

STRONG VINCENT

AND

His Brigade at Gettysburg

JULY 2, 1863

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Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States

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STRONG VINCENT

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In the numerous histories of the civil war or accounts of the campaign and battle of Gettysburg which have appeared from time to time, the writer of this paper has never seen one which did full justice to the important part enacted by Colonel Strong Vincent and his brigade on the extreme left of the Union Army on the afternoon of July 2, 1863, and which, if it did not decide the victory, contributed so much to it that but for this the battle would have been gained by the Confederates.

Some accounts state that General Warren, observing the importance of the position, entirely unoccupied, and the evident intention of the Confederates to seize it, took the responsibility of detaching Vincent's brigade from its division and personally conducted it to the place where it fought. Other accounts state that Weed's brigade was first placed on the hill by General Warren and that Vincent's brigade came up later and extended the line to the left. All accounts give great credit to Vincent's skill and the splendid fighting of the brigade, but they all miss the point which the writer wishes to make clear in this statement, which is that **If Vincent had not taken upon himself the responsibility of taking his brigade to that position without waiting to receive the order from his division commander as soon as he knew that his corps commander had ordered a brigade to be sent there, the arrival of his brigade would have found the enemy in possession of the ground, from which in all probability it could not have been dislodged.**

It may seem presumptuous for one who at the time of the battle of Gettysburg was a private soldier of the Eighty-third Pennsylvania Volunteers to question the accuracy of accounts written by officers of high rank or historians in civil life whose attainments have so well fitted them to write the story of the battle, but this presumption may be

NOTE.—Where italics are used in these reports they do not appear in the original but are employed by the writer to call special attention to certain statements.

pardoned perhaps when it is known that the writer is the only living person, with the possible exception of a captain on the staff of General Sykes, who saw and heard what took place at the critical moment.

The writer, although a private soldier, was on detached service at the time of the battle of Gettysburg, at the headquarters of the Third Brigade, First Division, Fifth Army Corps, acting as brigade bugler and bearer of the brigade headquarters flag. His duty was when the brigade was in the field to be always near the brigade commander, so that staff officers or others who had business with him could know by the flag where to find him, and to sound on the bugle orders for the brigade, when so directed by its commander.

The First Division, under command of General Barnes, with the other divisions of the corps, arrived on the field early in the morning of July 2 and was massed in rear of the right of the line. It made some changes of position during the day and about the middle of the afternoon, when Longstreet's attack on the Third Corps became very heavy, the Fifth Corps was moved to the left to reinforce the Third Corps. The First Division led the corps and the Third Brigade under Vincent led the division. The column was halted on the low ground in rear of the position of the Third Corps and General Sykes with General Barnes rode forward to select a position for the troops. Sykes and Barnes appear to have separated before any further orders were given to the division. While waiting for orders Vincent saw a captain of General Sykes' staff riding toward him from the front. Vincent, who evidently knew the captain, left the head of his brigade and rode forward to meet him; writer followed closely with the flag. Arriving, Vincent said, "Captain, what are your orders?" Without replying directly, the officer said, "Where is General Barnes?" If Vincent knew he did not answer the question, but said with emphasis, "What are your orders? Give me your orders." The officer replied, "General Sykes directed me to tell General Barnes to send one of his brigades to occupy that hill yonder," pointing to Little Round Top. Without a moment's hesitation Vincent replied, "I will take the responsibility of taking my brigade there."

Vincent was a born soldier. Although not educated at West Point, he entered the service in April, 1861, as Adjutant of the three months' regiment that was raised at Erie, Pa., and upon the reorganization of this regiment, which was mustered into the service of the United States for three years, he became its Lieutenant-Colonel and when its Colonel, John W. McLane, was killed at the battle of Gaines Mill, Vincent succeeded to the command of the regiment. A Harvard man recently admitted to the bar, he had the intellectual qualities which fitted him to command. With his quick eye he appreciated as well as his superior officers the importance to our army of the immediate occupation of that commanding position. General Barnes was not with his division; writer had not seen him since early in the morning. If Vincent knew where he was he also knew that if he waited for the officer of General Sykes' staff to find him and have the order sent through the usual channel, much valuable time would be lost, and it might be too late. At the risk of court martial for taking his brigade away from the division without orders from its commander, but understanding the order of the corps commander that some brigade of the division should be sent to that hill, he assumed the responsibility of taking his brigade there and he did the right thing at the right time. Returning to the brigade, he gave to Colonel Rice, the senior regimental commander, the order to bring on the brigade as rapidly as possible and started for the hill, closely followed by the writer. Arriving at the foot of the northwest slope and finding it impracticable, he skirted the northern base of the ridge, then turned southward along the eastern slope where the ground was less difficult until he reached the point where the high ridge ends and the hill falls away toward the valley, between the two Round Tops. Riding around the large rocks which end the ridge at this point, we came out on the small plateau where the Sixteenth Michigan Regiment was placed in position a little later. We sat on our horses looking out toward the Devils Den and the country toward the Peach Orchard where the battle was then raging fiercely, but in our immediate neighborhood not a Union or Confederate soldier was to be seen. We had been there but a few moments when a shell exploded a few feet to our right, followed by another

about the same distance to the left. Vincent said to me, "They are firing at the flag, go behind the rocks with it." I obeyed and in a few moments he came and dismounting, left his horse with me. He then went over the lower ground on foot, selecting the position in which to place the brigade. I think the regiments which had followed the same route we took, arrived in the following order: Forty-fourth New York, Sixteenth Michigan, Eighty-third Pennsylvania and Twentieth Maine. As the head of the column came up, Vincent said to Colonel Rice, "Form your regiment here, Colonel, with the right at the foot of this rock." Colonel Rice replied, "Colonel, in every previous battle in which we have been engaged, the Forty-fourth and Eighty-third have fought side by side. I wish it could be so today." Vincent appreciated the feeling and answered, "It shall be so, let the Sixteenth pass you." The order was sent back, the Forty-fourth was halted until the Sixteenth had reached its place, then under Vincent's direction the Forty-fourth, Eighty-third and Twentieth took their respective positions and sent out skirmish lines to the front. Up to this time not a shot had been fired nor a Confederate soldier seen on that part of the field, but the skirmishers of the Eighty-third and Forty-fourth soon met the enemy advancing in heavy columns without skirmishers. They came on rapidly following the retirement of our skirmishers, and arriving within short range of our line, opened a heavy fire on the Eighty-third and Forty-fourth. This lasted for some time, when the enemy fell back but re-formed and with additional troops made another assault, this time reaching far enough to our left to involve the Twentieth Maine, but our men could not be moved. While this was taking place, another force, supposed to be the greater part or all of Robertson's brigade of Texas regiments, passed to the north in the low ground between us and the Devils Den, and having gone beyond the line held by the Sixteenth Michigan, turned and advanced directly up the hill to attack this flank of our line. They came with such courage and such overwhelming numbers that the right of the Sixteenth Michigan wavered and broke. Colonel Welch and a large part of the right wing of his regiment left the field, taking his colors with him. In trying to rally these men Colonel Vincent was mortally

wounded and carried to the rear. Just at this time the One hundred and fortieth New York under Colonel O'Rorke arrived on the hill on our right and charged on the exultant enemy. O'Rorke and many of his men were killed and wounded, but the enemy was driven off, our line was re-established under the direction of Colonel Rice, who assumed the command, and no further assaults were made on the right of our line. Hazlett's Battery and the balance of Weed's Brigade, which came up after the One hundred and fortieth New York, extended the line along the crest of the ridge from Vincent's Brigade to its base at the north and held it until the end of the battle. The enemy continued its assaults upon the left of our line, making repeated efforts to turn the flank of Chamberlain's Twentieth Maine, but failed. The account of the battle at this point has been so fully described in the reports quoted elsewhere, that it need not be repeated here.

When the fighting opened the writer left his horse and flag with the horses and servants of the mounted officers of the brigade and obtaining a musket took his place in the nearest point of the line on the right of the Forty-fourth New York and remained there until the fighting ceased; reporting then to Colonel Rice he was directed by him to go to the hospitals in the rear to get ambulances and help to remove our wounded. Having no shoulder straps and being responsible for his brigade flag, he mounted and took that along as his badge of authority. He came to the road which passes east along the northern end of Little Round Top and found that road full of ambulances of the Second, Third and Fifth Corps and field hospitals of these corps located in every convenient spot for more than a mile to the east, but the ambulance officers and surgeons were so fully occupied that he received little immediate encouragement, although later help was sent and our wounded as well as those of the enemy which had fallen into our hands were cared for as well as they could be under the circumstances. Returning he saw Colonel Welch with a large number of the men of the Sixteenth Michigan and the colors of that regiment at the road-side nearly a mile in rear of the battlefield. Being much surprised to see him there, he asked Colonel Welch where the brigade was. Welch replied that

he did not know, that they were driven off the hill and that Colonel Vincent was in that farm house. After conversation with some of the men of the Sixteenth and being satisfied that Colonel Welch was mistaken, he entered the house and found Colonel Vincent on a bed in a room on the first floor. He was very pale and unable to speak, but held out his hand to me, and taking it I expressed in some way my sorrow at seeing him there. When I said "The boys are still there, Colonel," his face was lighted with a smile, but the sight was too painful to me and I hurried back to my place on the hill.

The writer has searched the official records and other accounts and presents herewith extracts from all the official reports relating to this matter, with certain letters and papers relating to the battle on Little Round Top. General Warren is entitled to all the credit which he would claim for himself, but he would be the first to disclaim credit for acts he did not perform. He went to the hill by the order of General Meade, accompanied by two Lieutenants of Engineers and some mounted orderlies. Seeing from his position near the signal station a heavy force of the enemy very near the hill, he sent a written dispatch to General Meade, suggesting that a division be sent there at once. He then went to General Sykes, reported what he had seen and urged him to send there a portion of his corps which was then just arriving. He did not detach Vincent's brigade nor any other brigade, but acted in accordance with his military training by referring the matter to General Sykes commanding the Fifth Corps, the nearest available troops. Sykes promised the troops needed and Warren returned to the signal station, where he found the officer folding his flags and preparing to leave. Warren directed him to remain and to continue waving his flags. He appears to have remained there until Vincent's brigade, which had repulsed the first assaults, seemed likely to be overwhelmed by the additional troops which the enemy was sending. He then descended the hill again and finding Colonel O'Rorke's regiment, the One Hundred and fortieth New York, bringing up the rear of Weed's brigade, the other three regiments with General Weed in advance, having already passed to the front, Warren took the responsi-

bility of detaching O'Rorke's regiment and hurrying it to the crest of the hill, where it arrived just in time to repulse the assault of the Texas troops which had just driven back in disorder the right of the Sixteenth Michigan.

Sykes appears to have ordered first one brigade from the First Division to be sent there and then Weed's brigade of the Second Division, which was following at some distance in the rear, to take position on the hill also. Sykes then went further to the rear to order up Crawford's Third Division. On his return he found that Weed's brigade, with the exception of O'Rorke's regiment, was moving to the front under orders from an officer of General Sickles' staff. He ordered it back to Round Top and Vincent's and Weed's brigades held this position until the fighting was over. Fisher's brigade of the Third Division came up later to reinforce Vincent's brigade, but did not arrive in time to take any active part in the battle.

Extract from General Hunt's paper on the Battle of Gettysburg, in "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," Vol. 3, page 307, in which he quotes a letter from General G. K. Warren:

" * * * As soon as General Longstreet's attack commenced, General Warren was sent by General Meade to see to the condition of the extreme left. The duty could not have been intrusted to better hands. Passing along the lines he found Little Round Top, the key of the position, unoccupied except by a signal station. The enemy at the time lay concealed, awaiting the signal for assault, when a shot fired in their direction caused a sudden movement on their part, which, by the gleam of reflected sunlight from their bayonets, revealed their long lines outflanking the position. Fully comprehending the imminent danger, Warren sent to General Meade for a division.

Before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, General Warren testified that he went to Little Round Top "by General Meade's direction." In a letter dated July 13th, 1872, General Warren says:

GENERAL WARREN'S LETTER.

Just before the action began in earnest, on July 2nd, I was with General Meade, near General Sickles, whose troops seemed very badly disposed on that part of the field. At my suggestion, General Meade sent me to the left to examine the condition of affairs, and I continued on till I reached Little Round Top. There were no troops on it, and it was used as a signal station. I saw that this was the key of the whole position, and that our troops in the woods in front of it could not see the ground in front of them, so that the enemy would come upon them before they would be aware of it. The long line of woods on the west side of the Emmitsburg road (which road was along a ridge) furnished an excellent place for the enemy to form out of sight, so I requested the captain of a rifle battery just in front of Little Round Top to fire a shot into these woods. He did so, and as the shot went whistling through the air the sound of it reached the enemy's troops and caused every one to look in the direction of it. This motion revealed to me the glistening of gun-barrels and bayonets of the enemy's line of battle, already formed and far outflanking the position of any of our troops; so that the line of his advance from his right to Little Round Top was unopposed. I have been particular in telling this, as the discovery was intensely thrilling to my feelings, and almost appalling. I immediately sent a hastily written dispatch to General Meade to send a division at least to me, and General Meade directed the Fifth Army Corps to take position there. The battle was already beginning to rage at the Peach Orchard, and before a single man reached Round Top the whole line of the enemy moved on us in splendid array, shouting in the most confident tones. While I was still all alone with the signal officer, the musket balls began to fly around us, and he was about to fold up his flags and withdraw, but remained, at my request, and kept waving them in defiance. Seeing troops going out on the Peach Orchard road, I rode down the hill, and fortunately met my old brigade. General Weed, commanding it, had already passed the point, and I took the responsibility to detach Colonel O'Rourke, the head of whose regiment I struck, who, on hearing my few words

of explanation about the position, moved at once to the hill-top. About this time First Lieutenant Charles E. Hazlett, of the Fifth Artillery, with his battery of rifled cannon, arrived. He comprehended the situation instantly and planted a gun on the summit of the hill. He spoke to the effect that though he could do little execution on the enemy with his guns, he could aid in giving confidence to the infantry, and that his battery was of no consequence whatever compared with holding the position. He stayed there till he was killed. I was wounded with a musket-ball while talking with Lieutenant Hazlett on the hill, but not seriously; and seeing the position saved while the whole line to the right and front of us was yielding and melting away under the enemy's fire and advance, I left the hill to rejoin General Meade near the center of the field where a new crisis was at hand."

ADDRESS OF CAPTAIN PORTER FARLEY.

140TH REGIMENT, NEW YORK VOLUNTEERS, AT DEDICATION
OF REGIMENTAL MONUMENT AT GETTYSBURG,

SEPTEMBER 17, 1889.

"New York at Gettysburg," Vol. III, page 953.

EXTRACT.

* * * "It was while waiting there that a printed order was brought to Colonel O'Rorke. He read it and then handed it to the adjutant, as they both sat mounted in front of the regiment, and told him to read it aloud. It was from the general in command of the army and was as follows:

CIRCULAR.

"HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC.

June 30, 1863.

"The Commanding General requests that previous to the engagement soon expected with the enemy, corps and all other commanding officers will address their troops, explaining to them briefly the immense issues involved in this

struggle. The enemy are on our soil. The whole country now looks anxiously to this army to deliver it from the presence of the foe. Our failure to do so will leave us no such welcome as the swelling of millions of hearts with pride and joy at our success would give to every soldier in the army. Homes, firesides and domestic altars are involved. The army has fought well heretofore. It is believed that it will fight more desperately and bravely than ever if it is addressed in fitting terms.

“Corps and other commanders are authorized to order the instant death of any soldier who fails in his duty at this hour.

“BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL MEADE,

“S. Williams, Asst. Adjt. General.”

The order was explicit that all commanding officers should address their troops; and, though doubtless much against his inclinations, as it was certainly contrary to his habit, O'Rorke, for the first and last time, there addressed a speech to his regiment. How well we all remember him sitting there on his horse in front of the regimental colors. His face, his form, his dress, all come up before us. His cheeks flushed as he spoke, but there was no hesitancy, and he closed with the ringing words: “I call on the file closers to do their duty, and if there is a man this day base enough to leave his company, let him die in his tracks. Shoot him down like a dog.” The words were those of a man who intended to do his duty and who was equally determined that every man under him should do his. The speech was effective for its purpose, and a murmur of approval ran through the ranks. The scene, the action, and the words were of intense dramatic interest.

We soon changed our position, and during the greater part of the remainder of that day we lay with the whole of our corps upon Powers Hill, about a mile eastward from the spot where we now stand. Throughout the day, the boom of an occasional cannon shot could be heard, but it seemed far away. Late in the afternoon, however, we could hear the artillery in lively play to our westward, but it still seemed much more distant than it really was. The

battle of the day had actually opened, and we were soon set in motion towards the high ground which we could see to the westward, and which in fact was the very hill on which we now stand.

The First Division of our corps had preceded us, and so had the other brigades of our division and the other regiments of our brigade. It is my belief that we were marching that afternoon as the rear regiment of the Second Division. The whole of our division, therefore, was passing along the road which crosses this ridge at the foot of the northern extremity of Little Round Top; the two leading brigades had become engaged in the furious battle then raging on the further side; our own brigade was crossing the ridge, and we ourselves had about reached the point where the railroad now crosses the roadway, when an incident occurred which changed our line of march, and which proved to be an important factor in the result of that day's battle.

Just at that moment our former brigadier, Gen. G. K. Warren, Chief Engineer of the Army, with an orderly and one or two officers, rode down towards the head of our regiment. He came from the direction of the hill top, that is, from this point where we now stand. His speed and manner indicated unusual excitement. Before he reached us he called out to O'Rorke to lead his regiment that way up the hill. O'Rorke answered him that General Weed had gone ahead and expected this regiment to follow him. "Never mind that," answered Warren, "I'll take the responsibility." Warren's words and manner carried conviction of the importance of the thing he asked. Accepting his assurance of full justification, O'Rorke turned the head of the regiment to the left, and following one of the officers who had been with Warren, led it diagonally up the eastern slope of Little Round Top. Warren rode off, evidently bent on securing other troops. The staff officer who rode with us, by his impatient gestures urged us to our greatest speed. You will remember how some of the guns of Hazlett's Battery broke through our files before we reached the top, and the frantic efforts of the horses, lashed by the drivers, to pull their heavy pieces up that steep acclivity. A few seconds later the head of our regiment reached the

summit of the ridge; war's wild panorama spread before us, and we found ourselves upon the verge of battle.

It was a moment which called for leadership, and we are here today the witnesses of the manner in which that leadership was fulfilled. There was no time for tactical formations. Delay was ruin. Hesitation was destruction. Well was it for the cause he served that the man who led our regiment that day was one prompt to decide and brave to execute.

The bullets flew in among the men the moment the leading company mounted the ridge, and as not a musket was loaded the natural impulse was to halt and load them. But O'Rorke permitted no such delay. Springing from his horse, he threw his reins to the sergeant major; his sword flashed from its scabbard into the sunlight, and calling: "This way, boys," he led the charge over the rocks, down this hillside, till he came abreast the men of Vincent's Brigade, who were posted in the ravine to the left. Joining them an irregular line was formed, such as the confusion of the rocks lying thereabout permitted, and the line grew and was extended towards the right as the successive rearward companies came upon the scene of action. There while some were partly sheltered by the rocks and others stood in the open, a fierce fight went on with an enemy among the trees and underbrush. Flushed with the excitement and bravely led, they pushed up close to our line. The steadfastness and valor displayed on both sides made the result for some minutes doubtful, but a struggle so desperate and bloody could not be a long one. The enemy fell back; a short lull was succeeded by another onslaught, which was again repelled.

The story has been told in print that our colonel led with the regimental colors in his own hands; and that the men followed him and with clubbed muskets beat back the enemy. Such fictions provoke a smile, and are mentioned only to contradict them. O'Rorke carried only his sword, and you carried your muskets grasped by the butts and not by the barrels. History should record the truth without exaggeration. And this is the truth of the matter; that as the regiment came over the ridge its muskets were empty, and its leading companies rushed down the hill to meet the

enemy without firing a shot. It was only when you came abreast the men of Vincent's Brigade near the foot of the hill that you had time to load and return the fire which spit a deadly fusillade from the woods before you. Those woods seemed to swarm with the gray-coated crowd. The enemy had almost enveloped Vincent, and had nearly seized this vantage ground on which we stand. Vincent's men, who for some minutes had maintained the fight, were outnumbered and outflanked. Reinforcement was never more opportune. The arrival of the One hundred and fortieth Regiment at that crucial moment saved Little Round Top, and a glance at the surrounding topography carries conviction as to the supreme value of its possession.

While our regiment fought in the valley, the guns of Hazlett's battery thundered from this hilltop, and its discharges swept the hostile lines which had forced back Sickles' corps; so that by the time our regiments' fighting was over, not a battalion of the enemy remained in sight upon the opposite ridge, which had been the scene of that afternoon's chief battle. Such, briefly told, was the struggle for the possession of this hilltop.

When that struggle was over, the exultation of victory was soon chilled by the dejection which oppressed us as we counted and realized the cost of all that had been won. Of our regiment, 85 enlisted men and 6 officers had been wounded. Two of these officers, Lieuts. Hugh McGraw and Charles P. Klein, were fatally hurt. Besides these, 26 of the comrades who had marched with us that afternoon, had fallen dead before the fire of the enemy. Grouped by companies, a row of inanimate forms lay side by side beneath the trees upon this eastern slope. No funeral ceremony, and only shallow graves could be accorded them. In the darkness of the night, silently and with bitter dejection, each Company buried its dead.

Among the slain was one whose loss lay heavy on the heart of every one of us. Your thoughts anticipate his name. The artist's hand has reproduced his features, and his effigy upon this cenotaph now calmly gazes upon us, and for years to come shall remain the testimony to all who come this way, of the admiration and the love which this regiment accorded him. O'Rorke was among the dead.

Shot through the neck, he had fallen without a groan, and we may hope without a pang. The supreme effort of his life was consummated by a death heroic in its surroundings and undisturbed by pain.

The spot on which he died is a most fitting place, and this circle of his comrades the most fitting presence in which to utter that tribute to his memory, which by grace of character, by natural talent, and by studious culture, he so truly deserves. To me he was as an elder brother beloved; and though since that time Death has struck near and hard upon my heart, he had never before struck so near as that July afternoon, when I looked down upon the placid features of O'Rorke's dead face and felt that he had gone from me forever. Twenty-six years have passed, and time has tempered the grief which his death brought into our hearts; but we shall always cherish his memory with a loving regard and admiration, which only a noble nature could inspire. We have known many men since the day he died. Let each of us recall the list of those whose qualities have most attracted his regard. Has there been one among them who possessed combined, the grace of form and carriage, the modesty, the purity and honesty of character, the amiable temper, the intellectual force, the commanding influence over others, the knightly accomplishments of his profession, and above all, the proved courage of Col. Pat O'Rorke, who here died at the head of his regiment? For myself I must say that I have never known one whose personality was so symmetrically developed, one so free from blemish, one who so well exemplified the ideal soldier and man.

"He was a very perfect, gentle knight." This cenotaph is a memorial of all our comrades who died in this great battle; but by the united wish of all of us who survived, it bears the face and name of the man whom we all most delighted to honor. * * *

REPORT OF GEN. GEORGE SYKES,

COMMANDING FIFTH ARMY CORPS,

DATED JULY 31, 1863.

"Rebellion Records," Series 1, Vol. 27, page 592.

EXTRACTS.

* * * A rocky ridge, commanding almost an entire view of the plateau held by our army, was on our extreme left. Between it and the position occupied by Birney's division, Third Corps, was a narrow gorge filled with immense boulders and flanked on either side by dense woods. It afforded excellent cover and an excellent approach for the enemy, both of which he promptly made use of. The rocky ridge commanded and controlled this gorge. In examining it and the ground adjacent, previous to posting my troops, I found a battery at its outer edge, and without adequate support. I galloped to General Birney, whose troops were nearest, explained to him the necessity of protecting the guns, and suggested that he should close his division on the battery, and hold the edge of woods on its right. I promised to fill the gap he opened, which I did with Sweitzer's and Tilton's brigades, of my First Division, *posting them myself*.

In the meantime, Vincent's brigade, of this division, had seized the rocky height, closely followed by Weed's brigade, Second Division. These troops were posted under the direction of General Warren, Chief Engineer of this army. After closing the interval made by Birney with the brigades of General Barnes, I rode rapidly to the Taneytown pike to bring up the remaining troops of the corps, and on my return with them found the greater part of Weed's brigade moving away from the height where it had been stationed, and where its presence was vital. I dispatched a staff officer to know of the General why he had vacated the ground assigned him. His reply was, "By order of General Sickles." I at once directed him to re-occupy it, which was done at the double-quick step. Hardly had he reached it before the enemy came on in tremendous force. Vincent's brigade and O'Rourke's regiment (Weed's brigade) were and had been sorely pressed. Both these heroic com-

manders had fallen; but Weed again in position, Hazlett working his guns superbly, and the timely arrival of Ayres' brigades of regulars, who were at once ordered to attack, stemmed the tide, and rolled away the foe in our front.
* * *

Night closed the fight. The key of the battle-field was in our possession intact. Vincent, Weed and Hazlett, chiefs lamented throughout the corps and army, sealed with their lives the spot intrusted to their keeping, and on which so much depended. * * *

REPORT OF GEN. JAMES BARNES.

COMMANDING FIRST DIVISION, FIFTH ARMY CORPS,
BEVERLY FORD, VA., AUGUST 24, 1863.

"Rebellion Records," Series 1, Vol. 27, page 599.

EXTRACT.

I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the First Division of the Fifth Corps, from June 28 to July 9, including the battle of Gettysburg and the movements of the command during the few days previous and subsequent thereto *in conformity with instructions from headquarters:* * * *

Between 4 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon, orders were received from General Sykes to move toward the left and to the front. The column was immediately formed, and moved rapidly up by the Taneytown road to the ground assigned to the division. *General Sykes and myself, preceding the advance of the column* upon the ground upon which it was to take position, reconnoitered the field, and the position to be held by the command was determined upon by him.

Soon after, the head of the column entered upon the field. At the same time General Warren, of the staff of General Meade, came up, riding rapidly from the left, and, pointing out the position of the elevation known as the Round Top, not far off and toward the left, urged the importance of assistance in that direction. *General Sykes yielded* to his urgent request, and *I immediately directed*

Colonel Vincent, commanding the Third Brigade, to proceed to that point with his brigade. Colonel Vincent moved with great promptness to the post assigned to him. The brigade consisted of the Sixteenth Michigan, the Forty-fourth New York, the Eighty-third Pennsylvania, and the Twentieth Maine Regiments.

The Second Brigade, commanded by Colonel Sweitzer, arrived next upon the ground. This brigade consisted of the Fourth Michigan, the Sixty-second Pennsylvania, the Ninth Massachusetts and the Thirty-second Massachusetts. The Ninth Massachusetts, however, was absent, being upon the special duty for which it had been detailed in the morning. Upon receiving his instructions, Colonel Sweitzer placed his command promptly in position.

The First Brigade, under command of Colonel Tilton, arrived next. This brigade was composed of the Eighteenth Massachusetts, the Twenty-second Massachusetts, the One hundred and eighteenth Pennsylvania, and the First Michigan Regiments. The position assigned to it was on the right of the ground occupied by the Second Brigade, and was immediately placed by Colonel Tilton, in conformity with the instructions given to him. The division thus in position constituted the right of the Fifth Corps, and its place in line was on the left of the ground assigned to the Third Corps. The line was on the edge of a thick wood, the ground to the front being cleared of timber, but interspersed with rocks and some straggling trees. As the two brigades entered the wood, they passed over a line of troops, understood to be a portion of a brigade of the Third Corps; they were lying down upon the ground.

Upon the right of our position an open space, apparently unprotected, extended to some distance. Upon calling the attention of General Sykes to it, he remarked, referring to the part of the Third Corps over which we had passed, and then lying down in our rear, that those troops were to be removed. The remaining portion of the Third Corps was understood to be at some distance to the right, and much in advance of what seemed to be their natural and true position. This unguarded space was watched with great anxiety. There was little time, however, for deliberation. General Sykes, called by his duty to the left of the line,

went toward that portion of his command. The attack of the enemy commenced almost immediately along my front. It was very severe, but was gallantly withstood.

After some time, during which the firing was very heavy, the enemy showed himself in great force on our right flank. He had penetrated through the unguarded space there, and commenced pouring in a destructive fire from the advantageous position he had gained, and without changing my front there were no means of checking his advance toward my rear. Colonel Tilton, commanding the First Brigade, which was on the right, was immediately directed to change his front to the right, and the order was at once executed, deliberately, yet promptly, and in good order. Colonel Sweitzer, commanding the Second Brigade, on the left of the First, was immediately notified of the change upon his right, and directed to fall back in good order, and to take up a new position a short distance in his rear, for the purpose of co-operating in opposing this heavy attack upon the flank. This brigade, consisting at that time of only three regiments, numbering in all, officers and men, 1,010, was placed promptly and in good order as directed. The First Brigade numbered in all, officers and men, 654.

Affairs being in this position, General Caldwell, commanding a brigade of the Second Corps, came up in great haste, and stated to me that his brigade, then in the woods a short distance to the left, was driving the enemy in his front, and urgently requested assistance. I immediately directed Colonel Sweitzer to go to his relief. He moved his brigade forward in line, to the front and left, his men giving cheers as they advanced across an open field to the edge of the wood; but the progress of the enemy upon our flank still continued, and this brigade was compelled again to change its front to repel his advance, and soon found itself in close conflict with him. The Fourth Michigan and Sixty-second Pennsylvania were in actual contact with him. Colonel Jeffords, commanding the Fourth Michigan, was thrust through with a bayonet while gallantly attempting to rescue his colors from the grasp of the enemy.

Finding himself unable to compete with numbers far superior to his own, and that the enemy was gaining ground in the rear, Colonel Sweitzer directed his command to re-

tire slowly, but orderly, halting and firing as they retired, and took position on elevated ground a short distance to his rear and succeeded in preventing the enemy from making any further progress in that direction.

In the meantime the movements of the First Brigade, under similar circumstances, corresponded with those of the Second. This brigade, small in numbers, fired and retired in good order, and succeeded in reaching the ground on the opposite side of the open field toward the left, and there halted. The darkness put an end to the conflict, and the enemy was foiled in his effort to get in the rear of the command. The Ninth Massachusetts shortly afterward rejoined the Second Brigade, having been relieved from the duty upon which it had been detailed early in the morning. In this position the two brigades remained during the night.

On the following day, the First Brigade was directed to relieve the Third Brigade at Little Round Top, where it also had succeeded in maintaining the position assigned to it, as will appear in the sequel.

I cannot speak in terms too commendatory of the bearing of the officers and men of these two brigades during the progress of this conflict. Skillfully directed by the two brigade commanders, they obeyed with cool intrepidity every order issued to them, under the most trying circumstances, and long resisted superior numbers with firmness. Partly surrounded by the enemy, they succeeded in preventing the left of the line from being taken in reverse, resisting an attack not exceeded, I am sure, in violence in any contest hitherto occurring. The exposure of their flank, arising from whatever cause, placed them in a most dangerous position and their heroic conduct alone saved the command at least, if not the entire left of the army, from disaster. The statement of the casualties of the contest is sufficient evidence of their gallant resistance, and it is alike due to those who have survived and to the memory of the gallant dead that this record should be made of their valor and devotion.

The Third Brigade, as above related, was detached from the division upon its arrival upon the ground, and was consequently removed from my immediate oversight. The record of its service, however, drawn principally from the

report of its commander, belongs to this record of the service of the division.

Colonel Vincent, commanding the brigade, upon being detached, as above mentioned, proceeded promptly to the position assigned to him. It was upon an elevated and rocky hill known as Little Round Top. It was situated at some distance to our left, and near the extreme left of the line of battle. Its defense was of the utmost importance. When the brigade was placed in position, the Twentieth Maine occupied the left of the line, the Sixteenth Michigan the right, the Eighty-third Pennsylvania and the Forty-fourth New York the center. *The Third Division of the Fifth Corps was posted on the right of the brigade.* The enemy had concentrated a heavy force in front of the line, and began a fierce attack immediately after the troops were in position. Repeated charges were made upon the center of the brigade, but the line was unbroken. A vigorous attack upon the right caused a temporary wavering there, but the One hundred and fortieth New York coming promptly to its support, it was re-established at once.

It was at this time that Colonel Vincent, commanding the brigade, while rallying this part of his command, fell, mortally wounded. He was a gallant officer, beloved and respected by his command and by all who knew him. His death is a serious loss to the army and the country.

Upon the removal of Colonel Vincent from the field, the command of the brigade devolved upon Colonel Rice, of the Forty-fourth New York Volunteers. The enemy, as stated, having in vain attempted to break the right of the brigade, renewed his attack upon the center and left. The Twentieth Maine, Colonel Chamberlain commanding, was posted on the left. It consisted of 380 men and officers. While the enemy in front was making a fierce attack, a brigade was observed in the rear of their lines moving by its right flank and passing through a slight ravine on our left, with the evident purpose of gaining a position on the left flank of this regiment.

Colonel Chamberlain at once threw back his left wing, and extended his right wing by intervals toward the left, in order to avoid diminishing the extent of his front. The brigade of the enemy alluded to reaching a proper position,

attacked him furiously on the left flank, advancing within 10 paces and rapidly firing. They were first checked and then repulsed by the left wing of the regiment, thrown back for that purpose.

A second, third, and fourth time the enemy renewed their attempt to break this line, and each time were they successfully repelled by that handful of men. Four times that little interval of 10 paces was the scene of a desperate conflict. The ground was strewn with dead and wounded men of both sides, promiscuously mingled. Their ammunition was exhausted; they replenished it from the cartridge boxes of the men lying around them, whether friends or foes, but even this resource soon failed them; the enemy in greatly superior numbers pressed hard; men and officers began to look to the rear for safety, but the gallant commander of the regiment ordered the bayonets to be fixed, and, at the command "Forward" that wearied and worn body of men rushed onward with a shout. The enemy fell back. Pressing on, and wheeling to the right in open intervals, the left wing came again in line with the right wing, and then the whole regiment, deployed at intervals of 5 paces, followed up the advantage they had gained. The enemy threw down their arms and surrendered in large numbers; the others fled rapidly from the contest; 368 prisoners, including 1 colonel, 1 lieutenant colonel, and a dozen other officers of lesser rank were sent to the rear; 50 of their dead lay upon the field, and large numbers of their wounded; 30 of this gallant regiment were killed, over 100 were wounded, but not one was taken a prisoner, and none were missing.

It was now nearly dark. A portion of the enemy appeared to have occupied the summit of the rocky hill to the left. The men of this brave regiment, exhausted by their labors, had thrown themselves upon the ground, and many of them sunk at once in sleep. Colonel Rice, now in command of the brigade, directed Colonel Chamberlain to drive the enemy from this height. The order was at once given. Roused again to action, and advancing with fixed bayonets and without firing, lest the smallness of their numbers might be suspected, they rushed up the hill.

Twenty-five more prisoners, including some staff officers, were added to the number previously taken, with a loss to the regiment of 1 officer mortally wounded and 1 man taken prisoner by the enemy. It was ascertained that these troops occupying the hill had been sent from Hood's division, which was then massed a few hundred yards distant, and that their object was to reconnoiter the position as a preliminary to taking possession of the height.

In addition to the prisoners above mentioned as taken by this regiment, 300 stand of arms were also captured by them. It is due to this regiment and to its commander that their service should be thus recorded in some detail.

Upon receiving a re-enforcement of five regiments of the Third Division, under command of Colonel Fisher, Colonel Rice detached two of them to the aid of Colonel Chamberlain, in order to maintain the position he had gained, and he was thus enabled to hold it, and the enemy, having been repelled upon every point of his attack, and night coming on, withdrew from the conflict.

Colonel Rice directed the Forty-fourth New York and the Eighty-third Pennsylvania to move to the front and gather up the wounded, who, including those of the enemy who had been left upon the field, were carefully brought in. The total results of the service of this brigade are stated by Colonel Rice to be 500 prisoners captured, including 2 colonels and 15 other commissioned officers, and 1,000 stand of arms. The brigade numbered about 1,000 men. * * *

A tribute is due to the memory of Colonel Vincent, who fell, mortally wounded, early in the engagement. He lingered a few days after the engagement. His promotion as a brigadier-general was sent to him at once as an appreciation of his services by the Government, but it reached him too late for his own recognition. He expired soon after its receipt. (July 7, 1863. O. W. N.) * * *

Being disabled for further actual command of the division, the opportune arrival of General Griffin enabled me to relinquish it to him, and the division moved toward Middletown, where it arrived on July 8. * * *

REPORT OF COL. WILLIAM S. TILTON,
COMMANDING FIRST BRIGADE, FIRST DIV., FIFTH A. C.
Middletown, Md., July 9, 1863.

"Rebellion Records," Series 1, Vol. 27, page 607.

EXTRACT.

* * * At 4:30 p. m., on July 2, the brigade, under my command, advanced to the front, and was placed, by order of General Barnes, in order of battle in a piece of woods at the south of Mr. Rose's house. The Second Brigade was on our left, but there being no infantry upon our right, I made a crotchet by refusing the right wing of my right battalion (One Hundred and Eighteenth Pennsylvania Volunteers, Colonel Gwyn). * * *

No sooner was the line formed than the foe attacked our front. The onslaught was terrible and my losses heavy, so much so that I was somewhat doubtful if our line could withstand it. This fact I communicated to *the general commanding division, who ordered me to fall back in good order if unable to hold the position*; but my men behaved nobly, and twice repulsed the assailants. My colonels wished to advance. Being anxious about my right, however, I reconnoitred in person, and discovered the enemy in large force coming from the direction of Rose's house, with the evident design of outflanking me. I immediately retired and took up a new position (in two lines), at the left and rear of a battery which had been posted about 300 yards to my right and rear. The battery soon commenced to retreat, firing, followed by the rebels, who were now again upon my right flank. To avoid this flank movement, I retired, firing, a short distance in the timber, and then moved across an open field, took up a new position upon the right of the Second Division, *and reported to General Sykes*.

* * * On the 3rd we relieved the Third Brigade, on duty, holding the rocky hill upon the extreme left.

On the 4th, I advanced the brigade to the edge of the woods in our front and sent out a strong line of skirmishers to feel the enemy. *The report of this reconnoissance has been made by order directly to Major-General Sykes.*

REPORT OF COL. JACOB B. SWEITZER,
COMMANDING SECOND BRIGADE, FIRST DIV., FIFTH A. C.

July 31, 1863.

"Rebellion Records," Series 1, Vol. 1, page 610.

EXTRACT.

* * * When we moved off from the orchard, the Third Brigade, being on the left of the division, moved first, the Second and First Brigades following in the inverted order.

The Second Brigade was placed in position in a wood fronting an open field, the woods bordering two sides of the field, the side in which we were and also that extending at right angles from our left toward the enemy, and in the last mentioned wood the First Brigade was posted, connecting with our left. Having formed the three regiments of this brigade in line of battle (the Ninth Massachusetts being still absent on picket duty) in their regular order from right to left, and finding this formation threw the Thirty-second Massachusetts, which was on our left, into an exposed position beyond the woods in low, cleared ground, I directed Colonel Prescott to change his front to the rear, so as to give him the benefit of the elevated ground and the cover of the woods, which movement he executed.

We had not remained long in this position before an attack commenced by the enemy in front of the First Brigade and Thirty-second Massachusetts. As there was no appearance of the enemy in front of the line formed by the Sixty-second Pennsylvania and Fourth Michigan, I directed them to change front to the left, and form lines in rear of the Thirty-second Massachusetts, to strengthen that position. During the execution of this order, the attack continued; the firing was very severe, and we lost many brave officers and men. Here fell Major Lowry, second to none in all the attributes of a soldier and a gentleman.

When the attack commenced, word was sent by General Barnes that when we retired we should fall back under cover of the woods. This order was communicated to Colonel Prescott, whose regiment was then under the hot-

test fire. Understanding it to be a peremptory order to retire then, he replied, "I don't want to retire; I am not ready to retire; I can hold this place," and he made good his assertion. Being informed that he misunderstood the order, which was only intended to inform him how to retire when it became necessary, he was satisfied, and he and his command held their ground manfully.

Some time after that, word was sent that the First Brigade was retiring, and *General Barnes sent me word to fall back also*, which I did in perfect good order, the regiments retaining their alignments and halting and firing as they came back. Having arrived at the road leading along the rear of the wheat-field, the brigade was formed in line in the woods in the rear of the road and parallel to it, the right resting on the corner of the woods toward the front. We had not remained here more than, say, fifteen minutes, when a general officer I had never seen before rode up to me, and said his command was driving the enemy in the woods in front of the wheat-field; that he needed the support of a brigade, and desired to know if I would give him mine. I referred him to General Barnes, and said I would obey his directions with pleasure. He spoke to the general, who was not far off. General Barnes came and stated to me what had been said to him by General Caldwell (this I learned was the officer who had lately spoken to me), *and asked me if I would take the brigade in*. I told him I would if he wished me to do so. He said he did. The command was then called to attention. General Barnes got out in front of them, and made a few patriotic remarks, to which they responded with a cheer, and we started off across the wheat-field in a line parallel to the road, our right flank resting on the woods. We advanced to the stone fence beyond the wheat-field next to the woods, and took position behind it to support, as we supposed, our friends in the woods in front. The Fourth Michigan, being on the right of the brigade, extended beyond the stone fence, and was, consequently, most exposed.

We had scarcely got to this position before I noticed regiments retiring from the woods on our right, which I supposed were relieved by others who had taken their places, and would protect us in that direction. I observed

also that there was considerable firing diagonally toward our rear from these woods, which I then thought were shots from our troops aimed over us at the enemy in the woods beyond and falling short. They were, however, much too frequent to be pleasant, and my color bearer, Ed. Martin, remarked, "Colonel, I'll be —— if I don't think we are faced the wrong way; the rebs are up there in the woods behind us, on the right."

About this time, too, word was brought me from the Fourth Michigan and Sixty-second Pennsylvania that the enemy were getting into our rear in the woods on the right. I directed those regiments to change front, to face in that direction and meet them, which they did, the firing in the meanwhile being rapid and severe. I at the same time dispatched Lieutenant Seitz, aide-de-camp, to communicate to General Barnes our situation. He reached the point where he had last seen General Barnes. *He was not there.* Lieutenant Seitz found the enemy had reached that point, and he came near falling into their hands himself; his horse was killed, and he made his way back to me on foot; *reported that General Barnes was not to be found*; that the enemy was in the woods on our right as far back as where we had started from, and along the road in rear of the wheat-field.

Finding that we were surrounded—that our enemy was under cover, while we were in the open field exposed to their fire—I directed the command to fall back. This was done in order, the command halting and firing as it retired. The Fourth Michigan and Sixty-second Pennsylvania had become mixed up with the enemy, and many hand-to-hand conflicts occurred. * * *

Finding, as we retired in the direction from which we advanced, that the fire of the enemy grew more severe on our right, I took a diagonal direction toward the corner of the wheat-field on our left and rear. We crossed the stone fence on this side of the field, and retired to the rear of the battery on the elevation beyond, where the command halted.

We had lost heavily in our passage across the field. The Fourth Michigan and Sixty-second Pennsylvania had been surrounded, and a large proportion of those regiments

were missing, either killed, wounded, or prisoners. What remained of the command formed in the rear of the battery, and we were shortly afterward joined by the Ninth Massachusetts, which had been absent all day on detached duty.

It is difficult to conceive of a more trying situation than that in which three regiments of this command had lately found themselves, and from which they had just effected their escape; in fact, I have since understood that one of General Barnes' aids remarked to him shortly after we had advanced, when it was discovered the enemy was behind us on the flank, that he might bid good-bye to the Second Brigade. I was also informed by General Barnes that, learning soon after we had advanced, the situation on our right, he had dispatched an orderly to me with the information and a verbal order to withdraw, but the orderly never reached me.

Every officer and man in the command, so far as I am informed, did his whole duty. All stood their ground and fought unflinchingly until they were ordered by me to retire, and in falling back behaved with coolness and deliberation. We lost many of our best officers and men.

I subjoin a field report of the regiments engaged on the morning of July 2, and also a report of the same regiments on July 4. A nominal and tabular report of casualties in the command has already been forwarded.

About dark on the evening of the 2nd, the acting assistant adjutant-general of the First Brigade came to me and inquired for General Barnes; said he was directed by General Sykes to tell him to have the Second Brigade form on the right of the First in the position they then were. As General Barnes was not present, I received the order, and put the Second Brigade in the position indicated, where we remained until the evening of the 5th, when the division advanced toward Emmitsburg.

REPORT OF COLONEL JAMES C. RICE,
COMMANDING THIRD BRIGADE, FIRST DIV., FIFTH A. C.
AT BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, WITH
REPORTS OF REGIMENTAL COMMANDERS.

"Rebellion Records," Series 1, Vol. 27, page 616.

July 31, 1863.

In compliance with orders from division headquarters, I have the honor to report the operations of this brigade during the battle near Gettysburg on the 2nd and 3rd inst.

The brigade, under the command of the late Colonel Vincent, was detached from the division and ordered into position at about 4 p. m. of the 2nd instant, on the extreme left of our line of battle. The Twentieth Maine occupied the extreme left of the brigade line, the Sixteenth Michigan the extreme right, connecting with the Third Division, under General Crawford, while the Eighty-third Pennsylvania and Forty-fourth New York occupied the center. The muskets taken into action by the brigade numbered about 1,000.

The ground occupied by the brigade in line of battle was nearly that of a quarter circle, composed mostly of high rocks and cliffs in the center and becoming more wooded and less rugged as you approached to the left. The right was thrown forward somewhat to the front of the ledge of rocks, and was much more exposed than other parts of the line. A comparatively smooth ravine extended along the entire front, perhaps 50 yards from our line, while on the left and beyond a high and jagged mountain rises, called Round Top hill. That the disposition of the forces and the nature of the ground may be better understood by the general commanding, I send with this report a diagram of the same.

The brigade had scarcely formed in line of battle and pushed forward its skirmishers when a division of the enemy's forces, under General Hood, made a desperate attack along the entire line of the brigade. He approached in three columns, with no skirmishers in advance. The object of the enemy was evident. If he could gain the vantage ground occupied by this brigade, the left flank of