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THE COLOR EPISODE

OF THE

ONE HUNDRED AND FORTY-NINTH REGIMENT PENNSYLVANIA VOLUNTEERS

IN THE

First Day's Fight at Gettysburg

JULY 1st, 1863

PAPER READ BEFORE THE LEBANON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY,
OCTOBER 18TH, 1907.

By J. H. BASSLER.

LATE CAPTAIN OF THE COLOR COMPANY.

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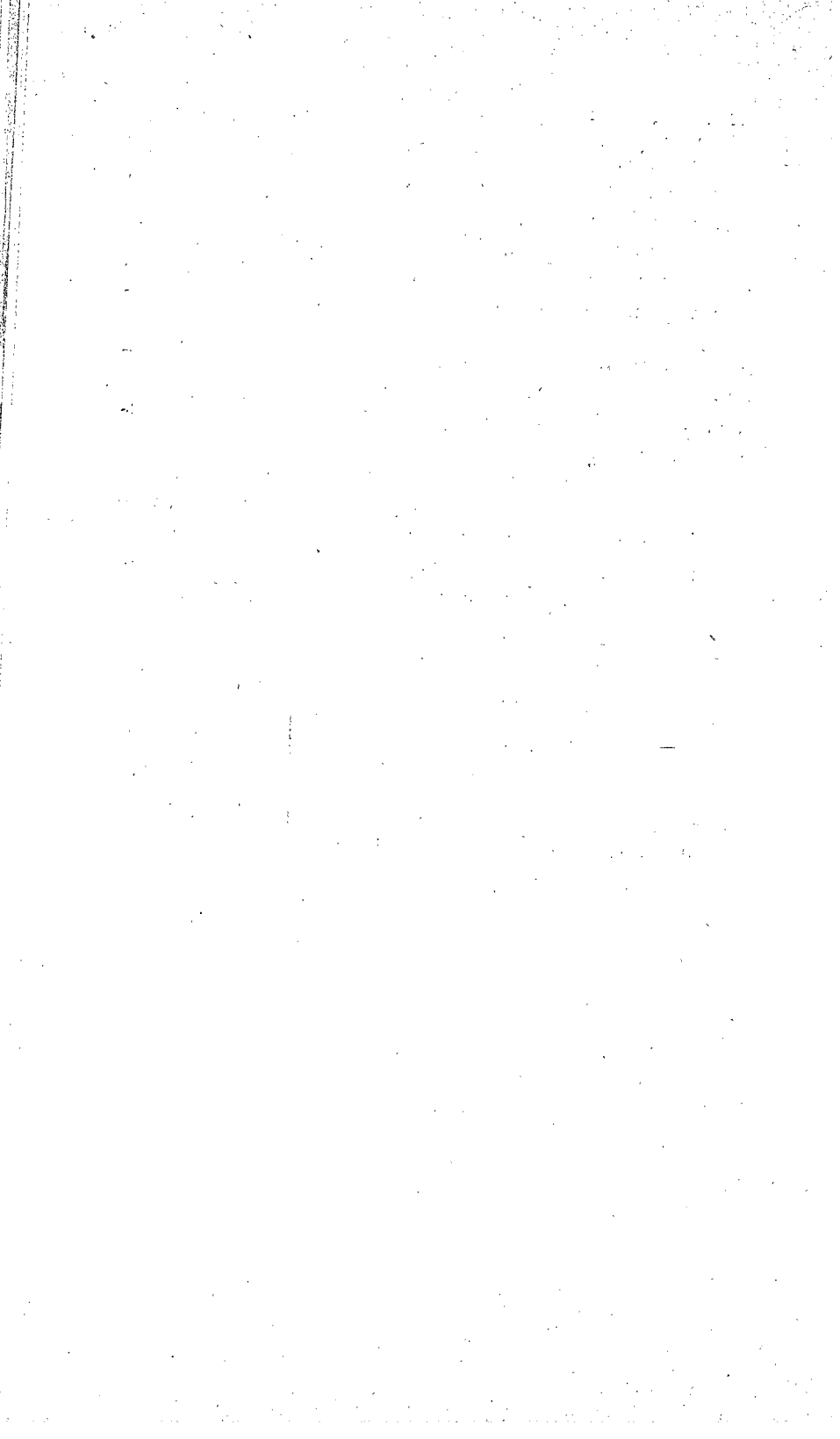
Truly Yours
J. H. Bassler

pelled, and the desperate fight of these Lebanon County boys to retrieve the errors of their superiors and save their colors from capture be spread upon the pages of history, and entrusted to the care of the Historical Society of their native County. Brehm, Friddell and Lehman were from Myerstown; Spayd, from a farm, south of town; Hammel, from a farm, east of town; and Hoffman, from Newmans-town.

As captain of the Color Company in that fight, it devolves upon me to see to it that my men are not robbed of their well earned laurels by antagonistic claims unsupported by evidence.

The proper place for a record of our color affair would have been the regimental history. But the comrades, who were successively appointed to write it, passed away before either of them had made a fair start. There is no one of my regiment left who is willing to assume the task. The most I can do before joining the innumerable army that has gone before is to preserve from loss the facts relating to the Color episode and lay bare the falsity of opposing claims.

That I delayed this task so long in hopes that it would be performed by another is owing to the fact that it involves the censure of Lt. Col. Dwight, a gallant soldier, and one to whom I am indebted for many favors.





COLOR SERGEANT HENRY G. BREHM

A lineal descendant of Conrad Weiser of Colonial fame, the heroism he exhibited at Gettysburg proved him worthy of his distinguished ancestor.

Color Episode

at Gettysburg

A Run to Escape an Enfilading Battery Fire.

THAT war is hell, as expressed by General Sherman, is perhaps never more fully realized than when a regiment of soldiers is exposed to an enfilading artillery fire. It was such an ordeal that faced my regiment after being placed in position (about 11 A. M. July 1st, 1863), at the apex of a right-angle in our line of battle. About two-thirds of the regiment lay along the McPherson lane, facing west, and the rest were aligned along the south side of the Chambersburg pike, facing north.

A gentle rise in the surface immediately west of us, known as McPherson's ridge, screened us from view from the next elevation, beyond Willoughby's run, where were stationed the confederate batteries of Pegram and McIntosh; the former of twenty guns and the latter of fourteen.

The enemy's infantry, which had been heavily engaged with Meredith's and Cutler's brigades a great part of the forenoon, were now making new dispositions and awaiting re-enforcements. In the meantime the infantry fire was confined to the skirmish lines, while the artillery fire passed over our heads.

Close on to 1 P. M. the scene changed. The enemy's re-enforcements were now arriving on the field. The first intimation we had of it was the fire of one of their batteries (Carter's) stationed on Oak hill, north of us. The crash of a shell through the tops of the old cherry trees along the lane admonished our Commander that we were exposed to an enfilade fire which might do us great damage. He at once swung our left out on the pike in line with the right, and ordered a left side-step movement to bring as much of the regiment as possible into the shelter of the dry ditch on the southern edge of the pike, in which we then lay down. We were now comparatively safe from the battery on Oak hill, but, unfortunately, the enemy to the west got a glimpse of our left before we lay down, and shrewdly guessing our position, at once commenced to drop shells into our ranks over the crest of the ridge.

With those thirty-four guns on our flank the regiment was in danger of annihilation, should the enemy concentrate their fire upon us.

It was now that Roy Stone, commanding the brigade, conceived the idea of using our colors to deceive the enemy and draw their fire away from the regiment. Accordingly, Color Sergeant Brehm, having been quietly instructed by an orderly of Col. Dwight's, marched in a north-westerly direction and planted the colors behind two rail piles, forming a right-angle, one side facing west and the other north.

This breastwork had been made as a safe guard against lurking enemies, by pickets of Buford's cavalry, who occupied the ground the night before. The rails had been carried together from a fence that formed the eastern boundary of a field of wheat, extending from the summit of the ridge down its western slope, and from the pike to an old R. R. cut north of it.

The colors were now some fifty yards north of the pike, a little to the left of the left front of the regiment, and about one hundred and fifteen yards south of the R. R. cut where it had its greatest depth.

In this position our flags were plainly visible over the standing wheat, to the batterymen west of us, but the rail piles and the men lying behind them were hid from their view; and, evidently thinking that the regiment had changed front, they now diverted their fire in that direction. Stone's ruse had succeeded.

Half an hour or so later, we were approached from the north-north-west by Daniel's brigade, of North Carolinians, and our regiment was ordered across to the cut to meet them.

It is not my object to describe the battle, but only to tell the story of our colors. Suffice it to say that up to about 3:15 P. M. the regiment did heavy fighting on that part of the field, including charges and counter-charges and several changes of front, and, incredible as it may seem, it fought without its colors during all that time; and when the brigade was forced out of its position in the vicinity of the Mc Pherson farm buildings by Brockenbrough's and Scales Confederate brigades, the latter enveloping its left flank, our precious standards still remained planted in their isolated position.

The deep R. R. cut to the north had proved a barrier to the advance of the enemy from that direction. But at an early stage of the fight the right of Daniel's brigade crossed the R. R. bed west of the cut and advanced obliquely up through the wheat field. Had its advance not been checked, our colors would then have been captured, unless its custodians had made a timely escape to the regiment.

Some may think that now was the time for Brehm to run. Not so in the judgement of men noted for their thorough study of the fight. There is ground for belief that it was of great service to our cause that Brehm stuck to his post. True, he might then have left with a good excuse and saved the flags; but the results attained by his remaining, far outweigh in importance the loss of the colors. This is what Stone believed after reading Daniel's report, and such was the view taken by Col. Batchelder, who stands pre-eminent as the historian of the battle.

I was introduced to the Colonel while attending the G. A. R. encampment, at Gettysburg, in 1881, my first revisit to the battlefield. He questioned me minutely about our color affair, and my queries in return elicited the fact that he had investigated it before to some purpose by consulting Confederate reports and interviewing prominent officers on that side; and he expressed high admiration of Brehm's conduct and firmness under such trying circumstances.

We must remember that Daniel's brigade had just arrived on the field, and that they naturally supposed that

our colors represented a regiment of Federals lying concealed in the upper edge of the wheat field, and whose right flank was protected against attack by the cut north of it. When the right of that brigade made its aforementioned advance, how could they help thinking but that the supposed regiment was waiting to strike them in flank and rear at the opportune moment. Fronting them were companies A, F and D of the 150th, a body of men so small compared with theirs, that they must have supposed their object, was to draw them into a trap.

The tide of battle was turned by the daring charge of the gallant Wister when he hurled those three companies upon the astonished foemen. All honor to those brave Bucktails! They have our unbounded admiration! It was one of those critical moments pregnant with far-reaching results. Had Brehm then flinched, and fled with his colors, the illusion that had cast a spell over the enemy would have been instantly dispelled; and we can well imagine the piercing "rebel yell" that would have followed, and the onward rush of the Confederates; firing with fresh courage and enthusiasm the rest of their line, north, north-west and west of our little brigade.

To think of it! Daniel's brigade of four regiments and a battery; Davis' brigade of three regiments (the fourth was absent at the time); all veteran troops and renowned fighters—and how many more of Heth's regiments south of the pike I cannot tell—opposing our brigade of three regiments, and these depleted by the absence of Company D of the 149th at Division headquarters, and Company K of the 150th in Washington, guarding the Presidential premises. Had the Rebs not been deceived as to our numbers, they would then in all probability have swept the "Key Point," as Gen. Doubleday called our position; and how could our Corps commander have retrieved such a disaster, hard pressed as he was at all points.

Was it chance, or destiny, that blinded Brehm and his men to the nearness of their capture at this important juncture? If the proximity of the enemy was unnoticed because they were then engaged in one of their "hot discussions" over their peculiar position, and what was best to do,* it was a most fortunate co-incidence. If—as Stone quotes Nicholson of the Battlefield Commission to say—every minute then gained was worth a regiment, Brehm's firm-



CORPORAL FRANKLIN W. LEHMAN

Bearer of the State flag. When the flag was wrenched from his one only available hand
he ran for the regiment, the most sensible thing he could do,
as he had no weapon to fight with.

ness was of priceless service. Let us honor then the intrepid Sergeant and the devoted little band that stood by him so nobly, though some of them, if not all, thought their chief should act on his own authority and return to the regiment.

In the final advance of the Confederate line, towards 3 p. m., there was one part of the enveloping semi-circle that did not move on with the rest. This was Davis' brigade, stationed down along the wheat field, west of our colors. This brigade had lost heavily in the forenoon and was instructed to follow in rear of the first line in the final onset.

Just then there was no line of Confederates in front of Davis, and all he needed to do to carry out his orders, was to delay marching, until, by the contraction of the semi-circle, further east, the right of Daniels' brigade connected with the left of Brockenbrough's.

This accounts for the fact that our colors were not driven back or captured, at, or before, the time that the two Bucktail regiments were flanked out of their position at McPherson's, and fell in on the left of the 143rd P. V., which had changed position and was now facing west, south of the pike. Our line was then about 100 yards east of the McPherson buildings. I was lying at the time in the south-east corner of the McPherson barnyard, disabled by a wound received about an hour before, in the field north of the pike. Though unable to shift my body I could turn my head, sufficiently, to get a view of part of the meadow east of the McPherson lane, but could not see our line.

It was then—at 15 to 20 minutes after 3 p. m.—that the dash on our colors took place, and I will let the surviving actors in that drama tell the story in their own language, in the following affidavits, the originals of which were sent to Captain Ralph E. Gamble, U. S. A., stationed at San Juan, Porto Rico, who lost seven blood relatives out of my regiment in the first day's fight and is engaged in the commendable work of writing its history in that eventful battle. To aid him in elucidating the facts of our Color episode, is one of the objects of this paper.

AFFIDAVITS.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN :

I hereby certify under oath that in the first day's fight at Gettysburg, July 1st, 1863, I was bearer of the State flag; that while my regiment, the 149th P. V., was lying in line of battle in a dry ditch on the south side of the Cham-

bersburg pike, north of the McPherson barn, and subjected to a destructive, enfilading fire from Confederate batteries to the westward, the colors, both State and National, were ordered out into the field north of the pike, to deceive the enemy and draw their fire away from the regiment; that we took a left oblique direction until we had cleared the left front of the regiment and planted the colors behind a rail pile, or rather two rail piles, forming a right angle, one side facing an old railroad cut and the other side facing a wheat field, covering the west slope of the McPherson ridge; that in the subsequent movements of our troops none came very near to us; that we were undisturbed during the progress of the battle until finally a squad of Confederate soldiers made a dash on us out of the wheat field, and, that while being startled to our feet by the rebel yell, I collided with Color Sergeant Brehm and was pushed over on my knees, my flag being tilted over the rail pile, and that it was immediately laid hold of by an enemy on the other side, while another enemy on top of the rails was aiming his gun at me; that I grabbed the barrel of said gun and turned it aside; that my assailant was shot and the flag-staff wrenched from my grasp at the same time. When I got to my feet the Confederates were all around us; I saw a rebel stretched on his back and Sergeant Brehm on top of him; I saw a Confederate in the act of striking him with the butt of his gun and another picking up the flag. I saw that I was not yet a prisoner and started to go to the regiment for help; that when I got near the pike I saw that the Confederates occupied the ground where recently we had seen our regiment; that I changed my course and got by the left flank of the enemy, but before getting far was disabled by a gun shot wound through my leg.

(Signed) Franklin W. Lehman.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 4th day of March, A. D., 1907; and I hereby certify that the contents of the above declaration were fully made known to him before swearing, and that I have no interest, direct or indirect, in the prosecution of this claim.

LUTHER G. WITT,
Notary Public.

Minersville, Schuylkill Co., Pa., May 3rd, 1907.

Capt. J. H. Bassler, Myerstown, Pa.

Dear Sir and Comrade :

I hereby respectfully refer Capt. Gamble to my statement in your "Reminiscences of the First Day's Fight at Gettysburg," a copy of which you told me you had sent to the Captain. I now reiterate under oath, that excepting the first advance of our regiment to the railroad cut, and later on the dash at us of a squad of Confederates out of the wheat field, after, as subsequent events proved, our regiment had been flanked out of its position near the McPherson buildings, there was no movement of troops, of either our own or of the enemy, so near to us as to attract our attention. Of course, we were crouching behind the pile of rails to shield ourselves from the aim of the rebel sharpshooters and it was only at intervals that one of our number would rise to take a hurried



COLOR GUARD HENRY H. SPAYD

Promoted to Color Sergeant of his regiment. Though only seventeen years of age, with a celerity of thought and action which challenges our highest admiration, he rescued the State flag from a foe, but was shot down and the flag taken from him before he got clear of the enemy.

survey of the long semi-circle of Confederates to the north, northwest and west. I further reiterate that after I had rescued the State flag from the foeman who had wrenched it from the grasp of Corporal Franklin W. Lehman, and made a dash for our regiment, I noticed before reaching the pike that the Bucktails had left, and that the ground was occupied by men in gray; that I then changed my course hoping to get around their flank, but was presently disabled by a gunshot wound in the right thigh and that very soon after, the colors were taken from me.

H. H. Spayd,

Late Color Bearer 149th Regt. Pa. Vol.

Sworn and subscribed to before me a Justice of the Peace in and for said County of Schuylkill, this 6th day of May, A. D., 1907.

C. K. TAYLOR, J. P.

My commission expires on the 1st Monday of May, 1912.

To complete the above account I will quote from Comrade Spayd's statement as set forth in my pamphlet, in which he says, when he was startled to his feet by the rebel yell, the first thing he noticed was Corporal Franklin W. Lehman, bearer of the State flag, on his knees with his colors stretched across the rail pile and a rebel pulling at them on the other side. Frank held on with his right hand and with his left had hold of the barrel of a musket in the hands of an enemy on the top of the rails and was pushing it aside. Spayd instantly shot down Lehman's assailant, then clubbed his musket and flung it with all his might at the Confederate on the other side who had just plucked the flag from Lehman's hand and was drawing it across the rails. The blow stunned the foeman; he dropped the flag; the next instant it was in Spayd's possession, and he was making for the regiment at the top of his speed.

Soldiers' Home, N. D. V. S., Central Branch, May 11th, 1907.

To Capt. J. H. Bassler,

Dear Comrade:

Below find my sworn statement to be sent by you to Capt. Gamble, to assist him in getting at the facts regarding the loss of our colors at Gettysburg. After being detached from the regiment and being posted to the left of its left front, (to deceive the enemy in regard to the position of the regiment), we then took shelter behind two rail piles placed together so that one faced north and the other west, and felt easy enough at first, though the shells dropped around us in a lively manner, for we expected to be recalled to the regiment shortly, but as the time lengthened and the fighting got rather close to us we felt very uneasy about the colors and there was a hot discussion among us, some arguing that we had better return to the regiment without orders. Color

Sergeant Brehm, however, refused point blank, as his idea of a soldier's duty was to stick to his post as long as he was able unless sooner relieved. He at last agreed though that I should go and report that there was great danger of the colors being captured unless they were ordered back to the regiment at once, but in the confusion of battle I could not immediately find either General Stone or Colonel Dwight, and before I succeeded the Bucktails were on their retreat back towards Gettysburg and I followed, seeing it impossible to return to Brehm without falling in the hands of the enemy. I had failed in carrying out my orders but whenever the brigade made a fresh stand I remained with them and did the best I could in helping to check the enemy.

(Signed)

Fred. Hoffman,

149th Color Guard, Gettysburg.

Sworn and subscribed before me this 11th day of May, 1907.

JOHN J. MARTIN, Notary Public,
in and for Montgomery Co., Ohio.

The above is an exact copy of the original except the spelling and punctuation.

To aid the historian in sifting the facts regarding the colors of the 149th P V., in the first day's fight at Gettysburg, from a mass of contradictions, I hereby testify that when lying in the southeast corner of the McPherson barnyard, the Confederates already being along the lane east of the barn, I saw Color Bearer Brehm, with his flag, run obliquely through the meadow east of the lane; that he evidently entered said meadow at its northwest corner where the lane connects with the pike; that soon after he was out of sight, a Confederate came into view, having our flag, and in hurrying to the rear, passed near me; that sometime after the storm of battle had swept by, Color Guard John Friddell, (now dead), came to me on his way to the pump to fill his canteen; that he was very pale and weak from loss of blood issuing from a wound in his chest; that he gave me a thrilling account of a fight with a squad of rebels that dashed upon them from the near-by wheat field; that when startled by the rebel yell they had barely time to jump to their feet when the enemy was right by them; that one of them laid hold of the National flag in the hands of Brehm, saying "this is mine"; that Brehm said "no by G— it isn't", seized him by the throat and threw him on the ground, but the Sergeant went down too on top of him; that evidently the rebels had not expected any resistance, and so, in the anxiety of each one to get one of our flags, they were unprepared for the hot reception given them and which gave our men the advantage; that in a few seconds, the guard having shot the majority of their assailants, and clubbed others, Brehm was on his feet again with his colors and running at the top of his speed for the regiment, and that he (Friddell) and another comrade (Hammel) were following close behind; that they got near the Confederates along the lane before discovering, amid the smoke of battle, that they were men in grey; that Brehm dashed right through their line, but himself and comrade were shot down in the lane in a struggle with the enemy.



COLOR CORPORAL JOHN FRIDDELL

Though shot through the right lung, he walked to town, over a mile distant, on the second day of the fight, and got a sponge for his Captain to bathe his wound with. In passing and repassing through a Confederate battery stationed on Seminary Ridge, he chaffed with the artillery men, who had too much respect for our bold "Bucktail" with his bloody bosom to stop him.

Further, that in a heavy thunderstorm late in the afternoon of July 4th, my clothes were completely soaked by the rain; that I was lifted out of a pool of water by a wounded comrade, aided by two Confederates (who had taken shelter from the rain under the fore-bay of the barn), was carried into the horse stable, stripped of my wet clothes and then placed on clean hay and covered with a blanket, presented for the occasion by Capt. F. B. Jones; that, then and there I was greeted by a comrade, who while lying on the field of battle, not far from the rail pile, had witnessed the fight over the colors, and characterized it as the most gallant imaginable, saying it was over quicker than he could describe it, with three of the enemy stretched on the sod, and our men bounding away for their regiment; but that the foe being then in possession of the ground around the McPherson buildings, they were all shot down.

To my great regret, I neglected noting down the name of this comrade, as I was very weak then and my water soaked diary was not within my reach.

J. H. Bassler,

Late Captain Co. C., 149th Regiment Pa. Vol's.

Sworn and subscribed before me this fourth day of June, A. D., 1907.

H. S. GOCKLEY, Justice of the Peace,

Myerstown, Pa.

AFFIDAVIT OF SURVIVORS OF CO. C. 149TH REG'T. PA. VOL'S.

State of Pennsylvania } ss.
County of Lebanon, }

Personally appeared before me a Justice of the Peace in and for said County, Edward L. Manderbach, William H. Reigart, John Schaeffer, Lorenzo Blecker, Adam Loose and Henry W. Moyer, who being duly affirmed according to law, do depose and say, that they were present in the First Day's Fight at Gettysburg, and that the regimental colors were never again returned to the custody of the Company after being sent out into the field north of the pike and planted by a rail-pile to the left of the left front of the regiment, and that there, at said rail-pile was the last we saw of them.

Affirmed and subscribed before me, this 25th day of May A. D., 1907.

H. S. GOCKLEY, Justice of the Peace.

Edward L. Manderbach, William H. Reigart, John Schaeffer,
Lorenzo Blecker, Adam Loose,
Henry W. Moyer.

These accounts harmonize so completely as to leave them free from all doubt. Note well the striking fact, that, when our temporarily victorious Color Guards came rushing along to rejoin the regiment, they saw only men in gray where but a short time before they had seen the blue, the enemy being in possession of that part of the field.

Had the dash on our colors been made but five or ten minutes sooner, or, had Brehm not lost twice that length of

time in waiting, in vain, for Hoffman to return and report, our little band of heroes could have reached the regiment, while it was yet at McPherson's, and the colors would have been saved from capture.

Since I could never learn of any one of our brigade who claimed to have seen Brehm approaching through the meadow, the inference is that our line was then being withdrawn, as Col. Dana, who was now in command, had discovered that he was flanked both right and left.

Now for the Confederate side of the story. I will quote from a booklet—Pickett or Pettigrew—written by Captain W. R. Bond, of Daniel's Brigade, who, in speaking of Davis' men says as follows:

"To illustrate the individual gallantry of these troops I will relate an adventure which came under my observation. It must be born in mind that this brigade had been doing fierce and bloody fighting, and at this time not only its numerical loss but its percentage of killed and wounded was greater than that which Pickett's troops had to submit to two days later, and that it was then waiting to be relieved. Early in the afternoon of this day my division (Rodes') arrived upon the field by the Carlisle road and at once went into action. My brigade (Daniel's) was on the right, and after doing some sharp fighting we came in sight of Heth's line, which was at right angles to ours as we approached. The direction of our right regiments had to be changed in order that we might move in front of their left brigade, which was Davis'. The Federal line, or lines, for my impression is there were two or more of them, were also lying in the open field, the interval between the opposing lines being about three hundred yards. Half way between these lines there was another, which ran by a house. This line was made of dead and wounded Federals, who lay 'as thick as autumnal leaves which strew the brooks in Vallombrosa'. It was about here that the incident occurred. A Pennsylvania regiment of Stone's brigade had their two flags—state and national—with their guard a short distance in front of them. One of these colors, Sergeant Frank Price, of the Forty-second Mississippi, and half a dozen of his comrades determined to capture. Moving on hands and knees till they had nearly reached the desired object, they suddenly rose, charged and overcame the guard, captured the flag and were rapidly making off with it, when its owners fired upon

them. All were struck down but the Sergeant, and as he was making for the house above referred to a young staff officer of my command, having carried some message to Heth's people, was returning by a short cut between the lines, and seeing a man with a strange flag, without noticing his uniform he thought he, too, would get a little glory along with some bunting. Dismounting among the dead and wounded he picked up and fired several muskets at Price; but was fortunate enough to miss him. Sergeant Price survived the war. His home was in Carrollton, Mississippi. Recently the information came from one of his sons, a name sake of the writer, that his gallant father was no more."

The line of killed and wounded spoken of above were those of my brigade; and the house mentioned by which this line lay, was the McPherson house—the only one in the vicinity.

This narrative of Capt. Bond's is easily reconciled with the sworn testimony of my men. There is no more discrepancy than is reasonable to expect from the circumstances; for it can readily be understood how awkward it would have been for Capt. Bond to give all the details.

Price and his comrades must have noticed our colors on top of that slope for the last hour or more. But they wisely postponed their adventure until they knew by the firing that the Confederate line south of the pike had reached the crest of the ridge. According to the rules of strategy the regiment they supposed to be with our colors should then have changed front and attacked its enemy in flank. No such movement taking place, and those colors still flaunting, as it were, in their faces, they determined to solve the mystery, and with commendable caution to escape detection they moved up the wheat covered slope "on hands and knees" as Bond relates it. Directly west of the colors the field had not been marched over and the wheat was still standing erect.

When these men reached the edge and peered out they saw at a glance that our troops were gone. Only a short distance before them stood our colors, their lovely folds gently swaying in a light breeze. Not a guard was visible. Not a musket showed above the rails. With an exultant yell they dashed forward. Never was there made a worse mistake than that yell; and it may truly be said that it sounded the death knell of more than one of those who gave

it. But for that yell they could have jumped on my men before they were up. That yell startled our Union boys to a consciousness of their danger and gave them a few precious seconds of time in which to jump to their feet and cock their rifles. The foe was so close that there was no need of taking aim. Every shot took effect. The next instant the rifles were used as clubs, and quicker than it takes to relate, the foemen were all laid low, and the little band of Buck-tails were speeding away with their colors to rejoin the regiment.

Three rifles against seven! The bearers of the seven all struck down but one, and that one temporarily stretched on his back by Brehm! The owners of the three off without a scratch! If it were not confirmed by the Confederate report it might well tax the credulity of my auditors.

How do we account for it? Easily enough. Those Mississippians—than whom there were no better fighters either North or South—had not anticipated any serious resistance. Each of them was so eager to secure one of the coveted prizes that they forgot all danger, and threw caution to the winds. Their hot reception took them completely by surprise, and, before they had time to recover from it, the clash was over.

The wounded comrade who witnessed the melee over the colors, saw but "three of the enemy stretched on the sod." It is presumed that the two victims of Spayd's rifle lay west of the breastwork and could not be seen by him. Price may have had only five comrades with him; but if he really had "half a dozen," as stated by Capt. Bond, then there is one more man to be accounted for, and he too must have lain in a position where the aforementioned comrade could not see him.

Price, the leader, was evidently the man whom Brehm clutched by the throat and hurled to the ground, and it is probably to this humiliating experience he owed his preservation from serious injury; otherwise he too might have received the blow of a rifle-butt over his skull. When he got on his feet again and had picked up a gun and was ready to fire, Brehm's bold dash through the enemy's ranks may have already been accomplished; but Spayd, noticing in time that he was running right into the Johnnie's, and having changed his course to clear their left flank, was nearer to Price, who, presently brought him down by firing a bul-

let through his thigh. It took him but a minute to cover the distance between them, when he pulled out from under our seventeen year old hero the flag which he had but a few minutes before so gallantly rescued; and Price, who had had his grasp on the staff of our national flag, but slipped up on its capture, as narrated, now had possession of our State flag, while the National flag and its noble bearer went down over a hundred yards further on, south of the pike and east of McPherson's.

This furnishes a striking illustration of the rapid succession of stirring events during the whirlwind of battle, and the sudden changes of fortune from one side to the other.

As a further confirmation of the above account I will quote from Capt. Bond's letter to Comrade W. R. Johnston, secretary of our Regimental Association:

Scotland Neck, N. C., Nov. 29, 1901

W. R. JOHNSTON, Belleview, Pa.

Dear Comrade:

Yours of the 21st with stated enclosure to hand. I have read Capt. Bassler's address with very great interest. The more so for the reason that I was a witness in part, and I might say an actor in part of one of the incidents described, for I was the mounted staff officer who fired several shots at the Mississippian who captured your State flag. * * * * * When I dismounted and picked up a musket there could have been nothing very formidable about my appearance, for I was only a pale-faced boy, yet several of the wounded thought I was an inhuman monster, for with hands raised in a deprecating way they besought me not to kill them. Poor devils! I would have helped them if I could, had the time been not so stirring * * * *

Yours Fraternally,

W. R. BOND.

Was Brehm to blame for clinging to his post so long? No! By all that is just and reasonable, no! He was perfectly justified in waiting for orders. He had a right to expect that his safety was looked after. He naturally thought that there must be a good reason for holding him to his post, or else he would be recalled. He considered it cowardly to go back without orders. *He, like all the rest of us, had learned that Col. Dwight would brook no infraction of his commands*, and hence was determined to stick to his post to the last minute. Nevertheless he sent a messenger to ask for orders and a watch was kept on Davis' brigade, one of their number getting up at intervals and taking a hurried

glance in that direction. It would have been foolhardy to expose themselves to the fire of sharpshooters longer than absolutely necessary, for by needlessly braving that danger, there would shortly have been no guard left to protect the colors.

Daniel's brigade having moved further east. Davis' men were the only troops from whom Brehm anticipated any danger; and his intention, no doubt, was, not to let that line get too close before leaving his post, orders or no orders. But as explained before, Davis did not move with the rest of the sweeping semi-circle, and Price and his squad came up through the wheat field so stealthily that they were not discovered.

The last time but one that I saw Brehm, was immediately after he was compelled to surrender his flag. He followed the captor of his colors to the Confederate rear and passed near where I lay. Though mortally wounded, he carried his head high, as became the undismayed warrior he was. His eyes were still ablaze with the fire of battle. He looked neither to the right nor to left. His gaze was fixed upon his beloved flag. I was wondering what were then his thoughts. Was he considering some scheme to attempt the recapture of the lost treasure?

It would be interesting to know how many shots were fired at the Color Sergeant while making his way across that meadow. In the end it seems to have been a fragment of a shell that struck him down, if subsequent reports concerning the nature of his wound, were correct.

The captor of Brehm's flag was J. T. Lumpkin, of Company C, 55th Virginia Regiment. While he was advancing with his command south of the McPherson buildings, being one of those wide-awake and observant fellows whose eyes take in more than those of the average man, he got a glimpse of both our flags, as the bearers were making the race of their lives to reach our line. Amid the smoke, hurry and confusion of battle, it appeared to him as if both flags had shot out from the barn. He and his nearest comrades at once directed their fire on Brehm; and when he was struck down, this fleet-footed Virginian was the first to reach him. As he hurried to the rear with his trophy, he passed near me, and though the sight was anything but pleasing, I cannot efface it from my memory.

In an address, which I delivered in after years, (embodied in the pamphlet repeatedly referred to in this paper) I alluded to this gallant Confederate in rather intemperate language, which subsequently, when my war-time animosities had finally died out, I regretted. I then reflected that had I been born and bred as far south of Mason and Dixon's line as Mr. Lumpkin, I, too, would most likely have been fighting in the Confederate ranks, as sincere a rebel as any of them, and would have been proud of capturing a Federal flag.

Thinking that the pamphlet, containing said address, might possibly fall into Mr. Lumpkin's hands, I wrote to him lately, tendering an apology for the language I had used, and in reply received a charming letter bearing the impress of a cultured mind, filled with lofty ideals, and evincing a warm attachment to our common country. He entered the Gospel ministry after the war and bore aloft the banner of the Prince of Peace for many years. He is now nearly blind the effect of an attack of la grippe.

WHOSE WAS THE FAULT?

Having now given the facts of our color episode, it is not difficult to determine who is responsible for their loss. Not a particle of blame attaches to the Color Bearers and guards, nor to the Color company. It is the Lieut. Colonel commanding the regiment, and the officers successively commanding the brigade, who are accountable. The responsibility of ordering Brehm back to his proper place, rested on them. The major part of the blame belongs to Dwight. Next in the order named are Stone, Wister and Dana. That attaching to the last two is comparatively slight; and if Stone had not been severely wounded and carried into the barn, he would no doubt have kept a watch over the colors and got them back in time; but, badly wounded though he was, he should not have forgotten that the colors were exposed to capture by his very unusual military stratagem of ordering them away from the regiment to confuse the enemy; and he should not have passed over the matter in silence when writing his official report, giving outside interests a chance to distort it. Not a word of reference to it does he make in that document. As far as I know, it was only when I sent him a copy of my pamphlet, thirty-three years after the battle, that he expressed himself on the subject. This he did in the following letter:

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,
OFFICE OF BOARD OF INQUIRY,

Washington, D. C., Sept. 26, 1896.

My Dear Comrade :

I have read with much pleasure your excellent address on the "First Day at Gettysburg," and I write to ask you to send me another copy for the "U. S. Battlefield Commission," who are anxious to gather all the facts and to do justice to all who fought so well on that day.

Our position is described by General Doubleday as the "key point" of the line of battle and the ENEMY so regarded it, as appears from their official reports and from the fact that they focussed 64 guns upon it, enveloping and enfilading both wings of our line.

I am glad to see the incident of our flag properly understood; of course, I intended to take care of it, and would have done so in good time if I had been spared; but if I had not detached it THE REGIMENT COULD NOT HAVE LIVED to do the grand work it did later in the action. (Daniel's Confederate report does more justice to this work than all the Union reports.)

The colors of the 149th were a target for the 34 guns which practically enfiladed the Regiment from the ridge beyond the run and when they had got the range, there was no safety for the regiment from quick destruction, but in confusing and deceiving the enemy to its location. My plan was to fire a volley or two from the edge of the R. R. cut and bring the regiment back under cover of the smoke, leaving the colors to draw the fire of the batteries. But the movement, as it was executed, had greater results than I hoped. It deceived the enemy in our FRONT ALSO, with the idea that we had force enough to take the offensive, and they delayed their final attack on that account, and "every minute gained then and there was worth a regiment," as Col. Nicholson says. With an undisciplined command I should have hesitated to detach the colors, but the 149th needed nothing, as I believed, nor as it proved, to "rally round."

I have proposed to the Commission to establish the "key point" and mark it with a special monument, and shall ask the survivors of the 149th at their next reunion to co-operate in this work of justice to the Brigade.

Please let me know what the plans of the regiment are for its next meeting as I would like to attend.

With many thanks for your kind remembrance and the hope of seeing you and the rest of the "boys" soon,

I am respectfully yours,

ROY STONE.

To Capt. J. H. Bassler,
Myerstown, Pa.

Stone left the task of explaining our color incident entirely to Col. Dwight, and the humiliation he must have felt on reading the Colonel's official report was a deserved punishment for his neglect.

"OLD GOBBLE-EM-UP."

Col. Dwight was a brave and forceful man, possessing in a large degree the qualifications of a successful commander. He had great push; good judgment; was a thorough disciplinarian; enforced strict obedience to orders; looked well after the sanitary conditions of his camps, and always saw to it that his men got the best that was to be had. He was one who had the courage of his convictions; was free and outspoken in his opinions, and never said behind a man what he would not say to his face. He was apt to be rough and profane when provoked, but to those who pleased him he was generous to a fault.

The Colonel was of a noted New York family; drifted into lumbering at an early age in Tioga County, Pennsylvania; and in the Spring of the year accompanied rafts down the Allegheny, Ohio and Mississippi rivers. Such a life inured him to hardships, but it was probably also through it that he acquired a taste for strong drink, and on rare occasions he was liable to indulge beyond the point of safety. With this exception he was the right man in the right place as Commander of a regiment; and it is a pleasure to mention, that though badly wounded before leaving McPherson's, he stuck to the men until they reached town.

In the Chancellorville fight, the Company C boys, in playful humor, nicknamed him "Gobble-em-up," which stuck to him ever after.

It pains me to say ought against my old-time friend, but truth, historical accuracy, and justice to my men, demand that the curtain be drawn aside and the Colonel's condition during the engagement on the McPherson farm be revealed. Especially is this incumbent upon me, because in his official report he ignored, (unknowingly it may be), the desperate struggle of my men to save the colors and retrieve his own mistake in neglecting to recall them; then, too, his report is so misleading and at variance with facts, that it leaves room for the false claim of a recapture that has done endless mischief; not only putting a stigma on my regiment, but doing great wrong to the actors in our color drama, tending to rob them of their laurels, and, what is worse yet, expose them to the shafts of slander.

That Col. Dwight was drunk during the fight is well-known to the men of his regiment. This statement is con-

firmed by comparing the testimony on both sides with the following extract from his official report, which says:

" * * * * Whereupon Col. Stone ordered me to move my regiment forward and take possession of the railroad cut, about 50 paces to my front", (it was over three times that distance;) "also, to plant my colors about 20 paces on the left flank of my regiment, all of which was accomplished in good order. * * * The enemy had planted three or four pieces of artillery in an orchard on our left, about one-half mile distant, commanding the cut I occupied, and had also, under cover of the hill we were fighting over, succeeded in moving up on my left flank part of a brigade, all of which was discovered in time to save my regiment by moving it rapidly back to my first position on the pike, but, I regret to inform you, not in time to save our colors, which were still where I first planted them; 20 paces on the left flank of the regiment, the color guard all being killed or wounded while defending them. To have saved my colors would have been to advance between two forces of the enemy, both my superiors in numbers; also, to have put my command under an enfilade battery fire. It would have been certain surrender or destruction "

The Colonel must have found it quite a task to write his official report. His recollections of the battle were evidently so indistinct and confused, that, cudgel his brain as he may, it was impossible to get order out of chaos. He fixes the time of the loss of our standards over one hour before its actual occurrence. He had no opportunity to post himself on the color affair by interviewing the survivors, who were scattered in hospitals.

The resulting document was about what could be expected from a man in his condition during the fight. He could not recall when and why the colors were detached, but having an undefined recollection of it concluded it took place after the regiment had reached the cut.

If Stone's order had really been what Dwight says it was, it would stamp him as a man lacking common sense. To plant the colors 20 paces on the left flank of the regiment with an overlapping brigade of the enemy approaching in front, could have done NO POSSIBLE GOOD. It would have been a senseless and criminal exposure of the colors and the men in charge of them, who would have drawn the enemy's fire with a vengeance, and would all have been struck down in a few moments, with the color company too far away to supply fresh victims.

The conditions the Colonel describes as a reason for not being able to save the colors—out there at the cut—did not exist until an hour or so later; that is, after both wings of the

brigade were left unsupported. During the greater part of that time there was nothing to prevent him from sending an order to Brehm to return to the regiment.

The Colonel's well worded official report, so carefully drawn to shield him from blame, and which passed current these many years, is a dismal failure when subjected to the light of truth; and standing out distinct and prominent is the melancholy fact that it was the whiskey which muddled his brain that is to blame for the loss of our flags. It is simply one of the endless array of examples of the evils of alcoholism, that curse of our Christian civilization, to which is traceable nine-tenths of the crime, misery and degradation that stalk over our fair land.

THE RECAPTURE CANARD.

(Thus characterized by a well posted comrade of the 150th.)

Having now seen how complete is the chain of evidence that the colors remained undisturbed at the rail piles where first planted until our position at McPherson's became untenable and the regiment was withdrawn, the question may well be asked, why was it deemed essential that the actors in the color affair be sworn or affirmed. Why? Because Gen. Huidekoper of the 150th has questioned my veracity and that of my men, by antagonizing our statements as given in my pamphlet. The General still clings to a modified form of the statement he gave in his official report, namely, that our colors were captured by the enemy at an early stage of the fight but were soon after re-captured by the 150th and restored to our regiment. But, after the lapse of these many years, he now says, he does not know whether the re-capture was made by his or our men.

As his claim has gone into history we cannot pass it by in silence, though the foregoing indisputable evidence from both Union and Confederate sides prove it to be utterly without foundation.

I quote first from his official report; second from a private letter of his which necessity requires to be made public, and third from an interview of his with Captain Gamble.

1. ' * * * * After lying under shelter for an hour, the command of the regiment fell to me, Col. Wsstar taking command of the brigade.

Almost immediately, by order of Col. Wister, a change of front forward on first company was made, and in that new position, protected by a fence (on the south side of the pike) our men awaited the charge of a rebel regiment which

was attempting to flank the 143rd and 149th regiments, which had gallantly repulsed an attack on their front. At a distance of fifty yards a volley was fired into the rebels, which staggered them so completely that a second one was fired before an attempt was made to advance or retreat. At this juncture Col. Wister ordered the regiment to charge, and led it in person. The rebels were utterly routed; and the colors of the 149th Pa. Vols. which had been lost were re-captured and restored to the regiment. The 150th then fell back to the position from which they had opened fire and advanced.

In other words THE 150th RECAPTURED AND RESTORED THE COLORS WHILE NORTH OF THE PIKE and then returned to the fence south of the road, the position from which they had opened fire and advanced

(2.)

Philadelphia, March 9, 1906

Dear Captain Bassler :

Thanks for your pamphlet on the First Day's Fight, which I read (for the second time) with interest. It was always in my mind that our three regiments being hidden from observation by Hill's men, but in sight of Rodes' men, the two regimental colors were placed to draw the fire of Carter's batteries, on Oak Hill. For this purpose the flag of the 150th was planted near the stone quarry and that of the 149th not far from where the Reynolds monument is, with the color guard close by, at the N. W. corner of the barn.

As I was with Gen. Stone, along about 11 30, reconnoitering, I got his views as to the purpose of this arrangement, and saw with him the benefit of it.

All of a sudden I saw Daniel's men swoop down upon our brigade from the north-west; and as they rushed towards us, they struck your flag which was carried along with them until they reached the 150th AND YOUR COLOR GUARD, but they left it in OUR HANDS. I now believe that it was your guard which had the colors when we recovered our breath after the closest, wickedest struggle I ever saw. I cannot but feel that the 149th was without its colors when it drove Daniel from the railroad cut the first time, and that it fought with the colors after your first encounter

This question is so profitless, that I make no mention of it in anything I now say or write. As I wrote to Capt Gamble, at Porto Rico, only a few days ago, in answer to a lot of questions he asked, the loss your regiment sustained at Gettysburg was phenomenal, and that the flag question should be dropped, forever, as unimportant and not worthy of remark in any paper he might be preparing about the 149th. Of course I sent him a copy of my pamphlet. I presume he would like your pamphlet if he does not have it. His address is Captain Gamble, Fort Morro, San Juan, Porto Rico. I presume he is the son of one of the 149th. * * * * *

Yours Sincerely,

H. S. HUIDEKOPER.

(The underlining in both of above is my own.)

(3). "I had a personal interview with Gen. Huidekoper last October (1906) upon this question (the Color question). He states positively and firmly that right after the charge to the cut of the 149th, apparently soon after you were wounded, that a force of rebels came down on your left and crossed the pike; and that they had the colors of the 149th; that the right of the 150th, and for all he can say, the left of the 149th, went after those fellows and the colors; drove the enemy back, and that the flag of the 149th was brought to him by men wearing "Bucktails," whom he supposed to be his men; but who may have been 149th men as well, as all he noticed was the "Bucktails." They brought him the flag and he ordered it taken to Colonel Dwight with his compliments."

In the above quotation H. gives three different versions of "the recapture canard," too contradictory in several essentials to ensure there credence in a court of law. In the first, as given in his official report, when the incidents of the battle were fresh in his memory, the recapture and return of the colors is claimed to have taken place during Wister's charge, north of the pike. In the second version given 43 years after the battle; he says the colors were "not far from where the Reynold's monument is," and curiously locates the color guards "close by at the N. W. corner of the barn"

Why the color guards should be posted at the N. W. corner of the barn, (south of the pike), while the colors were north of the pike, is a question that would puzzle a Philadelphia lawyer. They could not have been "close by" the colors, for the barn is 50 yards away from the pike in a direct line, and how could the color guards protect the colors 100 to 120 yards away?

In this version of H's story, the recapture must have taken place south of the pike; and, strange as it seems, he now believes that it was our color guards who got the flag; which flag, whether State or National, he does not say. It is strange that the enemy should take only one flag when they could just as easily have picked up both; strange, that if it was my men who recaptured "the flag," as H. now believes, that they should bring it to him; strange, that when ordered to take it to Col. Dwight with H's compliments, that they were sent back to the rail pile again, for THERE IS WHERE THEY WERE AN hour or so after as is proved by affidavits, corroborated by Confederate reports; strange, that not one man of the Color company (nor of the regiment as far as I could ever learn) knows anything personally about such a capture, recapture and return of the colors; strange, that

the force of the enemy that stole down on our left, (as H. says) struck our colors and carried them along south across the pike, is not mentioned in any official report on either side, not even in that of his own; strange, that in the spring of 1906, H. should consider this flag question so profitless that he resolved not again to make mention of it in anything he said or wrote, but that in the following fall we find him down in Porto Rico, revamping the recapture claim with added emphasis to Capt. Gamble, and giving it a sort of a stage setting to make it more impressive.

Strange it is, that H. wants my brave boys turned down—they, who were so faithful to their trust, and who, after being so shamefully left to their fate, gave such a splendid account of themselves, exhibiting the highest qualities of the American soldier, and adding renown to their regiment; strange, indeed, that it did not strike H. how unreasonable was such advice, which, if given by an outsider to the historian of his regiment, urging him to leave out as unimportant, all mention of their brave color bearer, Sergt. Peiffer, would have aroused his (H's) indignation, and he would have justly denounced it as the height of impertinence; yes, surprisingly strange, that H. has the effrontery to suggest to our historian that he pass over our color affair in silence and leave the stigma which his fictitious claim has placed on our regiment, without an antidote to its concealed poison.

Stigma? Yes, the worst kind. The recapture claim, as given in H's official report, looks innocent enough on its face? but, as it is a well-known fact that the enemy got permanent possession of both our standards, it is equivalent to charging us with having lost our colors TWICE that day, a record bad enough to blacken the reputation of any regiment, no matter how severe and bloody was its fighting, or how heavy its losses.

Strange it is, too, that H. adheres so persistently to his story, though unable to produce any evidence of its truth. Forty-three years have passed and the name of the hero who made the recapture is still a mystery. Is it not reasonable to suppose that if it had really occurred, his name would have been known to every man in the regiment within 24 hours? In the nature of the case, such a conspicuous affair would not escape the notice of a goodly number of men, who would be sure to spread the news and the name of their

valiant comrade. It would have formed a topic of conversation around the camp-fire for weeks to come.

It is astonishing that a man of the General's standing should place himself in such an indefensible position; for the proof is indisputable that there was no capture of our colors while the brigade held its position around the McPherson buildings, and since there was no capture there could not possibly have been a recapture.

For years I kept a watch to see whether anyone would claim the mythical honor of having been the central figure in this assumed recapture. When, in 1882, on the publication of Kieffer's fascinating serial, "The Recollections of a Drummer Boy," Sergeant John C. Kensill, Company F, 150th, posed as the long-sought-for hero, I at once opened a correspondence with him; but soon found that this comrade's mind was somewhat off its balance, and I subsequently learned that it was caused by a wound in his head.

Incidentally our correspondence did me a valuable service, for which I shall always hold him in kindly remembrance, for it led to my acquaintance with a comrade of his company, Sergeant W. R. Ramsey—an acquaintance which ripened into a warm and lasting friendship. As the Sergeant has something to say on the "recapture canard," I claim the privilege of introducing him to my auditors with a few complimentary remarks.

Comrade Ramsey's marvelous power of endurance enabled him to survive war experiences which not one man in a thousand could have passed through and lived. He had a leg shattered in the Battle of the Wilderness at the most advanced point to which our line had penetrated, lay for a time between the firing lines, and as our troops were driven back, was unavoidably left.

Mr. Ramsey is a gentleman of fine intelligence; and, that he is one of the notable men of his splendid regiment, is evidenced by the fact that he was selected as one of the speakers at the dedication of their battlefield monument; and, that the very complete roster of his regiment, involving a vast deal of correspondence, and which is embodied in Chamberlin's history of the 150th, is from his pen. He is a historian by natural instinct; brimful of facts relating to the first day's fight at Gettysburg; has carefully investigated all points of interest that presented themselves; among them Comrade Kensill's above mentioned pretensions, and

through pure love of truth and fairplay, he sifted to the bottom, the recapture claim as set forth in Bates' history. It gives me great pleasure to present to you the result of his investigation in the following letter:

Palmyra, N. J., Aug. 12, 1907.

Capt. J. H. Bassler,

Late Co. C, 149th P. V.,

My Dear Comrade:

I have yours of Aug. 5th in which you ask me to furnish you with the result of my investigation of the Kensill claim to have headed the squad of the 150th men, who were said to have recaptured the colors of the 149th P. V., in charge made by the right wing of the 150th regiment, during the battle of July 1st, 1863, at Gettysburg.

In reply would say that I have all my notes taken in 1883-84, and I will gladly place a copy at your disposal; you are at liberty to use all or any portion thereof, in any way you may desire.

To begin at the beginning; in Feb. 1882, an old tent-mate of mine, Sergt. Jno. C. Kensill, then residing in Fort Wayne, Ind., visited Phila. and called on me. During our conversation he told me he was engaged in a controversy with Capt. Bassler, of Co. C, 149th P. V., who wanted to make him believe that we did not recapture their colors for them at Gettysburg on the first day; he asked me to sustain the claim that we DID, for the honor of Co. F., God bless her.

This I told him I could not do, as I did not believe that any such recapture was made, and gave him my reasons for doubting the claim.

Jack did not tell me that he was a candidate for a Congressional medal because of his having headed the squad which made the recapture, but he did tell me that the St. Nicholas was publishing a series of articles, written by H. M. Kieffer, of Co. D. 150th, under the caption of "Recollections of a Drummer Boy," in which the recapture was narrated.

From an officer of the 150th, P. V., I learned the nature of Jack's claim; Kensill had asked for his recommendation and interest in procuring the medal; having no personal knowledge, this officer referred the matter to me, as a member of Co. F, who had been present at the time of the alleged occurrence.

I stated that while I knew of Jack's acting with great

gallantry on another occasion, I could not credit his claim in regard to the Gettysburg affair, whereupon he said that he himself thought that Jack was a little gone in the head.

I procured the back numbers of the St. Nicholas, and in the letter column saw the statement made that at a reunion of the 88th Indiana, held in Fort Wayne, in January, 1882, a comrade being called on, had responded by quoting the 149th flag recapture and other incidents from Kieffer's article: when he sat down Kensill took the floor and said he knew these incidents were true, because HE was the man who headed the charge for the recapture of the colors; and he then went on to describe with great minuteness the details of the terrific hand to hand struggle for possession of the flags; this was published in the next issue of the magazine, of which more anon.

After Jack's return to Fort Wayne in February, 1882, he and I entered into a correspondence, the result of which was that in August, 1883, he met me at Gettysburg, where we spent a week together, this being the first time either of us had been on the ground since July, 1863.

Jack so persistently stuck to his story of a recapture, that I began to wonder whether it could have taken place during my temporary absence from the line, while five of us carried Major Chamberlin into the house in our rear, he having been badly wounded as we changed front from the pike, facing north, to the barn, facing west.

Not wishing to do my old comrade an injustice, I determined to investigate the matter thoroughly.

I soon developed the fact that Jack had been wounded inside of twenty minutes after we became actively engaged, and had NEVER CROSSED THE PIKE—north of which the 149th colors were located. I notified him of the result of my inquiry, but he reiterated his story, adding that when old Gimber (our captain) ran away he took the company in. As this was an outrageous falsehood, I wrote and so informed him; also told him that his claim was a base slander on his superiors, two of whom were dead and could not defend themselves, but that in their behalf I would leave no stone unturned to get full particulars of the whole affair; that I would begin by writing to Capt. Bassler, asking him for a copy of his (Jack's) first letter, so as to know EXACTLY what claim had been made for the men of Co. F and their gallant **TAKER IN**, as well as **LEADER** in the color dash.

As you know, I wrote you on March 17th, 1884, and in reply received a copy of Jack's first letter, which you informed me was in answer to a letter of inquiry addressed by you to Jack after reading his claim in the St. Nicholas. This letter of Kensill's was a tissue of falsehood from commencement to close.

He was our fifth sergeant, and there were present, to my certain knowledge, four officers superior to him in rank, to wit: Capt. Gimber, Lt. Keyser, Ord. Sergt. Evans and First Duty Sergt. Chas. T. Street. Keyser was killed in field north of pike AFTER Kensill was wounded; Evans was with the company till the close of the day, and he and I left the Seminary together; Street also was there through the engagement; I saw and spoke to Gimber A FULL HOUR AFTER Kensill had gone to the rear.

I will now give you some extracts from my note book, under head of "Statements of sundry persons in regard to reported recapture of 149th colors by squad of 150th P. V."

Ramsey, of F, crossed the pike, saw your colors when we swung out from barn to fence on south side of pike, from which point we opened fire on the advancing rebel line, which was then partly across the R. R. grading, west of the cut—remained in field until the right wing—A, F, D—fell back, under orders, to the south side of pike; he saw no fight around your colors, to which Co. A, 150th, was nearest, on account of our position being diagonal to the pike, with right of A farthest north of the road

John Hines, of Co. F, crossed the pike, was wounded in field north of it; saw no dash, knows nothing of recapture; F. M. James, of F, wounded in field north of road, saw nothing of dash; Ned Fowler, of F, was in field north of pike, saw Lt. Keyser killed, noticed 149th colors, but says we did not get them; Ned Hess and Geo. Bates, both of F, crossed pike, know nothing of dash; MacDonald, of F, crossed the pike to fence on north side, but did not enter field, he saw 149th colors and locates them to our front and right, which agrees with Ramsey's recollections; HE SAYS THE COLORS WERE STILL THERE WHEN WE FELL BACK TO THE BARN. MacDonald was a veteran of the Mexican War, cool and observant, a thoroughly reliable man in every way.

Many other members of A and F were written to, or interviewed, and with but one exception, none had any per-

sonal knowledge of the recapture, although several had heard of it as a camp-fire rumor after the battle.

The one exception was a man of F who, like Kensill, described in glowing language the color episode, with this difference, however, he himself was the gallant leader; there were some weak spots in his story: first, he assigned to the command of F an officer who was not at McPherson's, having fallen by the wayside before reaching the field, and not rejoining the regiment until August 31st, following; second, this same leader number two, had previously stated, at a gathering of F in 1883, that our regiment NEVER CROSSED THE PIKE; third, this glorious hero was, like Kensill, wounded and off the field BEFORE the 150th crossed the pike.

In July, 1863, Sergt. Major Lyon, a tentmate and intimate friend of mine, who was then in Philadelphia, having been wounded July 1st, at the request and dictation of an officer of 150th, wrote up the part taken by our regiment at Gettysburg; this, with some modifications of phraseology, corrections of orthography, &c., was published in the Philadelphia Press, of July 25th, 1863; Lyon sent a copy to me, which I still have; this was, I believe, the first PUBLIC claim of the recapture of the 149th, P. V. colors, by a squad of the 150th; the statement in Bates' history, page 651, is substantially the same, and was doubtlessly based on the newspaper article referred to.

In July, 1884, I wrote to Lyon, then in New York, in relation to the claim made by Kensill; he forwarded to me the original M. S. which he had written in July, 1863, this also I still have in my possession.

Lyon died at the Home of Incurables in Philadelphia, Dec. 12, 1898; while he was an inmate of that institution, I frequently visited him, and in one of our war talks, not long before his death, while speaking of the recapture incident, he said to me: "You know, Bill, that was all poppycock," a favorite expression of his for buncombe.

I have always been of the opinion that the advance of our right wing into the field north of the pike, SAVED your colors from capture AT THAT TIME, and that fact was magnified into their having been RECAPTURED by us; many a goodly edifice has arisen from a much slighter foundation.

I think the responsibility for the final capture of your colors is a divided one, including Stone, Dwight, Wister and possibly Dana.

Their detachment by order of Col. Stone, had served its purpose long before the position at McPherson's had been abandoned, and the guards could have been recalled to their place in the regiment at any time prior thereto.

Stone being wounded, probably overlooked the matter, as did also Wister, who succeeded Stone in command of the brigade, Dana was in command but a short time before we were flanked out of the position.

Dwight in his report frankly assumes all the responsibility for their loss, but his explanation of the cause is such a mixture of fact and fancy, that one is compelled to look elsewhere for the true reason, which, in my judgment, and that of other participants, is that HE was "shot in the neck" as well as in the thigh.

My own observation, confirmed by that of others, assures me that he was under the influence of liquor. He was a gallant soldier, and stuck to the front after being badly wounded, but if his judgment had not been obscured by his condition, your colors would, no doubt, have been recalled by him in ample time to assure their leaving the field in safety, although they might have met the same fate as the flag of the 150th during the retreat through the town.

Trusting that this may be of service in proving your contention that no RECAPTURE took place, I am,

Fraternally,

Wm. R. Ramsey.

Kensill had served three years in the navy and was well-known as "Sailor Jack"; he was a good comrade and gallant soldier. I think his severe head wound, on the first day at Gettysburg, was responsible for much of the nonsense which he talked and wrote.

CAST IN A DIFFERENT MOULD.

In striking contrast to General Huidekoper's course, is that of the highly cultured and versatile Rev. Dr. Henry M. Kieffer, author of "The Recollections of a Drummer Boy." The Doctor had accepted the recapture claim as a fact, upon the authority of Bates' history, and in his serial for St. Nicholas, he, with customary literary license, dressed it up in fine style. But, with a nobility of nature worthy of his high calling and his title of D. D., as soon as he learned the truth about the matter, he made all the reparation that could be asked for, in the following letters:

Easton, Pa., October 27, 1896.

Mr. H. H. Spayd,

My Dear Sir and Comrade:

By your kindness I am in receipt of a pamphlet entitled *Reminiscences of the First Day's Fight at Gettysburg* by Capt J. H. Bassler, for which I desire to thank you most cordially. At once on receiving the pamphlet, though very busy, I sat down and read it with the greatest interest; and I wish to say that of all the addresses of a similar nature in my possession, I know of none that I shall more highly treasure. I do not know or even recall Capt. Bassler, tho I must often have seen him in the army—but 36 years is a long time to look back through—but if I had the opportunity I should very highly congratulate him on this little pamphlet. The address is simply charming in its straight-forward and unpretentious simplicity, and possesses certain literary characteristics which I find it difficult to specify. I have been careful to preserve all such orations and addresses, and some day shall have them bound that they may be preserved for generations to come; and I am sure that when those who are to come after us, read this little brochure of Captain Bassler's, it will make the blood tingle for them when they peruse his account of how the 149th Color Guard defended the flag. May that flag never want brave defenders.

Sincerely Yours in F. C. & L.,

Henry M. Kieffer,

Late Drummer Boy 150th Penna Vols.

P. S.—I wish you would put me in correspondence with Captain Bassler. I have some interesting correspondence with a Johnny Reb (Allen C. Redwood, of the Century Co. Artist Staff, who illustrated my book), on the subject of the capture of your flag. He says a messmate of his captured it—now a preacher in Richmond. “*Tempora mutantur, et nos cum illis.*”

Easton, Pa., January 2, 1897.

My Dear Comrade:

I should have replied to your esteemed favor of October 28th at an earlier date but I was awaiting a reply to a letter I had sent to Rev. Mr. Lumpkin at Richmond, who I think is the man that got away with you and the State flag of the 149th the first day at Gettysburg. He did not reply for so long that I had almost given it up; but to-day his reply reached me and I now send it to you, with the very particular request, that after you have read it you return it to me, as I want to keep it. It will greatly please me if I can feel that I have been the humble means of bringing you and the Rev Mr. Lumpkin together, two valiant foemen of former days. Do you write to him and let me know the result of your interview.

As for my statements in the Drummer Boy Book concerning the recapture of your flag by a squad of my regiment—when I wrote that book little had been written in any of the magazines about the war—indeed nothing but several sketches in the Century by Allen C. Redwood, now on the artist staff of the Century, who did the illustration of my book. Mr. Redwood's articles,

in "Johnny Reb at Play," in the Century about 1879, gave me the thought of writing a serial for St. Nicholas, likewise published by the Century people. My story ran through a year of that magazine; was afterwards published in book form by the Century people at their own suggestion and was really the way-breaker for the great series of war papers that afterwards appeared in the Century.

Now you see, my dear comrade, at that time when I began to write, the facts of our history were in a chaotic state. Little attention had been paid to them, and the few statements here and there made were as it were, at random; at least there was little of any opportunity of verifying and connecting impressions that were vague, or statements that were hasty. In Bates' history of Penna. Vols.—Vol. 5, I think—in the sketch of my regiment, written by Maj. Thomas E. Chamberlin of the 150th, a very well educated man and a most competent officer, you will find the statement made that your colors at one stage of the fight were recovered by a squad of my command. I do not think that Major C. would now say what he did then—he gave what his best information warranted at the time. Nor would I now, were I engaged in writing my book, state what is evidently apocryphal. What would I not now give had I had at hand when I was writing, these most valuable papers of Captain Bassler, your own and the Rev. Mr. Lumpkin's. And it gives me some little satisfaction that, in seeking to make amends to you and the members of your noble regiment, at this late day, I have been instrumental in searching out your antagonist and captor.

Suppose you send him a copy of Captain Bassler's fine address. Perhaps it wouldn't do though. The address calls one of the captors a "freckle faced traitor." Was Lumpkin freckle faced? * * * * Will you pardon my evident haste. I am very busy. With good wishes,

Yours Sincerely,

Henry M. Kieffer.

In conclusion, the evidence is indisputable that the only recapture of colors in the first day's fight was made by Color Guard H. H. Spayd, who temporarily rescued from a foeman our State flag; and, had our regiment still been at McPherson's, he would have brought in his trophy in triumph. Too modest to blow his own horn his heroic deed remained for a long time unrecognized; and he and his brave color comrades were maligned, on the supposition that the fictitious recapture claim in H's official report and in Bates' history, was true—that the colors were returned to them, and that they lost them a second time.

But truth is mighty and must in the end prevail.

THE END.

Jan 5 1914

Wrote to Genl Huidkoper
stating that Lt Col Dwight
was not drunk as charged
by Capt Bosher & W. R. Ramsey
as I personally attended Col
Dwight when he was wounded
and neither smelled any
Liquor or saw any signs of
his had liquor on July 17/63 -
Neither did I see him use
liquor for several days before
fight, my being in charge of the
Regt - on March I was with him
until Regt was cut to pieces
Litt. Kauffman, M.D.
Surgeon 15th Pa in charge
of 149th -

