A GREAT BATTLEFIELD

HOW AND BY WHOM A PORTION OF IT IS PROTECTED.

ALL BUT FIVE HUNDRED OUT OF SIXTEEN THOUSAND ACRES IS OWNED BY PRIVATE PERSONS—IS THIS WELL?

GETTYSBURG, July 9.—The battlefield of Gettysburg covers 25 square miles and contains 16,000 acres. To the soldiers who fought on this field—to the whole country, almost, it can be said—this ground is sacred, yet of 16,000 acres all but 540 acres is private property. To the old soldier who had lost a leg or an arm here 25 years ago at some point which he remembers as well as if he had lived upon it all his life, it is galling to be told that he has no right there; that he is trespassing upon property for the preservation of which he shed his blood and risked his life. It is under such circumstances that the wish is often expressed that the battlefield were the property of the Federal Government.

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Such a wish does not necessarily mean that the Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association does not or has not done its duty. The association was formed for the purpose of holding and preserving the battle ground, with its natural and artificial defenses, and such memorials as might be erected in commemoration of the heroic achievements of the actors in the great contest. The association was incorporated by act of the General Assembly of Pennsylvania approved April 30, 1864, and by a supplement approved April 24, 1866. By these measures the association was authorized to purchase lands and to construct such thoroughfares as would make them accessible. The property of the association is by law forever exempted from taxation.

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The Gettysburg Battlefield Memorial Association consists of a President and a Board of 21 Directors. These and ex officio Directors from States which contribute are elected annually. A membership fee of $10 entitles the holder of a certificate to a vote in person or by proxy in the election of the association's officers and participation in its general management. A large number of the certificates of membership are held by veterans and posts of the Grand Army of the Republic. By the charter the Governor of Pennsylvania is made ex officio President of the association, and the Governors of such States as contribute by legislative appropriations to the purposes of the association are made ex officio Directors, and have power to be present at meetings by proxy.

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In furtherance of its design the association has purchased such land as the condition of its treasury permitted. Although many points of historic interest have been secured, the land owned by the association is only a thirty-second part of the territory covered by the battle, this territory having been surveyed under the direction and at the expense of the Federal Government. Properties are changing hands. Improvements are liable to be made which will destroy the historic characteristics and value of the field. The association is aware that to preserve the original aspect of the battlefield it is absolutely necessary to purchase additional land and to construct additional thoroughfares. The association has discovered that land owners are more than reluctant to sell isolated plots. It is aware that to purchase the entire battlefield would require more money than it is likely to ever see in its treasury.

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Twenty-five years ago the entire battlefield could have been purchased for a good deal less than a New-York competency. Since that time the value of agricultural lands in the Cumberland Valley has not greatly increased. The increase in the price of land within the lines of the battle of Gettysburg is not due to a rise in the price of grain or hay. It is due simply to the fact that the battle of Gettysburg was fought. It may have often been stated before, but there is ample ground for once more stating, that the town of Gettysburg lives upon the battle of Gettysburg, and that the possessors of land which should be in the hands of the association propose to make all possible profit out of a battle which was fought for them as well as for the country.

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Queer stories are told of the action of people who lived here and owned property here at the time of the battle. Queer stories can be told of people who live and own property here to-day. It is not surprising that if 5 cents a glass was asked of the soldiers for water 25 years ago that these same old soldiers or their descendants should be required to pay for water to-day. The United States soldiers who participated in the recent reunion of the Army of the Potomac paid $10 a day for the water they used. The Ninth Regiment of the National Guard of the State of New-York paid 70 cents a barrel for the water with which they were furnished. Quartermaster Bassett of the regulars came here in advance of the troops. In going over the ground he saw a field which formed a part of the ground occupied in the first day's fight. He asked the owner if it could be rented for a camp. He was answered in the affirmative, and when he asked what the rent would be for five days, the modest patriot who owned it said $500. The regulars did not camp in that field. Stories of this character could be told without number. It is entirely safe to say that no military organization that participated in the reunion would ever return to Gettysburg were it not that the battlefield is here, or that it can contemplate a return without a shudder. As for civilian visitors, their recollections of the village will always be of the nightmare order. Nowhere else in the wide world is the art of squeezing so thoroughly understood and so harshly practiced as at Gettysburg.

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This faint picture of the situation lends peculiar force to the appeal of the association "that much work remains to be done and money is needed for the care, preservation, and protection of the grounds of the association, and the valuable and historical monuments that are erected thereon"; and that "to this end the association makes an earnest appeal to those States which have not contributed, and to those which have so generously responded, for additional funds. This aid," the association adds, "would enable us to complete the work in hand and make the field of Gettysburg, in its historical indications, a perpetual memorial to the patriotism and courage of the heroes who here gave their lives that the Nation might live."

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For the purchase of land and its improvement New-York has contributed $20,000, Pennsylvania $16,000, Massachusetts $5,000, Ohio $5,000, New-Jersey $3,000, Connecticut $2,500, Maine $2,500, Michigan $2,500, Wisconsin $2,500, Vermont $1,500, New-Hampshire $1,000, Maryland $1,000, Minnesota $1,000, Rhode Island $1,000, and Delaware $500. For the erection of monuments New-York has appropriated $1,500 for a monument for each New-York command which participated in the battle. Pennsylvania has made a similar appropriation. For monumental purposes Ohio has appropriated $35,000, Massachusetts $13,000, Vermont $6,500, New-Jersey $6,000, Indiana $3,000, Rhode Island $2,000, New-Hampshire $2,000, Delaware $1,500, Maine $1,000, Maryland $1,000, Michigan $1,000, Wisconsin $1,000, Minnesota $500, and the Federal Government $15,000. New-York, as usual, takes the lead in the amount of her contributions.

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The ground owned by the Battlefield Memorial Association—exclusive of isolated spots—bears a striking resemblance to an old-fashioned fish hook of colossal proportions. The point of the hook rests on that part of the Emmettsburg road occupied by Humphrey's division of the Third Corps. The "eye" is formed by East Cemetery Hill, but sweeps around in a curve to the southern base of Culp's Hill. If a fish were to swallow a large portion of the hook its nose would rest upon the rocks that form the Devil's Den. The latter forms the southern extremity of the Valley of Death. These two historic points occupy an oblong plot of 40 acres, which are owned by Gen. J. Wylie Crawford. Through the Valley of Death the Pennsylvania Reserves made a gallant and effective charge under Crawford's inspiring leadership.

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But to best describe the fishhook a beginning should be made at Culp's Hill, made glorious by the Twelfth Corps, under Slocum, and Wadsworth's division of the First Corps. The hill lies south and southeast of the town. Adjoining it on the west is East Cemetery Hill, on which Weidereich's and Rickett's batteries did such splendid work and upon whose grassy slopes and armed summit the Louisiana Tigers performed such prodigies of valor. To the west and south of East Cemetery Hill is the National Cemetery, the home of 3,555 gallant Union dead, the graves of 979 of whom are marked "Unknown." The cemetery is the property of the Nation. Extending due south is a strip of land that follows the course of the Taneytown road and sometimes touches its western border, but is generally located further westward, as the strip is only broad at widely-separated points. The northwest side of the National Cemetery represents the position held by the Eleventh Corps on July 3. Robinson's division faced the Emmettsburg road, further south. Then, due south, is the position held by the Second Corps. This covers the Bloody Angle, near which Hancock was wounded, and Armistead, Cushing, and a host of other gallant men were killed. It also includes the Umbrella Copse, a small grove of umbrella-shaped trees which are inclosed by an iron fence, the spot being known as the high-water mark of the rebellion. South of the position held by the Second Corps on July 3 is the ground occupied by Doubleday's division of the First Corps, McGilbery's artillery, and the Sixth Corps. To the east of the ground occupied by McGilbery's batteries stood the Third Corps.

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The Sixth Corps covered Little Round Top. The Fifth Corps guarded Round Top. Due west of Little Round Top is the Valley of Death and the Devil's Den, which, as stated, are the property of Gen. Crawford. To the north and east of the Devil's Den is the Wheat Field. This ground forms the curve of the hook and was occupied on July 2 by the United States regulars, the First Division of the Second Corps, the First Division of the Fifth Corps, and Birney's division of the Third Corps. The point of the hook represents the ground occupied on July 2 by the Third Corps, except that the only point widely known—the Peach Orchard—is not owned by the association.

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The other land owned by the association is scattered and is in small strips or plots. This includes the line occupied on July 1 by the First Corps, Major John F. Reynolds commanding, and by Buford's cavalry, but not covered by the operations of the day. This possession is a narrow strip except where it includes Reynolds's Grove, a beautifully-wooded spot in rising ground, which of itself is a magnificent monument to the glorious soldier whose name it bears. This narrow strip extends from the Mummosburg road to the Hagerstown road and crosses the Chambersburg road. It extends from due west to north-northwest of the town.

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The narrow strip which denotes the position taken by the Eleventh Corps on the first day of the battle is due north of the town, and extends in an irregular line from southwest to northeast, with a spur running south-southeast. The left of the Eleventh Corps rested on the Mummosburg road. The line crossed the Carlisle road, which approaches the town from the north. On the east side of Rock Creek is another little bit of association property. This was occupied by Neill's brigade of the Sixth Corps.

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When it has the necessary funds the association proposes to purchase the position assumed on the third day of the battle by Kilpatrick's Union cavalry and the line occupied by Longstreet, A. P. Hill, Pickett, Pender, and Wilcox on Seminary Ridge on July 2 and 3. Kilpatrick's position is a narrow strip that extends from the Emmettsburg road to within pistol shot of the southern base of Round Top. The Confederate line is also a narrow strip. It extends, in a wavering line, from the Emmettsburg road, on the south, to the Hagerstown road, on the north. The rest of the battlefield is private property. Very many people think this ought not to be so.

T. B. F.

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