

THE FIRST EASTERN SHORE OF MARYLAND VOLUNTEER INFANTRY
AT THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG, 1863.

“GETTING INTO THE FIGHT AT GETTYSBURG

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The March from Baltimore of the 1st (E.S.) Md. and Scenes Along the Way -
Action at Culp’s Hill - the Terrible Cannonading - Scenes of Destruction and Misery - Unburied
Dead of Three Days’ Battle - Meade’s Headquarters

by John H. Shane, Second Lieutenant, Co. I (E.S.) Md.

Note - This reminiscence was written by my brother - Lieut. John H. Shane, who is now dead. I thought, perhaps, the comrades would like to read it. - H. C. Shane, Corporal - Co. I (E.S.) Md.

On June 27, 1863, the 1st Eastern Shore Md. Inf., about 600 strong, marched from Baltimore, by the Frederick Pike, to join “Lockwood’s Independent Brigade, Middle Department,” composed of the 1st (Eastern Shore) Md., 1st (Potomac Home Brigade) Md., and the 150th N.Y. The two last named regiments had marched from Baltimore a few days earlier, leaving the First to complete its equipment and armament, exchanging its old “altered flintlocks” for “Enfields.”

Our objective was supposed to be Frederick, Md. The weather was sultry, and the route was strewn with articles discarded from knapsacks, which became heavier each mile they were carried. During our Eastern Shore marches transportation facilities were limited only by the ability of the individual to purchase: but on this march one wagon to the Company was the limit.

The Regiment reached Ellicotts Mills on the evening of the same day; pitched shelter tents, for the first time; and amid the fragrant grasses of a lofty hill near the town slept as only soldiers can.

On the 28th we broke camp at sunrise and proceeded on the march. At dusk reached Poplar Springs, 28 miles from Baltimore, and pitched tents in a beautiful grove by the roadside. Thus far the march had been a holiday; as each cluster of houses was passed flags were waved and cheers greeted the column, and, although our business was “war,” we dreamed not of an enemy. Before camp had become altogether quiet the ubiquitous “intelligent contraband” appeared and reported the enemy near; precautions against surprise were quickly taken, pickets thrown out on the road, east and west. It was soon learned that J.E.B. Stuart, with 15,000 Rebel cavalry, artillery, etc. interposed between our camp and Baltimore.

The Long Roll

Presently the picket post in the direction of the enemy gave the alarm--two musket shots; the “Long Roll” sounded its thrilling call to arms. Line of battle was formed parallel with the road and as we could not retreat, believing the camp surrounded, there was nothing to do but

await an attack which was considered inevitable. While expecting the enemy, a squadron of Purnell Legion Md. Cav. and a section of 30th Pa. Lt. Art., that had met and passed us in the afternoon, came thundering back during the night, and were placed as to protect our position. These unexpected reinforcements gave us confidence, and had we been attacked somebody would have been astonished. Our allies, who were comparatively old soldiers, admired the coolness and firmness of the men.

On the 29th, about daylight, the march was resumed westward; we did not wait for breakfast. The enemy had not appeared, but he had us just a trifle anxious, for daylight must reveal our weakness, and then he would strike.

Unknown to us, the Sixth Corps was passing at Ridgeville, about two miles distant. We shortly met Kilpatrick's Vedettes, and were soon thereafter covered by the guns of the gallant Sedgewick, to our relief and gratification. It appeared that Stuart hovered in our rear for several hours on the 28th, but, deceived by our full regimental band, had mistaken us for a brigade of infantry; and as his purpose at that time was not an equal fight, or anything near it, he hesitated until his opportunity and ourselves had fled.

Some hypercritical and unmusical individuals asserted that Stuart could have "gobbled" us at any time, but sooner than take that band he allowed all of us to get away.

Kilpatrick's forces struck Stuart's during the morning of the 29th, just as the latter had reached our camping ground of the night before. The action was slight, and Stuart did not stay. We were very tired from our march and the night vigil, besides politeness forbade our crossing the column of the Sixth Corps, consequently the Regiment remained at Ridgeville until late in the afternoon, when, our route being still obstructed, we marched in a different direction and struck out toward New Windsor. In the meantime our cavalry and artillery had been absorbed and we never saw them again.

The march was now conducted with great caution, as rumors of the near approach of the enemy continually disturbed us. About dark the regiment climbed a rather steep hillside, and went into camp, out of reach of the cavalry, at least.

June 30, in the forenoon, we reached the vicinity of Uniontown. A halt was necessary at this time as our rations were entirely consumed. The quartermaster hustled around, and during the day procured a lot of flour (where or how nobody inquired). This was at once converted into alleged bread, which made us all happy again. Our camp occupied a bare plateau, and appeared to have been selected with a view to warmth; shelter tents did not by any means keep out the severe heat of the sun, and breathing was a laborious effort. During the day a horseman hung around the camp, apparently watching our movements; he finally disappeared after being chased by a couple of the staff.

At Taneytown

July 1 we reached Taneytown late in the afternoon. Camp was pitched in a field just outside the town. It was a small place, the houses giving the impression that the village was about seeking other quarters and had marched without definite instructions. The natives did not crowd the principal and only street; the few we met seemed excited, but uncommunicative. We found some soldiers here and learned from them of the disastrous fight near Gettysburg; of the death of Gen. Reynolds, whose body had been brought to Taneytown, and other information not more inspiring. The Signal Corps posted in the steeple of the village church, communicating with some distant station by lanterns, afforded a beautiful sight, yet it had a gruesomeness about it, after all.

During the night bodies of troops arrived, and trains of artillery and supplies rumbled past the camp, arousing us from sleep and keeping before our minds the peculiar situation we were in, or at least expected to be in on the morrow. We seemed to have invaded the domain of war; many an anxious heart beat that night under a blue blouse.

July 2 the country roundabout was filled with soldiers. Quite early our column was formed, but we were delayed by the efforts of several general officers to attach our Regiment to their commands. This our Colonel resisted, and we finally moved toward Gettysburg. In an open field a short distance from the town, we stripped ourselves of all baggage, excepting arms and blankets, leaving as guards a few sick and disabled officers and enlisted men. A young soldier of Co. I, a mere youth was added to this detail at the urgent and tearful request of his aged parents, who were present and lived nearby. About 7 o'clock the Regiment marched in light toward Gettysburg. The gravity of our situation was fully appreciated, but there was no holding back. For a considerable time the step was quicker than usual, owing to our excitement, no doubt, but the sun was hot and the route long and we shortly fell into our usual pace.

In The Wake

As we advanced many novel sights attracted our attention; broken down and abandoned army wagons, burning stores thrown out upon the road; a disabled artillery limber, also on fire, from which occasionally exploded a shell causing the column to swerve considerably away from the road; an officer (whom we believe to be yet unhung) walked up to the limber and stirred the fire. The country appeared deserted, if we except "stragglers"; these became constantly more numerous the closer we came to Gettysburg. They largely outnumbered the Regiment, and were engaged in various pursuits--mending clothing, eating, cooking, playing cards, sleeping; they appeared rather more comfortable than we did. The sound of cannonading now became quite distinct, and produced peculiar sensations.

Between 6 and 7 p.m. we reached a point nearly opposite Little and Big Round Tops. We could plainly perceive the movements of troops. The struggle for the possession of Little Round Top was in progress, although we did not know it at the time. As we drew closer the column attracted the enemy's attention, and a battery threw several shells in our direction; this action caused some uneasiness, but no one was harmed. An officer now rode to the head of the Column and led us to the right out of range. Heavy firing to our front and left was going on, although the day was declining.

We passed on thru the woods and came upon a huge tent--a Division Field Hospital, we learned; toward this structure a stream of wounded soldiers flowed continuously, some limping, some supported by comrades, some on horses, others on "stretchers." To make matters more doleful, if possible, the cries of horses and mules suffering for water mistaken by the uninitiated for "cries of the wounded," kept up an accompaniment to the crash of musketry and the roar of artillery, which seemed close at hand.

These unusual sights and sounds had a depressing effect, and we lost to a considerable degree, the confidence we had felt during the day. Forward we marched, and it was quite dark when a halt was ordered; the Regiment had at last found Brigade headquarters. Here we lay upon our arms until morning, thinking of home, of sweetheart, of a hundred things, none of which we expected to see again; and listening to the sounds of battle, somewhere in front, which continued till about 10 o'clock.

On July 3 we were aroused at daybreak. After a hasty and simple breakfast, the Regiment was formed in line of battle, facing the point from which artillery had, thus early, been seeking our range. We were cool and confident; the fire was annoying, but did little harm. Along our front ran two ridges; to the left and front, at a considerable distance, rose Culp's Hill, upon the slope of which infantry was already engaged; between the two ridges, slightly to the left was posted Batty. A. 1st Md. Lt. Art.; as these guns opened fire our line advanced, pushing on till it reached a stone fence or wall about half the height of a man.

Shells were dropping uncomfortably close, here and there causing disaster, and we hoped for shelter, but the line swarmed over the wall and continued to advance, now at the double-quick; we cleared the right of the battery, when a flank movement threw us into column of fours, left in front; in a moment we passed directly under Rigby's line of fire; his guns were rapidly served and were so close that the smoke and flame enveloped us--blinding, choking, scorching; we were compelled to advance in a stooping posture to avoid being hit.

At Culp's Hill

Those few moments can never be forgotten. It perhaps takes longer to tell than it did to perform, but at last the battery was cleared. This was, however more than could be said of our brains, which were hopelessly muddled. At the start we had a "plan." we were now convinced of our ignorance. Nevertheless, we kept on, crossed the Baltimore Pike, and reached the foot of Culp's Hill, where we left blankets and everything that would impede rapid movements. Gen. Greene's aides were here urging us to hasten up the hill.

Although on the lookout for the enemy we had not yet discovered him; but his eyes were more acute; as we were passing the slope of Culp's Hill a terrible musketry fire assailed our flank and literally stunned us; but it was only for a moment, when we faced the enemy and rushed toward the front shouting like mad. Pausing upon a slight eminence to deliver a volley, without orders, we rushed into a parapet that began at the right of our Company's front and extended up the hill. In this earthwork or parapet lay a thin line of the 111th Pa. Our first volley passed clear over their heads. The next instant they rushed to the rear while our men crowded into the work. We so completely filled the space that all the officers were left a few feet in the rear, altogether without cover. We were close enough to the enemy's lines to see the eyes of our opponents. At this moment a double line of infantry charged toward us, yelling like demons. Before our fierce and steady fire these lines were broken and driven back.

The Line Is Relieved

Had our appearance been delayed 15 minutes, the weak line we relieved, exhausted, could not have withstood the charge, and the results of the fight at that point would have doubtless have been quite different. The enemy now opened a furious infantry fire which was responded to on our side with vigor. The crackling of musketry, the roar of guns, the yelling and shouting of combatants created a horrid uproar.

The ground in front and rear was strewn with corpses. Clouds of dust raised by bullets striking the ground enveloped us, and at times, shut out everything from sight. Leaves and twigs fell from the trees in showers. The intense heat, the nervous tension, the unmistakable odor of blood, together with the constrained position forced by loading and firing from the parapet induced nausea.

The firing was at times furious, then weaker, then would swell again. It seemed that this continued for a long time, but its duration probably did not exceed two hours; we began the setion [sic] with 60 rounds of ammunition, which was mostly expended. Glancing to the left we saw squads leaving the works, making for the rear; this movement spread to our Company which followed suit in the midst of a heavy fire from the enemy.

The Captain tried to stop the rush, but it was impossible. Just as we cleared the front another reserve line (150th N.Y.) dashed in and kept up the fight. There was a low ridge a few yards in rear of the front line, and under cover of this we were drawn up, refilled our cartridge boxes and began to breathe. We seemed so few that the thought occurred: "Are these all that are left?" It was not so bad, after all.

Appalling Cannonading

There were nine companies; five continued up Culp's Hill, and the four right companies were detached and thrown to the front (by whose orders it was never known) to repulse the charge above mentioned, leaving an interval of about 300 yards, which was now filled with other troops.

We could now look around and think about the situation. Our attention was principally directed to the firing in front; bullets flew thick and fast in this shelter. The ridge between us and the parapet presented a terrible sight; wounded men staggered or ran from the works, many falling to the bottom of the ravine, thru which ran a stream of blood. A battery dashed up, and taking position a short distance to our right, poured shell over our heads into the Confederate lines.

Up to this time the firing was kept up hotly by both sides, but it shortly grew weaker, and as our Confederate friends gave up the attempt to carry the position, and retired, our lines were pushed forward, sending back a battle flag with the southern cross stained by blood. By this time the two wings of the Regiment had been reunited, and firing in our vicinity had ceased; an occasional shell whirred over our position, but we thought the fighting was over; suddenly the cannonading was renewed, shot and shell howled, shrieked and crashed overhead; for more than two hours 300 guns hurled death-dealing missiles across the field; the uproar was absolutely appalling, the ground appeared to tremble.

Like Sheep In A Storm

We took shelter, as best we could, behind the rocks and trees and elevations, huddled like sheep in a storm, and awaited our doom. As the firing partially slackened, we were reformed on the plateau just back of the hill and marched toward the center of the field, where Pickett's grand charge threatened to pierce the lines. Before reaching that point the charge was repulsed, and we were halted near Gen. Meade's headquarters; here we remained about an hour, exposed to artillery and sharpshooters; a drummer was hit here by a minnie bullet.

During the confusion of our advance and fight in the morning several men became separated from the Company; they now came up, having served with other commands during the day; we thought them killed or captured. We lay here until firing ceased.

Gen. Meade and staff rode up about 6 p.m. and informed our General that the Union Army had been victorious. Didn't we hurrah? Large bodies of prisoners passed at this point. About dusk we marched back to the right of our first position, near the foot of Culp's Hill, and

darkness found us endeavoring to strengthen the line with fence rails and whatever else we could lay hands upon.

We here had some coffee and hardtack, the first fluid or solid we had taken since early morning. During the night an alarm startled the troops on our left, and a brisk musketry fire sent our pulses bounding, but it soon ceased.

On July 4 we witnessed for the first time the awful destruction and waste caused by war. In every direction lay the dead, friend and foe. As far as the eye could reach fields and hillsides were covered with slain horses, broken gun carriages, arms, accouterments, and wrecked paraphernalia of war.

We had our scanty breakfast alongside bodies of men that had lain three days; the odor from these was almost insupportable. These poor fellows were buried in trenches about two feet deep, a dozen or so side by side, with half a shelter tent wrapped about the head; earth heaped over them, and they were left "alone in their glory."

During the day we were moved back near the Baltimore Pike and served with rations, which were greatly needed. In the afternoon a heavy thunder storm gave us a fine bath, cleared the atmosphere of powder smoke and partially dissipated the horrible effluvia arising from the dead horses.

On the morning of July 5 we marched from the vicinity of Gettysburg with the proud title of Second Brigade, First Division, Twelfth Corps.

The Regiment lost during the battle 5 killed, 18 wounded, 2 missing; total 25, out of an effective strength July 3, 583."

Note: John Henry Shane was born in Deal's Island, Md. about 1837 and died in Baltimore on Feb. 19, 1901.

The following is from Shore Sentinels The First Eastern Shore Maryland Volunteer Infantry at <http://www.gettysburg.stonesentinels.com/MD/1MDes.php>

"The First Regiment Eastern Shore Infantry monument is southeast of Gettysburg on Slocum Avenue. It was dedicated in 1888 by the State of Maryland. From the front of the monument:

1st Regt. Eastern Shore
Maryland Volunteer Infantry
Col. Jas. Wallace.
Lockwood's Independent Brig.
12th Corps

Maryland's Tribute to her Loyal Sons

From the rear:

Five companies held the works in front of
this stone wall on the morning of July 3, 1863,
relieving other troops and remaining until

about noon when they were relieved.

The remainder of the regiment were in position during the same time about three hundred yards to the right.

Organized at Cambridge, Md. Sept. 1861.
Consolidated with the 11th Md. Infy. Feb. 25th 1865.
Effective strength July 3d, 1863, 583.
Casualties
Killed 5, wounded 18, missing 2, total 25"

No better example of a Maryland caught between two sides occurred than at Culp's Hill, where the Union 1st Maryland Eastern Shore faced the Confederate 1st Maryland Battalion. Color Sergeant Robert Ross of the Union regiment was a cousin to Color Sergeant P.M. Moore of the Confederate battalion, who was wounded several times and captured by his neighbors.

Colonel Wallace of the Union 1st Maryland wrote, "The 1st Maryland Confederate Regiment met us and were cut to pieces. We sorrowfully gathered up many of our old friends and acquaintances and had them carefully and tenderly cared for."

The 1st Maryland Eastern Shore had been enlisted as a home guard regiment. When it was ordered to Baltimore to join the Army of the Potomac at the time of the Gettysburg campaign Company K, raised in strongly pro-southern Somerset and Worcester counties, reminded the government of their terms of service and refused to go. On July 2nd, as their comrades were taking positions on Culp's Hill, sixty-seven members were disarmed, dishonorably discharged and given train fare back to Salisbury.

Note: Dickson Preston's Trappe The Story of an Old Fashioned Town states that Gov. Hicks summoned James C. Mullikin of Trappe, Md. to organize a company of Union volunteers in Cambridge. Charles R. Mullikin, a leading Trappe merchant, was named captain of Company H, which was Talbot Co.'s unit in the newly formed First Eastern Shore Regiment commanded by Col. James Wallace of Dorchester Co. Argalus G. Hennissee, James Mullikin and Solomon Colburn, were lieutenants, and Robert W. Ross was first sergeant. All were from the Trappe area, as were most of the 12 other non-commissioned officers and 64 privates.

After training in Cambridge, they were stationed at Camp Kirby, just outside Easton. Although originally formed only for home defense, they were moved to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, then Baltimore and on to Gettysburg.

At Gettysburg, Trappe men faced off against other Trappe men. Color sergeant Sgt. Robert W. Ross was the cousin of P. M. Moore who was the color sergeant of the First Maryland Confederate Regiment. Sgt. Moore was captured during the battle and died of his injuries a few days later. The 1st Md. Confederate Regiment also included several men from Trappe.

Ten men from Company H were wounded and one, Andrew Satterfield died soon afterwards.