

E467

.1

H48 F5

E 467
1
H48 F5
Copy 1

GENERAL ALEXANDER HAYS
AT THE
BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG.

EXTRACTS FROM

"LIFE AND LETTERS OF ALEXANDER
HAYS,"

BY GEORGE T. FLEMING,

"

AND

"UNDER THE RED PATCH,"

BY GILBERT ADAMS HAYS.

PITTSBURGH, PA., 1913.

E-487
.1
.H48F5



GENERAL ALEXANDER HAYS.

"He dared to lead where others dared to follow."



*Gift
Robert Anderson Hays
0.28.18*

MILITARY RECORD GENERAL ALEXANDER HAYS.

Born Franklin, Pa., July 9, 1819.

GRADUATE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY, WEST POINT,
July 1, 1844.

COMMISSIONS:

Brevet Second Lieutenant 4th United States Infantry,
July 1, 1844.

Second Lieutenant 8th United States Infantry, June
18, 1846.

Brevet First Lieutenant 8th United States Infantry,
May 9, 1846. "for gallant and distinguished services in
the battles of Palo Alto and Resacca de la Palma." Wounded at Resacca de la Palma. Participated in seven-
teen engagements in the Mexican War.

Resigned April 12, 1848.

Major 12th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, April
25, 1861.

Captain 16th United States Infantry, May 14, 1861.

Colonel 63rd Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, August
25, 1861.

Brevet Major, United States Army, June 30, 1862, "for
gallant and meritorious services at the Battle of Fair Oaks,
Peach Orchard and Glendale, Va."

Brevet Colonel United States Army, July 1, 1862, "for
gallant and meritorious services at Malvern Hill, Va."

Severely wounded at Second Bull Run, Va., August
30, 1862.

Brigadier General United States Volunteers, September
29, 1862.

Brevet Lieut. Col. United States Army, July 2, 1863,
"for gallant and meritorious services at the Battle of
Gettysburg, Pa."

Brevet Major General United States Volunteers, May
5, 1864, "for gallant and distinguished conduct at the
battles of the Peninsula, Gettysburg and the Wilderness."

Participated in sixteen battles of the Civil War.

Killed at the Battle of the Wilderness, Va., May 5, 1864,
aged 45 years.

THIRD DIVISION, SECOND ARMY CORPS AT
GETTYSBURG.

Commanded by BRIGADIER GENERAL ALEXANDER HAYS.

FIRST BRIGADE—Colonel Samuel S. Carroll.

14th Indiana, Colonel John Coons.

4th Ohio, Lieut. Colonel Leonard W. Carpenter.

8th Ohio, Lieut. Colonel Franklin Sawyer.

7th West Virginia, Colonel Jonathan H. Lockwood.

SECOND BRIGADE—Colonel Thomas A. Smyth, wounded; Lieut.
Col. Francis E. Pierce.

14th Connecticut, Major Theodore G. Ellis.

1st Delaware, Lieut. Col. John P. Harris, Capt. Thomas
B. Hizar, wounded; Lieut. William Smith, killed;
Lieut. John T. Dent.

12th New Jersey, Major John T. Hill.

10th New York (battalion), Major George F. Hopper.

108th New York, Lieut. Col. Francis E. Pierce.

THIRD BRIGADE—Col. George L. Willard, killed; Col. Eliakim
Sherrill, killed; Lieut. Col. James M. Bull.

39th New York (4 companies), Major Hugo Hildebrandt,
wounded.

111th New York, Col. Clinton D. MacDougal, wounded;
Lieut. Col. Isaac M. Lusk, Capt. Aaron P. Seeley.

125th New York, Lieut. Col. Levin Crandell.

126th New York, Col. Eliakim Sherrill, Lieut. Col. James
M. Bull.

ARTILLERY BRIGADE—Capt. John G. Hazard.

B—1st New York (14th N. Y. Battery attached), Lieut.
Albert S. Sheldon, wounded; Capt. James McKay
Rorty, killed; Lieut. Robert E. Rogers.

A—1st Rhode Island, Capt. William B. Arnold.

B—1st Rhode Island, Lieut. T. Fred Brown, wounded;
Lieut. Walter S. Perrine.

I—1st United States, Lieut. George A. Woodruff, mortally
wounded; Lieut. Cully McCrea.

A—4th United States, Lieut. Alonzo H. Cushing, killed;
Sergt. Frederick Fuger.

OFFICIAL REPORT, BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG.

BRIGADIER GENERAL ALEXANDER HAYS.

Headquarters Third Division, 2d Army Corps,
July 12th, 1863.

LIEUT. COL. C. H. MORGAN,
Chief of Staff.

Sir:

I have the honor to report, through you, the part taken by this Division, in the late battle of Gettysburg.

On the 2d day of July, the Division moving on the Taneytown road, arrived within about one mile of the town, where it was assigned a position on a ridge, nearly parallel with the road, facing eastward, a stone wall just below the crest of the hill gave much strength to the position, and an open space of half a mile on our front, afforded the artillery posted on the right and left flanks, a fair field for effective service.

A strong line of skirmishers was thrown forward to our front, and during the day contended successfully with the enemy.

Twice, at least, soldiers were sent from our position by the 12th New Jersey, 1st Delaware and 14th Connecticut Regiments, against a barn and house,* one fourth of a mile in advance of our position, returning in each case successfully with prisoners.

Colonel Willard, of the 125th New York Volunteers, commanding the 3d Brigade, was early in the day withdrawn from the Division by the Major General commanding and took a prominent part in the engagement on our left.

The history of the Brigade's operations is written in blood. Colonel Willard was killed, and next day, after the Brigade had rejoined the Division, his successor, Colonel Eliakim Sherrill, 126th New York Volunteers, also fell. Colonel Dougald McDougall, 111th New York Volunteers and Major Hugo Hildebrandt, 39th New York Volunteers, were each severely wounded, leaving the Brigade in command of a Lieutenant Colonel.‡

The loss of this Brigade amounted to one-half of the casualties in the Division.

The operations of the First Brigade, commanded by Colonel S. S. Carroll, are fully set forth in his own accompanying report. Too much credit cannot be given him and his command, for the

* The Bliss Buildings.

‡ James M. Bull, 126th New York.

gallant manner in which they went to the relief of the troops on our right. The darkness of night was no obstacle and I have no doubt, their timely arrival and merits will be acknowledged by the General commanding in that part of the field.†

The Second Brigade, Colonel Thomas A. Smyth, 1st Delaware, remained continuously in protection of our front, along the stone wall, and in support of our line of skirmishers.

Throughout the 2d the enemy kept up a desultory fire from their artillery, posted in the skirts of the distant timber, frequently shifting their batteries and opening suddenly on our lines, but were silenced or driven off by the effective fire of our artillery.

The ensuing night passed in comparative quietness, our men resting on their arms: the daylight of the 3rd was a signal for renewed hostilities and during the forenoon was a repetition of the practice of the proceeding day, except that their skirmishers appeared more pretentious in their assault. About 11 o'clock A. M., an entire lull occurred, which was continued until nearly two o'clock P. M.

Anticipating the movement of the enemy, I caused the house ‡ and barn on our front, which interrupted the fire of our artillery, to be burned. At the hour last named, they opened upon our front, the most terrific and uninterrupted fire came from their artillery. I cannot believe there was less than eighty pieces bearing on us, within good range.

It was continued, uninterrupted until half past four o'clock P. M., when a heavy column of the enemy formed in three lines, preceded by a strong line of skirmishers, debouched from the wood opposite our lines.

Their march was as steady as if impelled by machinery, unbroken by our artillery, which played upon them a storm of missiles. When within a hundred yards of our line of infantry, the fire of our men could be no longer restrained, our lines arose from behind the stone wall and before the smoke of our first volley had cleared away, the enemy in dismay and consternation, were risking safety in flight; many attempts to rally them by their officers were vain. In less time than I can count, they were throwing away their arms and appealing most piteously for mercy.

† General Howard.

‡ Bliss Buildings.



General Alexander Hays' Headquarters Flag, carried at Gettysburg,
Blue Tre-Foil on White Ground. In possession of the Hays Family.

The angel of death alone can produce such a field as was presented. The Division captured and turned into Corps Headquarters, fifteen battle flags, or banners, a number of other flags were captured, but have been surreptitiously disposed of in the subsequent excitement of battle before they could be collected.

I transmit the report of Lieut. W. E. Potter, showing a collection by him of 2,500 stands of arms, besides an estimate of 1,000 left on the field for want of time to collect them. From my own personal examination of the field, I am satisfied the number estimated is not too great.

Of the prisoners which fell into our hands I regret that an accurate account could not be kept, but by estimate, they cannot be less than 1,500. Colonel Smyth, commanding Second Brigade, was severely wounded in the head and face by a shell, which did not, however, prevent him from returning to duty the next day.

I commend to the notice of the General commanding and the War Department, the gallant conduct of my commanders, of Brigades and Regiments, trusting that they, in turn, will not be forgetful of meritorious subordinates.

Where all behaved exceptionally, it is difficult to discriminate. The coolness and determination evinced by our officers and men, which reflect back credit on their former commander.

I cannot omit the high recommendation of credit which is due Dr. Isaac Scott, Medical Director of the Division, and all his assistants. No case of neglect or evasion of their duties has come to my notice.

Lieutenant Sullivan (John S.), in charge of Ambulance Corps, deserves the highest credit for his courage and the fearless manner he discharged his duties, continually under the fire of the enemy's skirmishers, bringing off the wounded and assisting in keeping up the stragglers.

Lieutenant W. E. Potter, Ordnance Officer, was indefatigable in the discharge of his duties.

Captain George P. Corts, Assistant Adjutant General, and my Aide-de-Camp, Lieutenant David Shields, 63d Pennsylvania Volunteers, were constantly by my side, exhibiting as always heretofore, self possession and courage of the highest order. Captain Corts lost two horses killed and Lieutenant Shields one.

Division Quartermaster, Captain Ludington and Commissary Officer, Captain Queen, discharged their duties to my entire satisfaction and deserve the notice of their respective departments.

Second Lieutenant, E. J. Huston, 111th New York Volunteers, attracted my attention by his exemplary conduct in charge of posting and encouraging our pickets, as a present recognition, I have appointed him an aide on my staff.

By accompanying report, the entire loss of the Division in the two days' action, will be seen to be 1285 men killed, wounded and missing.

I am very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

(Signed) ALEX. HAYS,
Brigadier General of Volunteers

INVOICE OF FLAGS CAPTURED AT GETTYSBURG, PA., JULY 3D, 1863.
By Third Division, Second Army Corps, commanded by Brigadier General Alexander Hays.

BRIGADE	REGIMENT	CAPTURED BY	TAKEN FROM	ON	INSCRIBED
1st Brigade,	8th Ohio,	Company G,	34th North Carolina,	1	Cedar Run, Manassas, Ox Hill, Mechanicsville, Cold Harbor, Frazier's Farm, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg, Sheppardstown, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville.
1st Brigade, 2nd Brigade,	8th Ohio, 1st Delaware,	Company G, John Mayberry, Co. F.	38th Virginia, 7th North Carolina,	1 1	Thirty-Eighth Virginia. Newbern, Hanover, Mechanicsville, Cold Harbor, Frazier's Farm, Malvern Hill, Cedar Run, Manassas Junction, Manassas Plain, Ox Hill, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg, Sheppardstown, Fredericksburg, Wilderness, Chancellorsville.
2nd Brigade,	1st Delaware,	Company C,	13th Alabama,	1	Seven Pines, Mechanicsville, Cold Harbor, Malvern Hill, South Mountain, Sharpsburg, Chancellorsville.
2nd Brigade, 3rd Brigade,	12th New Jersey, 39th New York,	12th New Jersey, 1st. Sgt. Maggie.	Not known, Not known,	2 1	No inscription. Battle Flags. Manassas, Seven Pines, Gaines Farm, Malvern Hill.
3rd Brigade, 3rd Brigade, 3rd Brigade,	39th New York, 126th New York, 126th New York.	Corp. Navordie, Pvt. G. H. Dore, Capt. M. Brown,	Not known, Not known, Not known,	1 1 1	No inscription. Battle Flag. No inscription. Battle Flag. Manassas, Cedar Run, Frazier's Farm, Cold Harbor, Mechanicsville, Hanover, Ox Hill.
Total,				10	

Received this 5th day of July, 1863, of Brigadier General Alexander Hays, commanding Third Division, Second Army Corps. Ten (10) Flags, (Rebel) captured by the Third Division at the Battle of Gettysburg, inscribed as above.

EDWIN P. BROWNSON,
Capt. A. D. C. & A. A. A. Gen'l.

INVOICE OF FLAGS CAPTURED AT GETTYSBURG, PA., JULY 3D, 1863.
 By Third Division, Second Army Corps, commanded by Brigadier General Alexander Hays.

BRIGADE	REGIMENT	CAPTURED BY	TAKEN FROM	№	INSCRIBED
1st Brigade,	14th Indiana,	Pvt. John Rood, Co. F.	21st North Carolina,	1	No inscription. Battle Flag and Staff.
2nd Brigade	14th Connecticut,	14th Connecticut,	1st Tennessee,	1	Frazier's Farm, Cedar Run, Manassas, Seven Pines, Mechanicsville, Cold Harbor, Ox Hill, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg, Sheppardstown, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville.
2nd Brigade	14th Connecticut,	14th Connecticut,	52d North Carolina,	1	Fifty-Second North Carolina. Battle Flag.
2nd Brigade	14th Connecticut,	14th Connecticut,	16th North Carolina,	1	Frazier's Farm, Cedar Run, Manassas, Seven Pines, Mechanicsville, Cold Harbor, Ox Hill, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg, Sheppardstown, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville.
2nd Brigade	14th Connecticut,	14th Connecticut,	14th Tennessee,	1	Seven Pines, Mechanicsville, Cold Harbor, Frazier's Farm, Cedar Run, Manassas, Ox Hill, Harper's Ferry, Sharpsburg, Sheppardstown, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville.
Total,				5	

Received this 8th day of July, 1863, of Brigadier General Alexander Hays,, commanding Third Division, Second Army Corps, Five (5) Flags, (Rebel) captured by the Third Division at the Battle of Gettysburg, inscribed as above.

Original receipts in possession of Gilbert A. Hays,

EDWIN P. BROWNSON,

AS OTHERS SAW HIM.

“On the third day of the Battle of Gettysburg, General Hays, commanding the Third Division of the Second Army Corps, finds himself opposed to General Pickett and others of General Hays’ classmates at West Point, and comrades of the Mexican War, who had been cannonading the opposing lines for some time, without effect, then moves his troops across the field, thinking, no doubt, that his veterans will drive these raw militia like chaff before the wind. But they meet General Hays and his veterans; he has put fight into them. He restrains himself and his men until the enemy is at close quarters. Then the word is “Up and at them.” His rapid, well directed firing sent the column reeling in confusion back upon its rear and center. A hurricane, charged with lead and fire and death, consumes them.

The battle was won. This was the decisive charge, and General Hays was a hero among the heroes of Gettysburg. He takes from the enemy that day, twenty-one regimental banners or battle flags, three thousand stands of arms, and captures about twice the number of his command. Out of sixteen mounted orderlies he has but two left. He has lost all of his Colonels; Lieutenant Colonels command Brigades; Lieutenants command Regiments. Two of his horses are killed under him; his entire staff is unhorsed. Their steeds lie dead where they fell, or are in their last agonies.”

Colonel S. D. Oliphant,
8th Pennsylvania Reserves.

A correspondent of a Buffalo newspaper, himself a soldier, and who was upon that fatal hill when the battle was at its height, beholding the deeds of valor of this brave leader and his fearlessness when the very air seemed freighted with danger, thus described him:

“I wish you could have seen the picture, just at the close of last Friday’s battle, on the left of our center, of which his splendid figure formed a prominent part. Our little brigade, which had been lying on Cemetery Hill, was ordered over to the position that was so valiantly, but unsuccessfully charged by Pettigrew’s Rebel Division. We hurried there through a storm

of shot and shell, but only arrived in time to see the grand finale, the tableau vivants, and, alas, morants, at the close of the drama. The enemy's batteries were still playing briskly, and their sharpshooters kept up a lively fire, but their infantry, slain and wounded and routed, were pouring, prisoners, into our lines throughout their whole extent.

“Then enter Alexander Hays, Brigadier General United States Army, the brave American soldier. Six feet or more in height, erect and smiling, lightly holding in hand his horse—the third within an hour, a noble animal, his flanks be-spattered with blood, he seized a captured rebel flag, handing one to each of his aides, David Shields and George P. Cortis, all three dashing along in front of our Division line, trailing ignominiously in the dust the enemy's flags, now rushing out in the open field, a mark for a hundred sharpshooters, but never touched, now quietly cantering back to our lines to be welcomed with a storm of cheers. I reckon him the grandest view of my life. I bar not Niagara. It was the arch spirit of glorious victory triumphing wildly over the fallen foe.

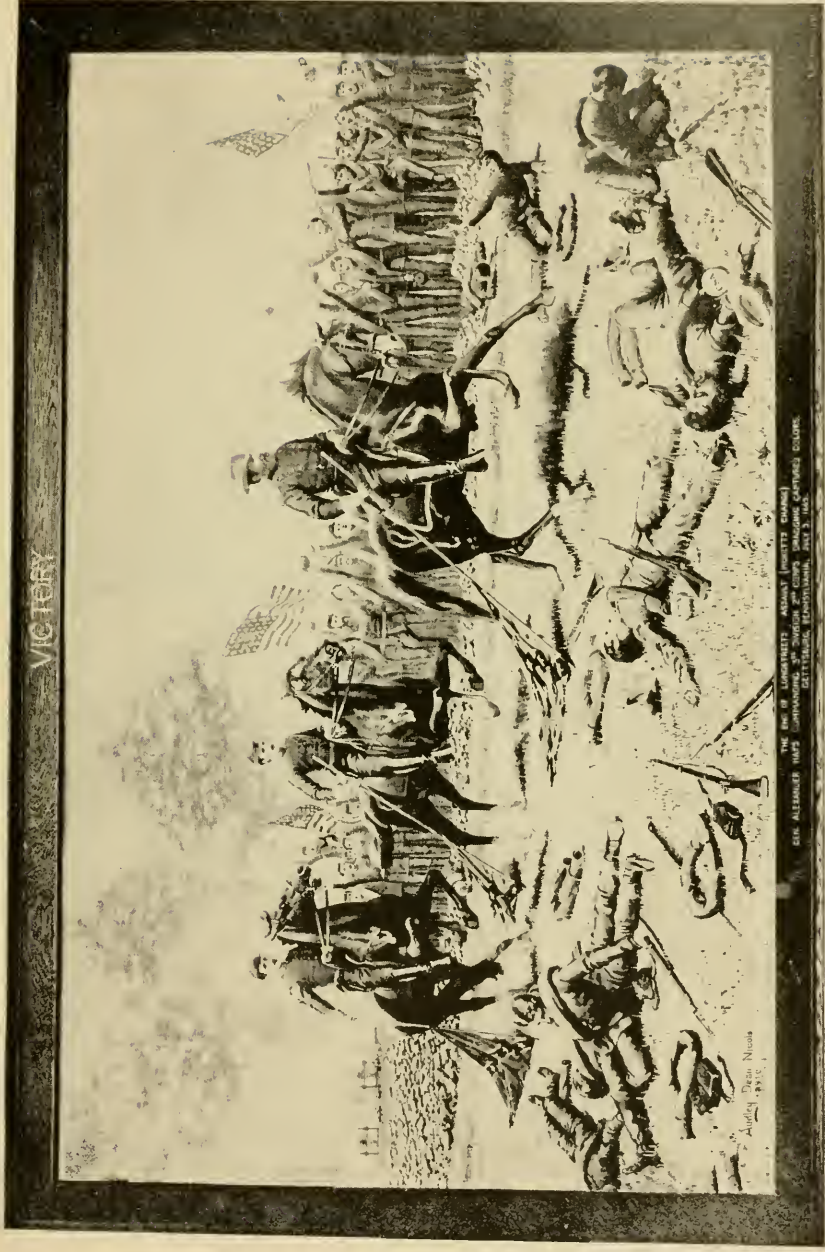
“The night after, I met General Hays again. After the fight of Friday afternoon, we held the battlefield, our skirmishers forming a line on the outer edge of it. The field was strewn with Rebel wounded. It was impossible for us to bring them in Friday night; every apology for a hospital being crowded, our own wounded, in many cases lying out all night. But on Saturday morning, handsmen were sent out with litters to bring in the poor fellows, and were fired upon so briskly by the Rebel sharpshooters that it was impossible to help them. Stories similar to this I had often heard, but never believed, but this came under my own observation. So all day Saturday the poor fellows lay there, praying for death. When night fell, another officer of my regiment and myself got a few volunteers to go with us, thinking there might be some who could creep into our lines, supported on either side, by one of us. May God preserve me from such a position again! We could do almost nothing. Of a thousand wounded men we found one whom four of us could carry into our lines in a blanket. Other poor souls would think they could accomplish it, but at the slightest change of position, would fall back screaming in awful agony. Litters we had none. Then appeared General Hays in another light, less of the

bravado perhaps, not less of the hero. He sent out two companies, who cleared the rebel sharpshooters from a position they held in a ruined building, busied himself in procuring litters and bearers, and before morning many of the poor fellows were safe within our lines. It is not my good fortune to be personally acquainted with this General Alexander Hays, but I wish everyone, as far as I can effect it, to honor him as the bravest of soldiers, and love him as the best hearted of men. A true chevalier he must be, sans peur et sans reproche. It seems miraculous that General Hays escaped unharmed."

The character of General Hays was manifested in the letter acknowledging the receipt of a magnificent sword, presented him by the citizens of Pittsburgh, a few months after the Battle of Gettysburg, in which he says: "When the rebellion broke upon us like a tornado, in the desecration of our flag at Sumter, I took oath never to sheath my sword until honorable peace should restore us to one glorious Union."

General Walker, in his "History of the Second Army Corps," thus speaks of General Hays at Gettysburg:

"Here was to be seen the new division commander, General Alexander Hays, with his staff and his flag following him, dashing along the skirmish line, inciting his men to renewed activity, in the eye of both armies. Such demonstrations which, with General Hays, were of frequent occurrence, were likely to give the impression that he was a mere hot headed fighter: whereas, in fact, his extraordinary vivacity in battle was united with a soundness of judgment and firmness of temper which made him one of the most useful officers in the service."



THE GEN. & LOOSELY, ARMY (FORGETTY DRAWING)
GEN. ALEXANDER HAYS COMMANDING 3RD DIVISION 2ND CORPS (MAGAZINE CAPTURED COLORS)
GETTYSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA, JULY 3, 1863.

General Hays and his Aides Trailing Captured Flags at Gettysburg. Reproduction of Painting by Audley D. Nicols.

Of the Confederate battle flags captured, General Hancock's Official Report of the Battle of Gettysburg, is quoted:

“There were undoubtedly thirty-three colors captured.”

Of these General Alexander Hays' command, the Third Division of the Second Army Corps, captured twenty-one.

In the history of the 126th New York Regiment, “Disaster, Struggle and Triumph,” this incident is described:

“At Gettysburg when Longstreet's memorable charge of the 3rd of July had been repelled, and the twelve regiments of Hays' Division had captured 2600 prisoners and 21 stands of colors, General Hays took a rebel flag, and two of his staff, Capt. George P. Cortis, Assistant Adjutant General, and Lieut. David Shields, each with a captured flag, rode down in front of his command and in the rear, trailing the rebel colors in the dust, and, amid deafening shouts and cheers of the men, who for a moment forgot the terrible scenes and thought only of the glory of their victory.”

The burning of the Bliss barn is thus mentioned in the official report of Col. Thomas A. Smyth, 1st Delaware Volunteers, commanding the Second Brigade of the Second Corps:

“Artillery firing from both sides began at 4 A. M. on the morning of the 3rd, the heaviest firing being on our right. Skirmishing with artillery and infantry continued all along the line until 10:30 A. M., when the lull ensued, which lasted up to 2 P. M. The barn and house near it being re-occupied by the enemy's sharpshooters, an order was received from General Alexander Hays, commanding the Division, to take the house and barn at all hazards and hold it. The 14th Connecticut were detailed on this service, which it gallantly performed. Soon after, an order came from General Hays to burn the house and barn and they were accordingly fired.”

How this firing was accomplished is told by General Clinton D. MacDougal, Colonel of the 111th New York Volunteers, who was in command of the Third Brigade during the fight, until wounded:

“Take the incident of the burning of the Bliss barn. As soon as General Hays discovered that it was occupied by the enemy’s sharpshooters, he asked me if I had a man in my command, who would volunteer to go down and fire that barn. The troops were lying down at the time. I stepped in front of my regiment (the 111th New York), and asked ‘who will go down and fire that barn?’ Fully half a dozen hands went up. Sergt. Charles A. Hitchcock, of Company G, having raised the first hand, I designated him, giving him a box of matches and a lot of newspapers. He started on the doublequick, taking a zigzag course on beyond our skirmishers until he reached the barn, as soon as he passed beyond the skirmishers he was loudly cheered. With his bunch of papers he fired the barn in one corner, under which he found some hay. On his return he was wounded in the arm. He was promoted to a Lieutenantcy upon the recommendation of General Hays for this gallant act, and was the father of Raymond Hitchcock, the actor. Upon reporting to General Hays the success of his mission, he handed the General a bunch of flowers picked up at the barn upon leaving it, these flowers, carefully preserved, being now in possession of the Hays family.”

Of this flower, General Hays, in a letter written to his daughter just after the fight, says:

“The flower I sent to Grandma came from the garden of the field of Gettysburg, from the house where our pickets fought so wickedly, and which I afterward caused to be burned. It was given me by the Sergeant (Charles Hitchcock) who volunteered to go forward amidst a shower of balls to burn the house. He fulfilled his mission and returned severely wounded.”

Another act of General Hays on the opening of the third day’s fight is vouched for, not only by many prominent officers of the Union Army, as well as by Confederate. General Mac-Dougal thus describes it:

“On the arrival at Gettysburg on the morning of the 2nd, the usual skirmish lines were thrown out. I can never forget the first act of superb gallantry I noticed in General Hays. The line of skirmishers on our right was hard pressed and gave way. In an instant General Hays rode down at a gallop mounted on his big bay ‘Dan,’ with an orderly carrying his

Division Flag, followed by his other orderlies.* The line was at once re-established and never broken again. It was the first and only time I ever saw a Division Commander with his staff on the skirmish line, where they were targets for hundreds of sharpshooters."

THE GENERAL'S LETTERS HOME.

On the Battlefield.

Near Gettysburg, Pa., July 4th, 1863.

Yesterday was a warm one for us. The fight of my Division was a perfect success. Corts, Shields and myself were untouched. "Dan" ‡ was killed, and "Leet" severely wounded. Corts and Shields each lost a horse.

We are all sanguine of ridding our soil of the invaders.

You have heard so much of Gettysburg, that as myself, you desire to hear no more. Only that providence protected us, I cannot account for our escape. Women may lecture on "The Horrors of War," but such a scene of carnage I never imagined. Carnage, himself (if an artist), could not paint the picture. Dead horses, shattered carriages, dead and dying men, in all the last agonies of death, for two full hours, would have paralyzed any one, not trained to the "butcher trade." I was fighting for my native state and before I went in, thought of those at home I so dearly love. If Gettysburg was lost, all was lost for them, and I only interposed a life that would be otherwise worthless. But if we suffered, the poor Rebels suffered terribly, ten fold.

The night following the battle of the Third, I rode out and over the battlefield at two o'clock A. M. I could scarcely find passage for my horse, for the dead and wounded. In one road it was impassable, until I had them removed. The shrieks of anguish and prayers for relief were heart rending.

I only feel that this is a trial, not a judgment, upon our nation, and that we will come out of it as "refined gold" and that my children will be enabled to sing "Columbia, Columbia, to glory arise, the Queen of the world, and the child of the skies."

* Corporal Carrol, 5th New York Cavalry, carried the flag, the two Orderlies being Privates Jonas Thornton and William Peterman, of the 1st Ohio Cavalry, all three receiving commissions through General Hays for this gallant act. ‡ "Dan" and "Leet" were his horses.

Taneytown, Maryland, July 7th, 1863.

I have written several times since the eventful third, to assure you that all was well with us. I mean Corts, Shields and myself. Our fight with the Rebels on the 3rd was most terrific.

I commanded the Third Division of the Second Army Corps. Opposed to me were A. P. Hill and George E. Pickett, besides several others of my old acquaintances.

They thought they were attacking raw militia. After cannonading us for an hour, they advanced across the plain and were met from behind our stone wall by a volley which swept them like a tornado. It will not be credited, but we (I mean the Third Division), took double our own number of prisoners, killed twice our own numbers and took nearly 3,000 stands of arms. It is called the decisive battle of Gettysburg.

I am untouched, as are also Corts and Shields, which is miraculous, although we all lost our horses. "Dave Shields had the shoulder of his coat blown off by a shell." "Dan" was killed by a cannon ball through the heart, just after I had exchanged him for "Leet." "Leet" was shot severely in the breast, three balls. One has been extracted and will be sent to Leet Shields. Out of twenty mounted orderlies, I have but five or six left.

Of your acquaintances, I have lost all my Colonels, Lieutenant Colonels commanding Brigades, and Lieutenants commanding regiments.

The battle cannot be described, except as the most terrible fought between men.

My Division has taken twenty banners or battle flags, more than all the balance of the army and the Third Division is at a high premium.

Near "Jones Cross Roads," Maryland.

July 13th, 1863.

"The Cross Roads" are six miles and equi-distant from Hagerstown, Williamsport and Boones.

My Division is formed along the heights near the Hagerstown road. It forms one of the links of the Anaconda which holds Lee's Army in its coils.

When I took command of it, the Third Division, only two weeks ago, it was considered large. Since then, however, it has become more respectable, although its numbers have diminished. In the Battle of Gettysburg I lost 1,262 men. We, however, can count five of the enemy to one of ours. The killed of the enemy alone outnumber my whole Division two to one. The arms we captured will give us three guns to each man. Our prisoners also, outnumber us two to one. I have sent forward to Headquarters, seventeen (17) of the enemy's standards and know of at least five others which were surreptitiously disposed of. Such a capture of flags was never known before.

The Second Corps justly claim the honor of the repulse of the enemy, and it is conceded that the Third Division (Hays') Second Army Corps, fought the decisive action—killed, wounded, prisoners and banners, speak convincingly of our claims. I have written of the loss of my horse. Noble old "Dan" died a soldier's death. A solid shot passed through his heart just after I had dismounted from him and he died without a struggle. He lies in an honored grave, dug by Henry and the other servants. "Leet" was soon afterwards shot in the breast with three balls and totally disabled. My third horse was one of "Uncle Sam's" and of little account. Corts' horse, as well as Shields' was killed. I had about fifteen mounted orderlies when the battle began, at the end only two. One of them lost his horse and the other—my Standard Bearer—had his flag staff cut in two. The shoulder of Shields' coat was blown away. Corts had his knuckles skinned. I escaped totally unscathed, although all expected to see me go under. Once in the forenoon my pickets (The Garibaldi Guards), who were posted near a barn, half a mile from my front, were repulsed by the rebel sharpshooters and retreated in disorder.

"Dan" was then living and on him I dashed over the plain, followed by my standard bearer (who is a reckless, devil-may-care Irishman).† We rallied the runaways, put them in position again, retaking the barn. This was in full view of both lines and fair range of the enemy's bullets. Our line held their breaths in surprise and I have since been told by several Generals, that they expected to see me blown up each minute. The enemy appeared to have been surprised, for not a gun of theirs opened

† Corporal Carroll.

until my mission had been fulfilled and I had nearly reached our lines, when all the rebel batteries opened upon me and showered shot and shell around. Just as I entered our lines, Colonel "Dick" Coulter came to congratulate me, when a shell struck a tree between us, glanced off and killed several of our men who had been drawn from behind their defenses from curiosity.

Already there is shown a disposition to rob me of my right, but it can't be done. You have heard that all the Colonels of my old Brigade were lost, two killed and two severely wounded."

TRIBUTES OF FELLOW OFFICERS.

“One of our excellent commanders, General Alexander Hays, was killed. I had been with him at West Point and had served with him in the same regiment in the Mexican War. He was a most gallant officer, ready to lead his command wherever ordered. With him it was “Come, boys, not Go!”

General U. S. Grant, “Personal Memoirs.”

“General Alexander Hays, that dauntless soldier, whose intrepid and chivalric bearing on so many battle fields, had won for him the highest renown, was killed at the head of his command.”

General Winfield S. Hancock

The losses had been heavy. Among the killed that afternoon was General Alexander Hays. At Gettysburg, at Bristoe, at Mine Run, at Morton's Ford, this devoted officer rode, his staff and his flag behind him, a mark for a thousand riflemen, the admiration of the two armies, only to fall in a tangled wilderness, where scarce a regiment could note his person and derive inspiration from his courage and martial enthusiasm.

General Francis A. Walker,
“History of the Second Army Corps.”

“Hays himself (a classmate of Hancock, both being in the class after Grant), during a lull rode down the line of battle with his staff and when he reached his old regiment, the 63rd Pennsylvania, he stopped. While he was speaking a kindly word, a bullet struck him just below the cord of his hat, crashing into his brain; he fell from his horse and died within a few hours and a braver spirit never rose from any field.”

Colonel Morris Schaff,
“Battle of the Wilderness.”

“Among our losses is General Alexander Hays, of Pittsburgh, who was killed. For a time Hays' Brigade bore the brunt of the rebel attack. Hays asked for reinforcements. Hancock

replied, 'I will send a Brigade in twenty minutes. Tell Hays to hold his ground. He can do it. I know him to be a powerful man.' He did hold it, but it cost him his life."

Special in New York Tribune.

"The fighting had become exceedingly severe on that part of the field. General Alexander Hays, one of the most gallant officers in the service, commanding one of Hancock's Brigades, finding that his line had been broken, rushed forward to reorganize his troops and was instantly killed. * * * After remaining some time with Hancock's men, I returned to headquarters to report the situation to the General-in-Chief and carry to him the sad intelligence of Hays' death. General Grant was by no means a demonstrative man, but upon learning the intelligence I brought, he was visibly affected. He was seated upon the ground with his back against a tree, still whittling pine sticks. He sat for a time without uttering a word, and then, speaking in a low voice and pausing between the sentences, said, Hays and I were cadets together for three years. We served for a time in the same regiment in the Mexican War. He was a noble man and a gallant officer. I am not surprised that he met his death at the head of his troops; it was just like him. He was a man who would never follow, but would always lead in battle."

General Horace Porter,
"Campaigning with Grant."

What more fitting tribute could be paid the memory of General Hays than that in the formal official report of his death: "The fighting became very fierce at once, the lines of battle being so very close. The musketry continuous and deadly along the whole line. General Alexander Hays, an officer of distinguished gallantry, was killed at the head of his command."

Oct 27 1913

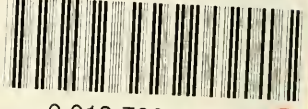
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 700 315 6



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 013 700 315 6

