

DID GENERAL MEADE DESIRE TO RETREAT
AT THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG?

BY

GEORGE MEADE,
FORMERLY CAPTAIN AND AIDE-DE-CAMP AND BREVET LIEUT.-COL. IT. S. ARMY.

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I DID not see or hear of the letter of General Abner Doubleday, published in the "New York Times" of April 1st, until my attention was called to it nearly a month afterward. But, in view of the fact of my previous silence, when General Doubleday has discussed the same topic, that does not account for my noticing it now or at all. I begin, therefore, with an apology for breaking that long silence, induced by the conviction that he had manifestly to the world failed to substantiate the assertions made in his history of the battle of Gettysburg. I have been actuated, heretofore, by the belief that "no man was ever written out of reputation but by himself," and the belief that I might safely commit that task to General Doubleday. But there comes a time when, in the individual case, it becomes a debatable question whether this view may not be pushed too far, when for instance, as at present, the living, as being alive, has to that extent a signal advantage over the dead. This I hold to be a good and sufficient reason for breaking a silence which has been maintained in deference to a general belief among friends, in which I no longer share, that it was simply not worth while to take notice of these attacks. They shall no longer have the benefit of the doubt of being harmless. If they be not harmless, it were well worth while to prove them groundless, which I proceed to do from undisputed facts, and from the enormously preponderating weight of testimony against them.

That the reader may have a clear idea of the question at issue, it is well to premise that it is asserted by a little clique of dissatisfied spirits who find in General Doubleday a convenient and willing instrument that General Meade desired and intended to retreat from the Field of Gettysburg throughout nearly the whole of the 2d of July, It has been attempted to prove this in various ways, in face of General Meade's well-known conduct on that day, of his official orders [?] despatches, and of his solemn protestation to the contrary before Committee on the Conduct of the War, in 1864, where the charge [?]is having intended to retreat was first distinctly formulated. Although those engaged in maintaining this charge have devoted to it nearly twenty years, although during that time they had the moral support of the controlling element of the Committee on the Conduct

of the War, free access to all the records of the War Department, and ample opportunity to confer with all the officers of the Army of the Potomac who had been present at the battle of Gettysburg; and, during the last ten years, have had the decided advantage that he whose reputation is assailed has lain dead in his grave, yet, as Mr. Swinion says, in his "Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac," when referring to the late work of General Doubleday, he "does not produce one scintilla of testimony in support of his accusation," to refute which assertion is the ostensible motive of General Doubleday's late letter.

In order to show how utterly inconsistent all General Meade's actions were with any such intention as that ascribed to him by General Doubleday, it is necessary to take a retrospective view of what occurred just previous to the time specified by General Doubleday.

On the evening of July 1st, 1863, General Meade was at Taneytown, distant from Gettysburg about thirteen miles. He had made every exertion to hasten the troops to the front, and was preparing to go to Gettysburg in person, when General Hancock, just returned from the front, reported to him. That officer's report as to the advantages of the ground for fighting a battle there, and as to the dispositions that had been made, confirmed him in his intention of fighting there, and determined him upon proceeding at once to that place. He sent out additional orders, urging the rapid advance of the corps which had not yet reached Gettysburg, and soon afterward started for the front, arriving at the Cemetery about 1 A. M., July 2d, stopping for a few moments only on the way, to order General Gibbon, temporarily commanding the Second Corps, to move forward as soon as it was daylight. After a conference with General Howard and other officers, as soon as objects could be distinguished, General Meade made personal inspection of the lines. He fully approved of the position as selected, and issued his orders for the posting of the various corps as soon as they should arrive upon the field. At 9.30 A. M., the Fifth [Corps] having in the mean time arrived and been posted on the right of the Twelfth Corps, General Meade sent a despatch to General Slocum to examine at once the ground in his front with reference to the [practicability] of attacking the enemy in that quarter. At 10 A. M. this was [followed] by an order to General Slocum to make arrangements for an [attack] from his front with his own and the Fifth Corps. General Met expressed his intention to General Slocum that this should [be] "strong and decisive attack," which he would order made as soon [as] he received definite information of the approach of the Sixth Corps which corps he intended should cooperate in the attack. The [attack]

contemplated was, however, abandoned, owing to the fact that General Slocum, as also General Warren, General Meade's Chief Engineer, who had been sent to confer with General Slocum, advised against it. General Meade then decided to move the Fifth Corps to the left as soon as the Sixth Corps had arrived, and to attack from that wing, providing that the enemy did not in the mean time attack. The interval before the arrival of the Sixth Corps was made use of in examining the ground in the vicinity, in perfecting the line, in strengthening the position, and in allowing the troops a much needed rest after their constant and arduous marching since General Meade had assumed command of the army. As soon as the arrival of the Sixth Corps was reported, the Fifth Corps was ordered to the left. At 3 P. M. General Meade sent the following despatch to General Halleck:—

HEADQUARTERS NEAR GETTYSBURG,
July 2, 1863, 3 P. M.

MAJOR-GENERAL HALLECK, General-in-Chief:

I have concentrated my army at this place to-day. The Sixth Corps is just coming in, very much worn out, having been marching since 9 P. M. last night. The army is fatigued. I have to-day, up to this hour, awaited the attack of the enemy, I having a strong position for defensive. I am not determined as yet on attacking him till his position is more developed. He has been moving on both my flanks apparently, but it is difficult to tell exactly his movements. I have delayed attacking to allow the Sixth Corps and parts of other corps to reach this place and rest the men. Expecting a battle, I ordered all my trains to the rear. If not attacked, and I can get any positive information of the position of the enemy which will justify me in so doing, I shall attack. If I find it hazardous to do so, or am satisfied the enemy is endeavoring to move to my rear and interpose between me and Washington, I shall fall back to my supplies at Westminster. I will endeavor to advise you as often as possible. In the engagement yesterday the enemy concentrated more rapidly than we could, and towards evening, owing to the superiority of numbers, compelled the Eleventh and First Corps to fall back from the town to the heights this side, on which I am now posted. I feel fully the responsibility resting on me, but will endeavor to act with caution.

GEORGE G. MEADE,
Major-General.

As soon as the Sixth Corps had in the main arrived, and whilst the Fifth Corps was still moving to the left, General Meade, shortly before 4 P. M., rode to that part of the line, “with the view,” as he says in his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, “of ascertaining as far as I could the position of my own troops

and the troops of the enemy, and with the intention of ordering an attack from there if the enemy did not themselves attack.”

We have now, be it observed, reached four o’clock in the afternoon—that is, within one hour of the time when, as General Doubleday would have it, General Meade indicated the intention of retreating. There is nothing as yet, it must be admitted, that seems to indicate an intention or even desire to retreat, or even to withdraw from the position at Gettysburg. On the contrary, we have not only seen that the army was pushed forward as rapidly as possible to Gettysburg, with the expressed intention of fighting there, and that one attack had been ordered, and only countermanded upon the report of the two officers who had examined the field in their front, but, in addition, that General Meade had despatched to General Halleck that he would take the offensive if the enemy delayed doing so; and we find him an hour afterward proceeding to the left of the line with that object in view.

Incredible as it may appear, it is during the time between 9 30 A. M. and 4 P. M., which General Butterfield, in his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, specifies as the interval within which General Meade gave him instructions to make out an order to withdraw the army. Why General Meade should at that time have wished to retire, or having wished to retire, did not, has never been explained. It is not necessary to the present issue to discuss this statement, but merely to say that General Meade, when before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, denied emphatically ever having given General Butterfield any such instructions, and showed so conclusively that such could not have been his intention, that this assertion is too much for even General Doubleday to adopt, who does not hesitate to accept General Butterfield’s statement on almost every other point, and who usually does not scruple to retail, if it will reflect upon General Meade, any scrap of idle gossip as matter veracious history.

General Meade had hardly arrived on the part of the field to the left, just in rear of the advanced position assumed by General Sickles with the Third Corps, and engaged in conference with that officer, when the enemy opened his batteries on the Corps, and made a most vigorous and determined attack on that part of the line, and the battle soon became general along the whole line.

This is not the place to enter into details regarding the terrible struggle which ensued, and which lasted until long after dark. We are concerned only with the action of General Meade on that memor-

able day, and with that action only so far as it is impugned by General Doubleday. The general history of that day's fight is well known. To the valor and admirable fighting of our troops, to the gallantry and hearty cooperation of the superior officers, and to skilful handling of the army are owing that this determined attack of the enemy was repulsed, our lines maintained, and he driven from the field. General Meade, in constant communication with all the prominent officers who were engaged there, remained throughout the whole of the engagement on and about that part of the field where the enemy's attack was made. That he was fully alive to the emergency is evidenced by the promptness with which he brought forward reinforcements, some of which he led personally to the line of battle, and by his strenuous exertions in reforming his line and maintaining his position.

Yet General Doubleday, continuing to criticize Mr. Swinton's statements, makes the assertion that, during all this time General Meade was desirous of retreating, and he emphasizes it by italics. "This desire to retreat was supplemented," he says, "*by acts which form part of the history of the battle.*" The only way in which this statement is reconcilable with fact is, that General Doubleday refers to his own history of the battle. As the only evidence, however, of his statement, he produces a letter of February 8, 1883, from General Alfred Pleasonton, in which he says, that—

"General Meade, on the 2d of July, 1863, at Gettysburg, about five o'clock in the afternoon, gave me the order to get what cavalry and artillery I could, as soon as possible, and take up a position in rear to cover the retreat of the army from Gettysburg. I was thus occupied until ten o'clock at night, when I was recalled by an order from General Meade."

Now, there is nothing on record that warrants either this assertion of General Doubleday's, or the statement embodied in General Pleasonton's letter quoted by him. There are no orders on file that even indicate such design. There is no mention of or allusion to it in any way in the official report of General Meade, or of any other general officer, including that of General Pleasonton himself. There is no mention of or allusion to it in the testimony of any of the officers who appeared, in the spring of 1864, before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, including that of General Pleasonton himself; and certainly it was made amply apparent that that Committee sought for anything that might even by implication cast discredit upon the commander of the Army of the Potomac; and, judging from their tes-

timony, Generals Doubleday and Pleasonton were in full sympathy with the Committee. There is no officer, besides General Pleasonton, who received at that time, as he alleges he did, an intimation from General Meade that he desired or intended to retreat. Strange that, of all the officers in high command in the Army of the Potomac, General Pleasonton should have been the only one to whom General Meade communicated his design!

Let us now see what reliance is to be placed on the statement of this witness of General Doubleday's. General Pleasonton, in answer to the question conveyed to him in the note from General Doubleday, answers, as we have seen, that about five o'clock in the afternoon of July 2d, he was ordered to take up a position in the rear, to cover the retreat of the army from Gettysburg, and that he was engaged in this duty until ten o'clock that night. Now this in sum involves the astounding conclusion that only one hour after the attack began, and long before the Third Corps had been forced back, General Meade desired to retreat, and gave General Pleasonton an order preliminary to doing so. It is doubly astounding from the fact that General Pleasonton was, according to his own account, absent for five hours from the field of battle, throughout the most important part of the day's fight, engaged, as he alleges, in the responsible duty of preparing for retreat. But how comes it, then, that in his official report of the campaign, made in August of the same year, he omits to mention or to allude in any way to this incident of which he has now so perfect a recollection? And again, it may naturally be asked, Why, when he was before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, in March, 1864, only nine months after the battle, did he not in his testimony refer to it in even the most remote manner, but, on the contrary, as will shortly appear upon his own authority, did, in answer to the question as to whether he knew of General Meade's ever having had any idea of retreating from Gettysburg, say that *he did not remember*. It would seem, then, that when events are recent, General Pleasonton's recollection of them is not so vivid as when they are long past; that, in fact, they do not reach the sphere of his consciousness until some years after their occurrence.

General Doubleday, aware of the discrepancies in the testimony of his witness, attempts to bolster it up by pointing out that there is further testimony of General Pleasonton's before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, which has probably escaped notice, and which, he would persuade us, is quite sufficient to bear out his charge. Let us now examine that, and see what it amounts to. In the Reports

of the Committee on the Conduct of the War, Part 2d of the Supplement, will be found the testimony to which General Doubleday refers. It is in the form of a long letter, dated Oct. 16th, 1865, addressed to the Committee by General Pleasonton, who had shortly after his first testimony before the Committee been relieved from duty with the Army of the Potomac, giving a history of his personal experiences throughout the whole of the Rebellion. The following is an extract from page 10 of this letter, which is General Pleasonton's account there of the second day's battle at Gettysburg. He says:—

“On the 2d of July, 1863, that portion of the army that was on the field “was placed in a defensive position, but General Meade had so little “assurance in his own ability to maintain himself, or in the strength of his “position, that when the rebels partially broke our line in the afternoon of “the 2d, he directed me to collect what cavalry I could, and prepare to cover “the retreat of the army; and I was thus engaged until twelve o'clock that “night. I “mention this fact now, because when I was before your honorable “Committee, and was asked the question whether General Meade ever had “any idea of retreating from Gettysburg, I answered that I did not “remember, the above circumstance at that time being out of my mind, and “it was only afterwards recalled by my staff officers on my return to camp.”

It is thus seen that this statement of General Pleasonton, made a little over two years after Gettysburg, differs entirely from that before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, made nine months after Gettysburg, and very materially from that made last February, nearly twenty- years afterward. In his first statement (before the Committee) he remembered *nothing* about the question of retreat. In his second statement (in his letter to the Committee) he says that in the emergency, when the enemy partially broke our line, General Meade instructed him to take measures for the *contingency* of retreat. But in the third statement, nearly twenty years after Gettysburg, be it remembered, the time at which he represents himself as having received his orders is long before affairs assumed a critical aspect, the length of time he was absent on this alleged duty is shortened by two hours, and the question of *contingency* of retreat has been entirely discarded. To sum up, General Pleasonton, in his official report immediately after the battle, did not consider this incident of sufficient importance to mention it. In the following year, when before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, he forgot it. Two years after the battle he gave it as evidence of unnecessary precaution. Nearly twenty years afterward he gives it succinctly, without qualification, as an explicit order for a specific purpose.

As a possible explanation of these irreconcilable statements, an incident of July 2d, at Gettysburg, connected with General Pleasonton, is here introduced. This incident is alluded to in the official report of one of that general's subordinates. While it shows that certain action preparatory to retreat was actually taken by General Pleasonton on the afternoon of July 2d, it also clearly shows how little confidence he himself had at that time in our ability to maintain ourselves, "when," as he says, "the rebels partially broke our line on the afternoon of July 2d."

During the campaign of Gettysburg, Captain J. M. Robertson, Second U. S. Artillery (now Bvt. Brig. Gen. U. S. A.), was in command of the First Brigade of Horse Artillery, attached to the Cavalry Corps, and therefore under the immediate orders of General Pleasonton. In that officer's official report of the campaign, made on 22d August, 1863, we find the following statement:—

"Arrived near the battle-ground of Gettysburg at 5:30 A. M. on the 2d, "and reported to the General commanding the Cavalry Corps, and by his "directions held my batteries in reserve near the battleground until near "dark, when, by his direction, I moved back about two miles on the "Baltimore Pike and encamped for the night."

Hearing that some such movement had taken place, but not knowing by whose orders, I some years ago wrote to General Robertson for an account of the movement, and under what circumstances it came to be made. In reply, he said that on the evening of the 2d July, just at sunset, he had his reserve batteries feeding in a meadow on the banks of Rock Creek, when an officer rode furiously up to him. General Robertson continues :—

"As soon as he was near enough to be heard, he said in a very excited "manner, so that all the men heard him: ' General Pleasonton directs that "you at once move your batteries across Stony [Rock] Creek, and retire "about one mile on the Taneytown road [Baltimore Pike] and take up a "position. The Rebs have broken through our centre, and it is all up with "us! ' "

It may be answered that this mode of address was simply that officer's, that General Pleasonton was in no wise responsible for undue excitement in an officer's demeanor when carrying his order. Still, inasmuch as he had received his order from General Pleasonton, it is reasonable to conclude that the excitement which he betrayed was communicated to him either by the words or the manner of his chief. It would seem, therefore, that General Pleasonton, at dusk of that memorable day, was so far from thinking that General Meade was

unduly wanting in confidence as to his ability to maintain his position when the enemy partially broke our line, that he himself thought it “was all up with us.”

Thus it has been shown that the testimony of this witness upon whom General Doubleday has greatly relied to sustain his charge against General Meade has completely broken down under its own collated weight, and that the charge, so far as this testimony is equal to sustaining it, must perforce with it fall to the ground.

Continuing to comment upon Mr. Swinton’s statements regarding the point which has now been exhaustively discussed, General Doubleday says:—

“By way of rebuttal, Mr. Swinton parades the following declaration of ‘General Meade. A very slight examination will show *that it refers to a different period of the battle*; to the morning of the 2d, and not to the ‘evening. General Meade says: ‘I utterly deny, under the full solemnity and sanctity of my oath, and in the firm ‘conviction that the day will come ‘when the secrets of all men shall be made known—I utterly deny having ‘intended or thought for one ‘instant to withdraw that army, *unless the ‘military contingencies which the future should develop during the course ‘of the day might render it a matter of necessity that the army should be ‘withdrawn.*’ “The italics are mine.”

This purports to be a passage from General Meade’s testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, as printed in the report of the Committee, and also in the appendix to Mr. Swinton’s “Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac.” And he who pretends to quote it is he who, in a preceding clause of his letter, only a few lines back, speaks of himself, impliedly, “as a faithful historian.” The italics, he says, are his; let that pass, although the meaning did not require them. The quotation is correct, of course, if so relatively small a matter as italicizing is noticed. We ought to feel doubly sure of that, from the fact that the letter under consideration is now republished on a sheet for special distribution. But is it correct? No. General Meade said:—

“I utterly deny, under the full solemnity and sanctity of my oath, . . .
“I utterly deny *ever* having intended or thought, for one instant, to withdraw
“that army, unless the military contingencies which the future should
“develop during the course of the day might render it a matter of necessity
“that the army should be withdrawn.”

Proceeding, General Meade added:—

“I base this denial, not only on my own assertion and my own veracity,
“but I shall also show to the committee, from documentary

“evidence, the despatches and orders issued by me at different periods during that day, that if I did intend any such operation, I was at the same time doing things totally inconsistent with any such intention.”

What a reply to such a clear and comprehensive statement, when his attention too had been especially drawn to it, is that of General Doubleday! He omits the concluding passage, in which General Meade said that he would not depend for sustaining his asseveration even upon his known reputation for veracity, but would show that the suspicion raised was incompatible with the events of the day. He evades the full sense of General Meade’s denial of “*ever* having intended,” garbled by the omission of the indispensable word “*ever*.” And he coolly sums up the significance of the statement by saying that it “*refers to a different period* of the battle ; to the *morning* of the 2d, and not to the evening.” What a commentary—his own—is this general’s upon his faithfulness as an historian!

Having now, as cannot be doubted save by the most careless reader of the evidence adduced, disposed of General Doubleday’s charge that General Meade’s actions on the 2d of July, as derived from the testimony of General Pleasonton, showed a desire and intention in any event to retreat; having rectified the misquotation by General Double day of General Meade’s asseveration that he never intended to retreat, and that his despatches and orders would prove upon examination inconsistent with any such theory; and having shown by the full text of the asseveration that it covered the whole period under discussion, without reservation ; let us examine into the merits of the case where General Doubleday attempts to prove the same charge against General Meade through evidence which he produces regarding the proceedings of a consultation of corps commanders held at general headquarters on the night of the 2d of July.

General Doubleday’s statements as to this circumstance are so much at variance with facts, and the obscurity of his style is so great, that it is not always easy to follow him. Critical examination, however, of the text of his letter will fully bear out the statement that the meaning which he intends to convey is that in the night of July 2d, General Meade, still (according to General Doubleday’s theory) impressed with the desirability of retreating, called his corps commanders together and propounded certain questions to them looking to retreat.

The fact of the calling a meeting of corps commanders, of their coming together, of certain questions being propounded to them, is

not denied. It is a well-known historical event. But at the very outset of the investigation it is to be noted that General Doubleday, with his habitual inaccuracy, gives the questions propounded about as incorrectly as it is possible to record any matter needing precision of statement. Yet, upon the knowledge of the character of the questions, of the answers to them, as well as of General Meade's final decision after hearing the answers, must depend the excellence or worthlessness of the judgment one can form regarding the event. Fortunately, there are other records besides General Doubleday's.

This incidentally noted, let us proceed to the statement as formulated in General Doubleday's letter. It is, that the decision of the corps commanders was to remain in the then position of the army. To use General Doubleday's own words: "General Meade dissented from the conclusion, and expressed his strong dissatisfaction." According to General Doubleday, General Meade was, in fact, overruled by his corps commanders, and thus prevented from retreating. The authority given for this is General Butterfield's testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War.

But Mr. Swinton having pointed out in his "Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac," that General Butterfield's testimony is not confirmed by any other officer present at the council of war, General Doubleday advances again to the assault, armed with a letter, dated Feb. 19th, 1883, from General Slocum, quoted in full in his own. General Slocum says :—

"The question submitted was: 'Is it advisable for the army to remain in its present position, or to fall back?' The opinion of each corps commander was asked, commencing with the junior in rank. A majority were of the opinion that we should remain in the position then held by us. When each officer had expressed his views, General Meade said: 'Well, gentlemen, the question is settled. We will remain here, but I wish to say that I consider this no place to fight a battle.' I do not believe any officer who was present at this important meeting has forgotten General Meade's words."

With all due respect to General Slocum, be it said, he is mistaken. He was most assuredly under a false impression at the time of the council, as to certain words there spoken, and as to the person who spoke them, and, in the course of years, has forgotten that any language, such as he describes as used in the council, must have referred to the contingency of a successful flank movement by General Lee. Whatever the language, and by whomsoever used, it was not indicative of a desire to retreat; that is certain. The evidence is cumulative that no such desire existed in the breast of any member of the council. We

shall find, as we proceed, that, so far from General Slocum's recollection being confirmed, as he imagines, by every officer present at the council, it is contradicted by the recollection, when the matter was recent, of several officers then present. Moreover, it can be impugned on account of his statement that the *majority* of the officers present decided to fight in the position of Gettysburg. The decision of the council was *unanimous*.

If the conviction can be brought home to General Slocum, that he is mistaken, he will be ready to acknowledge his error. But, at any rate, whether or not he can reach the conclusion that he was mistaken at the time, or that his recollection of the event is now at fault, the cause of justice can no longer be delayed, if there is aught in circumstantial evidence and human testimony combined that avails to right a wrong.

At the close of the fighting on the 2d of July, General Meade summoned his corps commanders to assemble at his headquarters, in order to obtain from them information as to the condition of their separate commands, and to confer with them as to the action to be taken on the following day. These officers could not have all assembled until 9 P. M., for the fighting on General Howard's front continued until that hour; he was present with his command until the fighting was over, and was afterwards at the conference. There were present, besides the commanding general, Generals Slocum, Sedgwick, Howard, Hancock, Newton, Sykes, Birney, A. S. Williams, and Gibbon. General Butterfield was in attendance, in his capacity of chief-of-staff; General Pleasonton, commander of the Cavalry Corps, was not present.

After a long conversation regarding the events of the day, and discussion of the probabilities as to General Lee's future movements, and of the most advisable action to take, General Meade finally condensed the points to be decided, and submitted them in the form of the following questions :—*

QUESTIONS ASKED.

1. " Under existing circumstances, is it advisable for this army to remain in its present position or to retire to another nearer its base of supplies ?"
2. " It being determined to remain in present position, shall the army attack or wait the attack of the enemy ?"
3. " If we wait attack, how long ?"

* These questions and replies are taken from the original minutes of the Council at Gettysburg, of the 2d of July, 1863, and are among the papers of General Meade.

REPLIES.

- Gibbon. 1. "Correct position of the army, but would not retreat."
 2. "In no condition to attack, in his opinion."
 3. "until he moves."
 3. "Till enemy moves."

- Williams. 1. "Stay."
 2. "Wait attack."
 3. "One day."

Birney. "Same as General Williams."

Sykes. Do. do.

- Newton. 1. "Correct position of the army, but would not retreat."
 2. "By all means not attack."
 3. "If we wait, it will give them a chance to cut our line."

- Howard. 1. "Remain."
 2. "Wait attack until 4 P. M. to-morrow."
 3. "If don't attack, attack them."

- Hancock. 1. "Rectify position without moving so as to give up field."
 2. "Not attack unless our communications are cut."
 3. "Can't wait long; can't be idle."

- Sedgwick. 1. "Remain"
 "and wait attack"
 "at least one day."

Slocum. "Stay and fight it out."

It certainly should be demonstrable, even without adducing any direct evidence, that the possibility of a flank movement by General Lee, threatening the lines of communication of the army, and if successful in cutting them with a large force, entailing the taking up of a new position, ought to have been, and was discussed, in the council of war. We now know, since the close of the war, through General Longstreet, that the plan of attempting to turn the left flank of the Army of the Potomac was proposed and strongly advocated by him to General Lee. General Meade's first quoted despatch to General Halleck explicitly states it as a contingency; his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, shortly to be quoted, also explicitly states it as a contingency: for which, as in the case of any contingency, it is a duty to prepare. It would be incredible

that a contingency which every tyro in the art of war sees involved in strategy, especially where the safety of a capital is concerned, should not have been considered by veterans. The propriety, nay, the necessity, for the consideration of this question is so obvious that it seems puerile to discuss it. The fact that it was considered is plainly in evidence, not only from direct testimony, but from the mere wording of the first question: "Under existing circumstances, is it advisable for this army to remain in its present position, or to retire to another nearer its base of supplies?" Here is no suggestion of retreat, but merely of strategical movement. The questions, too, let it be remembered, were propounded *after* the discussion, and must represent the extreme range of divergence of opinion that had been recognized through that process; and through the general tenor of the answers to them is very plainly to be seen that the range of divergence never had reached for one of its extremes the possibility of retreat, but merely of retiring to a better position in the given contingency; and that there was ample confidence among the officers as to the ability of the army in its position at that time to hold its own against any direct attack of the enemy, for we find them unanimous in their opinion as to the advisability of remaining in the position then held.

There is, it will be observed, nothing, either in the character of the questions or in that of the replies, that would warrant one in supposing that the Commanding General, or any one else, favored retreating. And, if one be called upon to believe that, without expressing or implying the fact in his formal questions, the Commanding General did favor it,—a circumstance that could not have failed to be known through the previous discussion,—it is strange that this fact is not indicated in the agreement with his opinion of a single one of the replies of the corps commanders, some of whom had the greatest respect for and reliance upon his judgment.

It was never dreamed of by General Meade, or by those about him who were not hostile to him from the moment he took command, that such construction as that indicated could be put upon anything which had taken place at the council. As far as known to them, no question upon the subject was raised until nine months after the battle, when the allegation appeared in the newspapers as one of the charges made against General Meade before the Committee on the Conduct of the War. General Meade being himself before the Committee at the time when his attention was attracted to the published statements of some of the, testimony regarding the council of war of the 2d

of July, made the following statement to the Committee, to be found in the printed reports:—

“Having thus denied any recollection of having issued, or directed to be issued, any order on the morning of the 2d of July for the retreat of my army before any attack from the enemy, I now desire to refer to a consultation of my corps commanders held on that evening, which, it has occurred to me, may possibly be the groundwork for this report that I had directed an order to retreat.

“On the evening of the 2d of July, after the battle of that day had ceased, “and darkness had set in, being aware of the very heavy losses of the First “and Eleventh Corps on the 1st of July, and knowing how severely the “Third Corps, the Fifth Corps, and other portions of the army had suffered “in the battle of the 2d of July—in fact, as subsequently ascertained, out of “the 24,000 men killed, wounded, and missing, which was the amount of “my losses and casualties at Gettysburg, over 20,000 of them had been put “*hors de combat* before the night of the 2d of July; and taking into “consideration the number of stragglers, and weakening of my army from “the two days’ battle, my ignorance of the condition of the corps, and the “moral condition of the troops, caused me to send for my corps “commanders to obtain from them the exact condition of affairs in their “separate commands, and to consult and advise with them as to what, if “anything, should be done on the morrow. The strong attack of the enemy “that day upon my left flank, and their persistent efforts to obtain possession “of what is called Round Top “Mountain, induced the supposition that “possibly, on the next day, a very persistent attack might be made, or that a “movement, upon their part, to my left and rear might be made to occupy “the lines of communication I then held with the Taneytown Road and the “Baltimore Pike.

“The questions discussed by this council were, first, whether it was “necessary for us to assume any different position from what we then held; “and secondly, whether, if we continued to maintain the position we then “held, our operations the next day should be offensive or defensive. The “opinion of the council was unanimous, which agreed fully with my own “views, that we should maintain our lines as they were then held, and that “we should wait the movements of the enemy and see whether he made any “further attack before we assumed the offensive. I felt satisfied that the “enemy would attack again, as subsequently proved to be the case, for he “made a vigorous assault upon my right flank, which lasted from daylight in “the morning until ten o’clock. He then made one of his heaviest assaults “upon my left and left centre, which lasted from one o’clock until six in the “evening.”

“I have been specific in giving the details of this council, because it has “occurred to me as possible that some erroneous report of what took place “there may have given rise to the idea that I desired, to withdraw my army “and retreat, and that I called my corps commanders together to know if “they were in favor of retreating.”

“I should like to have the Committee, and I trust they will do so, call “upon all the principal officers I had upon that field—the corps “commanders and division commanders; that their attention should be “called to all the points to which I have alluded here; and that they should “be specifically questioned as to their recollection and views upon those “points.”

Here is the issue distinctly marked out in the statement of General Meade—“The opinion of the council was unanimous, *which agreed “fully with my own views, that we should maintain our lines as they “were then held”*—as contrasted with that of General Doubleday, which is as follows:—

“On the evening of the 2d, after sending Pleasonton off, General Meade called a council of war and put the question to the corps commanders whether they were in favor of remaining on the ridge or retreating. Our losses had been heavy and the enemy were then attacking our right, which was denuded of troops. Nevertheless, the council voted to remain and endeavor to hold the ridge. *General Meade dissented from the conclusion and expressed his strong dissatisfaction.*”

It remains now to summon witnesses on General Meade’s side, whose competency cannot be denied even by General Doubleday, as it rests upon the same foundation of excellence affirmed by him of General Slocum’s testimony quoted by him — presence at the council of war.

General Meade, determined to put at rest the injurious statements made and published regarding his intention of retreating from Gettysburg, addressed the following circular letter to Generals Slocum, Sedgwick, Sykes, Newton, A. S. Williams, and Gibbon.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF POTOMAC,
March 10th, 1864.

CIRCULAR.

SIR: Your attention is respectfully invited to the articles, which have recently appeared in the newspapers, charging the Commanding General with favoring a retreat of the army from Gettysburg on the 2d July last.

These articles are supposed to be based upon the transactions of a council, or meeting of corps commanders, held on the evening of the 2d July; and, if you have no objection to so doing, the Commanding General desires that you will furnish him in the course of to-day with a short statement, giving your recollection of what transpired at the council, and mentioning whether he at any time insisted on the withdrawal of the army from before Gettysburg.

By Command of MAJ.-GEN. MEADE,
S. WILLIAMS,
Assist. Adjt.-General

This letter, marked as addressed among the rest to General Slocum, who was at that time in the West, under General Sherman, was never received by him. The following are the replies of the other officers addressed: —

BRIG.-GEN S. WILLIAMS,
Asst. Adjt.-Gen.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH CORPS,
March 10th, 1864.

GENERAL: My attention has been called to several articles which have recently appeared in the papers insinuating or charging the general commanding the Army of the Potomac with ordering or favoring a retreat of the army on the evening of July 2d at Gettysburg.

I took no minutes of the council of corps commanders held on the evening of that day, but my present recollection is that three questions, viz., of attacking the enemy, of sustaining an attack, or taking up a new position, were submitted. The council was unanimous (with, I think, one exception) to sustain the attack in our then present position.

At no time in my presence did the General Commanding insist or advise a withdrawal of the army, for such advice would have great weight with me and I know the matter did not engage my serious attention.

I am positive that the General Commanding could not have insisted, much less have given the order to withdraw the army from its position. In a council on the evening of the 3d [4th] the two questions of following the enemy or moving on parallel lines were submitted, and, I think, the council were unanimous, and their decision adopted by the General of moving parallel to the enemy and attacking him when possible.

I am very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

JOHN SEDGWICK,

Maj.-Gen. Commanding.

HEADQUARTERS FIRST ARMY CORPS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
March 10th, 1864.

GENERAL:

Your circular note of this date in relation to reports, to the effect that the Commanding General advocated a retreat of the army on the second day of July last, and particularly in reference to the proceedings of a council of war, held on the night of the second, has been received.

In reply I have to state, that I was frequently with the Commanding General on that day, and was likewise present at the council, and nothing that I heard him say, has ever given me the impression that he insisted on the withdrawal of the army from before Gettysburg.

There was a discussion in the council not concerning a retreat, but concerning the dispositions proper to make should the enemy endeavor to turn our position, by getting between us and Emmettsburg, by pass-

ing entirely around our left flank—and I imagine this to have been the exclusive foundation of such report to the prejudice of the Commanding General.

Respectfully your most obt. servt.,

JOHN NEWTON,

BRIG.-GEN. S. Williams, A. A. G.,
Headqrs. A. of P.

Major-Gen. Comdg.

HEADQUARTERS FIFTH CORPS A. P.,
March 10th, 1864.

GENERAL:

I have seen in late papers, and in the speech of a member of the U.S. Senate, statements charging you with having ordered a retreat of the army at the battle of Gettysburg. I commanded a corps in that battle—was present at a meeting on the nights of the second and third [4th] of July when yourself and corps commanders discussed the events then taking place—remember distinctly the number of soldiers we thought we could take into action after the fight on the second—remember more distinctly the expressed determination of each commander present to fight that battle out then and there, and never received or heard of any order directing a retreat of the army.

I am, General, very respectfully,

your obt. servant,

GEO. SYKES,

Major-Gen. Commdg. Fifth Corps.

MAJ.-GEN. MEADE, Comdg. A. P.

HEADQUARTERS, 1ST DIVISION, 12TH CORPS, ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND,
Tullahoma, Tenn., March 23d, 1864.

GENERAL:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular communication of tenth instant. My recollections of the council or meeting of corps commanders held on the evening of 2c1 July last are briefly these:

After some desultory conversation having reference, mainly, to the amount of supplies and the strength of each corps, and, incidentally, to the results of the afternoon's attack upon our left and to the defensible character of the position around Gettysburg compared with others named—three questions were read by the Chief of Staff for the opinion of the general officers present. In substance they were, 1st. Shall the army remain in its present position? 2d. If so, how long? 3d. Shall it act on the defensive or offensive? The vote was (I think unanimous) to remain and to act on the defensive and the Commanding General announced that his orders would be in accordance with this opinion. I heard no expression from him which led me to think he was in favor of withdrawing the army from before Gettysburg.

I have the honor to be, General, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A.S. WILLIAMS,

BRIG.-GENERAL S. WILLIAMS,

Brig.-Gen. of Vols.

Asst. Adj.-General Army of the Potomac.

HEADQUARTERS RENDEZVOUS FOR DRAFTED MEN,
PHILADELPHIA, P.A., March 14th, 1864.

BRIG.-GEN. S. WILLIAMS, Adj.-Gen. Army of the Potomac.

General: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your circular of the 10th inst. in regard to the council of war held at General Meade's headquarters on the evening of the 2d of July last, and in reply to state:

1st. I was a member of that council, having been placed by General Hancock in command of the Second Corps, when he was detached to take command of the Third Corps, after its defeat on the afternoon of the 2d.

2d. The result of the day's fight was then, I believe, for the first time fully known. It, together with our military situation, were fully discussed and commented upon by the members. It thus appeared that the Third Corps had been badly defeated, and rendered for the time comparatively useless; that the enemy taking advantage of the absence of a portion of the Twelfth Corps sent over to the assistance of our left centre after the defeat of the Third Corps, had obtained a footing in a portion of our line on the right, and that to the right of Cemetery Hill he had driven a portion of the Eleventh Corps out of the line, taken possession of some of our batteries there, and had been himself driven out by the timely arrival of Carroll's Brigade, sent by me according to General Hancock's direction, over to the right "to the sound of the firing." Otherwise our line remained intact.

3d. One of the corps commanders (Newton) urged some objections against the military position of our line and when the council came to decide upon a number of points, which were written out by General Butterfield, Chief of Staff, and submitted to its vote, one of the questions was to this effect: "Should the army remain in its present position or retire to a better one?" Being the youngest member of the council I was required to vote first, and on this particular point, I voted (having General Newton's objection in my mind, and having confidence in his judgment as a military engineer) that we should as far as possible correct our position, but on no account to change it so much that any one could construe it into a retreat. My recollection is that General Newton voted substantially the same way, and that every other member voted simply to remain and offer battle. So that the decision of the council to remain in position was *unanimous*.

4th. I never heard General Meade say one word in favor of a retreat, nor do I believe that he did so, being confident I should have *[heard]* it, the council meeting in a room not to exceed ten feet square. I recollect there was great good feeling amongst the corps commanders at their agreeing so unanimously and General Meade's announcement in a decided manner, "Such, then, is the decision." There were a number of other questions, of minor importance, put and decided, which I do not deem it necessary to refer to.

It may not be out of place here to state that during a portion of the sitting of the council, which continued up to nearly twelve o'clock,

fighting was going on on the right of our line, where the portion of the Twelfth Corps, returning to its position from the left centre, was attempting to dislodge the enemy from the footing he had gained in our line.

I am, General, very respect'ly, your obt. servt.,

JOHN GIBBON,
Brig.-Gen. Vols. Commdg.

It is thus seen that, besides the General Commanding, five out of the ten other officers present at the council of war on the 2d of July answered the circular adversely to the charge made against General Meade. Why the circular was not sent to General Birney is evident from the circumstance that, at the time of its transmission to others, General Meade, having learned that General Birney's testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War had reflected upon him, addressed a letter to him individually, asking for an account of it, with which account General Birney, replying that his testimony belonged to the Committee, declined to furnish him. Why the circular was not sent to Generals Howard and Hancock is unknown. To correct the popular presumption that all the officers at the council of war on the 2d of July were summoned before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, it is well incidentally to mention that of the eleven present, inclusive of the commanding general, only General Meade, and Generals Sedgwick, Hancock, Birney, Gibbon, and Butterfield were before that Committee.

While General Birney's testimony before the Committee cannot be construed as in the main favorable to the commanding general, there is nothing in it that supports the particular charge of desire to retreat.

He says :—

“There was a council of the corps commanders held at General Meade's headquarters that night [July 2d], of which I was one present. It was there determined to remain and fight the next day; to make no attack the next day, but to receive one should the enemy make it.

“General Meade said that his orders were to cover Baltimore and Washington, and he seemed indisposed to hazard a battle except on the “most favorable terms.”

Further on in his testimony, in answer to the direct question, “Do you recollect how General Meade stood on that question ?” [as to a change of position by retiring], General Birney replied :—

“General Meade stated that his orders were positively to cover Washington and Baltimore, and that he did not wish to hazard a battle without he was certain of victory ; that was his statement to the council. He said that he intended to be guided by the opinions of his corps commanders.”

Thereupon, being asked whether the council might not have understood General Meade “to be rather of the opinion that it was safest to retire,” General Birney answered merely, “I could only state my own impression. I have given his language as I remember it.”

The reader has now substantially before him, either through testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, or through letters, the statements of the Commanding General and of all the officers present at the council of war on the 2d of July, excepting Generals Hancock, Howard, and Butterfield, present as chief-of-staff. It remains, then, only to consider the attitude of Generals Hancock and Howard with reference to the question under discussion. General Slocum not only places himself on record through his letter, already quoted from, to General Doubleday, but his letter is corroborative of General Butterfield’s testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War.

General Hancock said in the only part of his testimony before the Committee, relevant to the present issue :—

“That night [July 2d] this council was held. After each corps commander “had reported the actual condition of things along his front, the question “was submitted to the council. General Meade being present, and General “Butterfield questioning the members whether we should remain there or “the army fall back to a better position,—I understood with a view of “protecting our supplies,—one corps commander, I think it was General “Newton, said he did not think the position of Gettysburg a very good one. “General Gibbon, “who was the junior officer, I believe, and voted first, “said that he “had not seen the entire ground, but he had great confidence in “General Newton’s military eye for these matters, and he voted in “accordance with that view of the case, except that he objected to anything “that looked like a retreat. I understood afterwards that General Newton “really had the same view, and did not propose to make a retreat. But all the “other commanders, I understood said they wished to fight the battle there, “and General Meade announced that to be the decision. The council then “adjourned, and that was the last operation of the second day of the fight.”

This testimony of General Hancock’s being only negative as to the question at issue, I took the liberty, on April 27th last, of addressing him a letter covering specifically the points in General Doubleday’s communication to the “New York Times.” In his reply, through an officer of his staff, on April 30th, he regards his statement before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, made when the whole matter was fresh and distinct in his mind, as covering every point as far as he is concerned. Testimony, therefore, which up to that time was

negative, becomes in its nature positive, to the effect that he has nothing further to offer. What he had to offer has just been quoted.

General Howard, who, as has been mentioned, was not before the Committee, and to whom the circular of General Meade was not sent, still remains. To him also I addressed a letter at the same time, covering the points in General Doubleday's letter, and have received from him the following reply : —

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
OMAHA, NEB., June 9th, 1883.

Colonel GEORGE MEADE, 309 Walnut Street, Phila.

MY DEAR SIR :

I will set down the impressions left on my mind by the council during the night of the 2d of July. A question was submitted to us, substantially as to whether we should continue in the position then occupied by the army or withdraw to another. Your father stated to us clearly the existing condition of affairs, and General Butterfield, who was then chief-of-staff, read the question. It was quite freely discussed. One officer, a corps commander, said that, strategically, the position was not a good one. Some one said, "Why so ?" The officer answered, "Because Lee could so easily turn the position if he chose." I did not hear your father utter a word which made me think that he then favored a withdrawal of his troops. Every officer either urged the remaining or believed it too late to take up new ground. Certainly when your father announced the decision, which he did after a formal vote, he expressed no dissatisfaction or dissent from our opinions. With sincere regard for your excellent father's memory, official and personal, and pleasant recollections of yourself, I remain

Yours truly,

OLIVER O. HOWARD,
Brigadier General U. S. A.

We have now before us the testimony of every officer present at the council of war of July 2d, and excepting that of Generals Slocum and Butterfield, it is adverse to the charge of General Doubleday. The testimony of General Meade and of General Hancock is printed in the reports of the Committee on the Conduct of the War; the letters, already introduced, of Generals Sedgwick, Newton, Sykes, A. S. Williams, and Gibbon, in reply to General Meade's circular letter, are, and have been for years, on file in the War Department, where of course General Doubleday, "as a faithful historian," has had access to them, and in his researches has consulted these

authoritative records, and yet he not only does not accept them, but does not even mention their existence.

General Warren, writing to me some years ago upon the subject of this council, said :—

“I know General Meade had made up his mind to hold his ground to the last minute, without any idea of retreating, and if such question was then considered, the decision was made beforehand.”

It is to be gathered from the letter of General Gibbon, that the council was in session until nearly midnight, and that it broke up immediately after coming to a decision. As at U P. M., July 2d, General Meade sent the following despatch to General Halleck, that is, an hour before the council terminated, it is fair to presume what General Meade’s intentions were before the decision of the corps commanders had been reached.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE POTOMAC,
July 2, 1863, 11 P. M.

GENERAL HALLECK: The enemy attacked me about 4 P. M. this day, and, after one of the severest contests of the war, was repulsed at all points. We have suffered considerably in killed and wounded; among the former are Brigadier-General Paul Zook; and among the wounded, Generals Sickles, Barlow, Graham; and Warren, slightly. We have taken a large number of prisoners. I shall remain in my present position to-morrow, but am not prepared to say, until better advised of the condition of the army, whether my operations will be of an offensive or defensive character.

GEORGE G. MEADE,
Major General.

If any testimony be demanded, additional to that which now seems conclusive against the charge that General Meade intended to retreat, it will only be necessary to refer to that of General Hunt, Chief of Artillery, General Warren, Chief Engineer, and General Seth Williams, Adjutant-General, of the Army of the Potomac, given before the Committee on the Conduct of the War. It shows that they never understood from General Meade that he had any desire or intention to retreat from Gettysburg. True, they were not present at the conference on the night of July 2d, and also, their testimony is negative; but if it be considered how high and important their positions in that army were, that all of them, from the necessity of their positions, were near the person of the Commanding General, and that in all he had the greatest confidence, and possessed for them the highest esteem, it ought to be apparent that he would hardly, indeed could

hardly, conceal from them, even if he wished, his desire or intention concerning so momentous an operation as a retreat of the army. The confidence that General Meade had in General Hunt is incidentally shown in his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, and that which he had for the others, by his having invited them successively on June 28th, as soon as he had taken command of the army, to assume temporarily, in addition to their own respective duties, those of chief-of-staff. General Meade intended that General Humphreys should eventually fill this position, and had so notified him, but he concluded that it was for the best interests of the service that General Humphreys should continue during the emergency in command of his division in the Third Corps, as he relied greatly on him as a main dependence in the handling of that corps during the impending battle. This decision was also in keeping with General Humphreys' own wishes.

It was solely owing to the decision in the case of General Humphreys, and to the disinclination of Generals Warren and Seth Williams to accept the position, through their belief that in the emergency they could render better service in the positions which they respectively held, that induced General Meade to come to the conclusion to retain General Butterfield, General Hooker's chief-of-staff, temporarily in the same position, in consideration of the fact that he was more familiar at that time than any one else could be with the *personnel* of the army and the routine of the office. If any one of the three officers mentioned, General Humphreys, General Warren, and General Williams, had been chief-of-staff on the eventful day of the 2d of July, at Gettysburg, the nation would not have witnessed nine months afterward the humiliating spectacle of its victorious general, who had received the thanks of the Government and of the people, compelled to defend himself from the aspersion of having intended to retreat from the field he won.

If anything be wanting beyond what has been said to enable one to form an estimate of General Doubleday's fitness for the task of an historian, it is only necessary to consider in connection with his book the concluding paragraph of his late letter, which letter was written to justify the statements of his book. There, for the first time, he freely admits, he says, that in what he is pleased to style his criticism of General Meade before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, he was "unnecessarily harsh" in his language. He accounts for it by saying that, "just before the battle of Gettysburg," he thought

he had reason to believe that General Meade was about to convert the Army of the Potomac into a "partisan three, which was to become the personal appanage of an individual." Naturally he resented that, but found out afterwards that he was "mistaken in this respect; that he had no intention of reorganizing the army in the interest of "General McClellan. Indeed, he "could not have done so without displacing himself. When I understood the "circumstances I did not blame him for his action toward me at "Gettysburg."

"Just before the battle of Gettysburg" leaves a short space of time to have allowed of such a belief, considering that General Meade had not expected to be placed in command of the army; that he took command of it on the 28th of June; that the corps were widely separated, feeling for the enemy, preparatory to concentration; and that battle evidently could not be long postponed, as in point of fact the first day's encounter was on the 1st of July. It is strange that General Doubleday, upon having his suspicions aroused "just before the battle of Gettysburg," did not discard the unworthy thought upon which they turned with regard to General Meade, if not from the point of view of being unworthy and unwarrantable, at least from the perception that under the circumstance of General Meade's having so much soliciting his attention, it was almost impossible that he could have conceived and communicated any such intention. Not only was this not so; but we find General Doubleday accounting for the undue harshness of his testimony against General Meade, nine months after the battle of Gettysburg, by the fact that he was still laboring under the false impression there received regarding General Meade's intentions.

Now, for the first time, in his late letter, he grants that his language in his testimony against General Meade before the Committee on the Conduct of the War was unduly harsh. It has taken, then, nearly twenty years to bring him to this *amende honorable*; but, unhappily, there is a remarkable coincidence in point of time between it and the appearance of Mr. Swinton's strictures upon his book.

Discrepancies of statement apart, General Doubleday is in any case unfitted for the task of an historian, as proved by the facts that he believes readily and implicitly on hearsay; that he is not open to correction of false impressions; that even after a long interval of time, nearly twenty years, he is ignorant of his ground, or sure of it only from his belief in the ignorance of others as to what is contained in the national archives of the war.

The reader curious in historical matters will naturally desire to

know what that action of General Meade's at Gettysburg could have been towards General Doubleday, for which General Doubleday no longer blamed him as soon as his false impressions regarding General Meade had been dissipated. General Meade, upon learning of the fall of General Reynolds, commanding the First Corps, at once sent orders to General Newton, commanding a division of the Sixth Corps, to go immediately to Gettysburg and assume command of the First Corps, thus relieving and superseding General Doubleday, who, as senior officer, had succeeded to the command of the Corps upon the death of its gallant and able chief. The action was not induced by some foolish remarks of General Doubleday's, which he imagined had reached his general, but solely by that general's view as to the qualifications of a corps commander. The reader is now in a position to judge whether or not General Doubleday's knowledge of and belief in General Meade's alleged intentions is an extraordinary coincidence with his being superseded as commander of the First Corps. Two days after the battle General Doubleday was relieved from duty with the Army of the Potomac, and went to Washington, where he remained until the close of the war.

When the announcement was made that General Doubleday had been selected to write the volume in the Scribner's Series, covering the campaign and battle of Gettysburg, it was generally considered the most extraordinary choice that could have been made, to produce what was at the same time announced as "a full and authoritative military history" of that important part of the war. General Doubleday's work, however, surpassed all expectations, for a more incongruous, bitterly prejudiced, and unreliable performance cannot be imagined. It was fondly hoped, from the almost universal condemnation the book received, that that was the last that would be heard of it, or of him as an author.

Of the distinguished officers mentioned, whose names are indissolubly associated with the grand achievements of the Army of the Potomac at Gettysburg, who in hearty support of their commanding general battled bravely on those historic hills, each in his own sphere doing the best that in him lay for his country's cause, who are revered by the veterans of the army as the ideal of all that is able, brave, and true, we find arrayed on their commanding general's side, Sedgwick, Hancock, Sykes, Newton, Howard, Gibbon, A. S. Williams, Hunt, Warren, Seth Williams; and in sorry contrast, Doubleday, Butterfield, and Pleasonton. It is high time that dispute should cease as to the award due him who won the greatest battle of the

war, upon which it turned, saving the nation's capital and giving to the Rebellion a blow from which it never recovered. It must cease, under penalty of the malcontents making themselves and the nation ridiculous. It will cease, for all battles, save for a time Gettysburg, have been universally recognized and acknowledged as won by the general in command; and despite all its escaped heroes, it remains for history to record that, from the beginning to the end of the Rebellion, it was only when Meade was chief that Lee was ever met in pitched battle and defeated on equal terms.