

SHERIDAN.

THE FISHER'S HILL POSITION.

Secretary Stanton's Despatch to General Dix.

Scene of Longstreet's Retrograde Movement and Sheridan's Triumphal Advance on the Morning of the 20th of October, 1864.

Graphic Description of the Battle by a Herald Correspondent.

Additional Particulars of Sheridan's Brilliant Victory.

Another Despatch from Gen. Sheridan.

Enthusiasm of the Soldiers on the Appearance of General Sheridan.

Over Fifty Pieces of Artillery Captured.

Fisher's Hill Carried by the Union Cavalry.

Lieutenant General Grant's Appreciation of General Sheridan.

He Pronounces Him "One of the Ablest of Generals."

THE REBEL GENERAL RAMSEUR DEAD.

THE CASUALTIES.

THE OFFICIAL DESPATCH.

Secretary Stanton to General Dix.

Washington, Oct. 21—11:40 A. M.

The following telegram received this morning contains further particulars of the battle of Cedar creek—

Cedar Creek, Va., Oct. 20—11:30 A. M.

Lieutenant General U. S. Grant, City Point.

We have again been favored by a great victory, won from disaster, by the gallantry of our officers and men.

The attack on the enemy was made about three o'clock P. M. by a set half wheel of the white line, with a division of cavalry turning each flank of the enemy, the whole line advancing.

The enemy, after a stubborn resistance, broke and fled, and were pushed with vigor.

The artillery captured will probably be over fifty pieces.

This of course includes what was captured from our troops in the early morning.

At least sixteen hundred prisoners have been brought in, also wagons and ambulances in large numbers.

This morning the cavalry made a dash at Fisher's Hill and carried it, the enemy having fled during the night, leaving only a small rear guard.

I have to regret the loss of many valuable officers, killed and wounded, among them Colonel Joseph Thoburn, commanding a division of Crook's command, killed.

Colonel J. Howard Kitching, commanding a brigade, wounded; Colonel R. G. McKean, commanding a brigade, wounded severely, but would not quit the field.

I cannot yet give exact details.

Many of our men captured in the morning have made their escape, and are coming in.

Ramseur, commanding a division in Early's army, died this morning.

P. H. SHERIDAN, Major General Commanding.

General Grant's appreciation of the victory at Cedar creek is expressed in the following despatch—

CITY POINT, Oct. 23—Night of Oct. 23 P. M.

Mon. Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War—

I had a salute of one hundred guns from each of the armies here fired in honor of Sheridan's last victory.

Turning what had been feared to be a disaster into a glorious victory, I am proud to say that I have always thought you, one of the ablest of generals.

U. S. GRANT, Lieutenant General.

The Medical Director reports that seven hundred and seventy slightly wounded have reached Winchester from the field.

All the wounded that are able to bear transportation will be forwarded immediately to Martinsburg.

The telegraph line is now working to Atlanta, but no late reports have been received by the department.

EDWIN M. STANTON, Secretary of War.

THE HERALD DESPATCH.

Mr. Charles H. Haassman's Despatch.

CHERRY HILL FIELD, Near Cedar Creek, Va., Oct. 19—10 P. M.

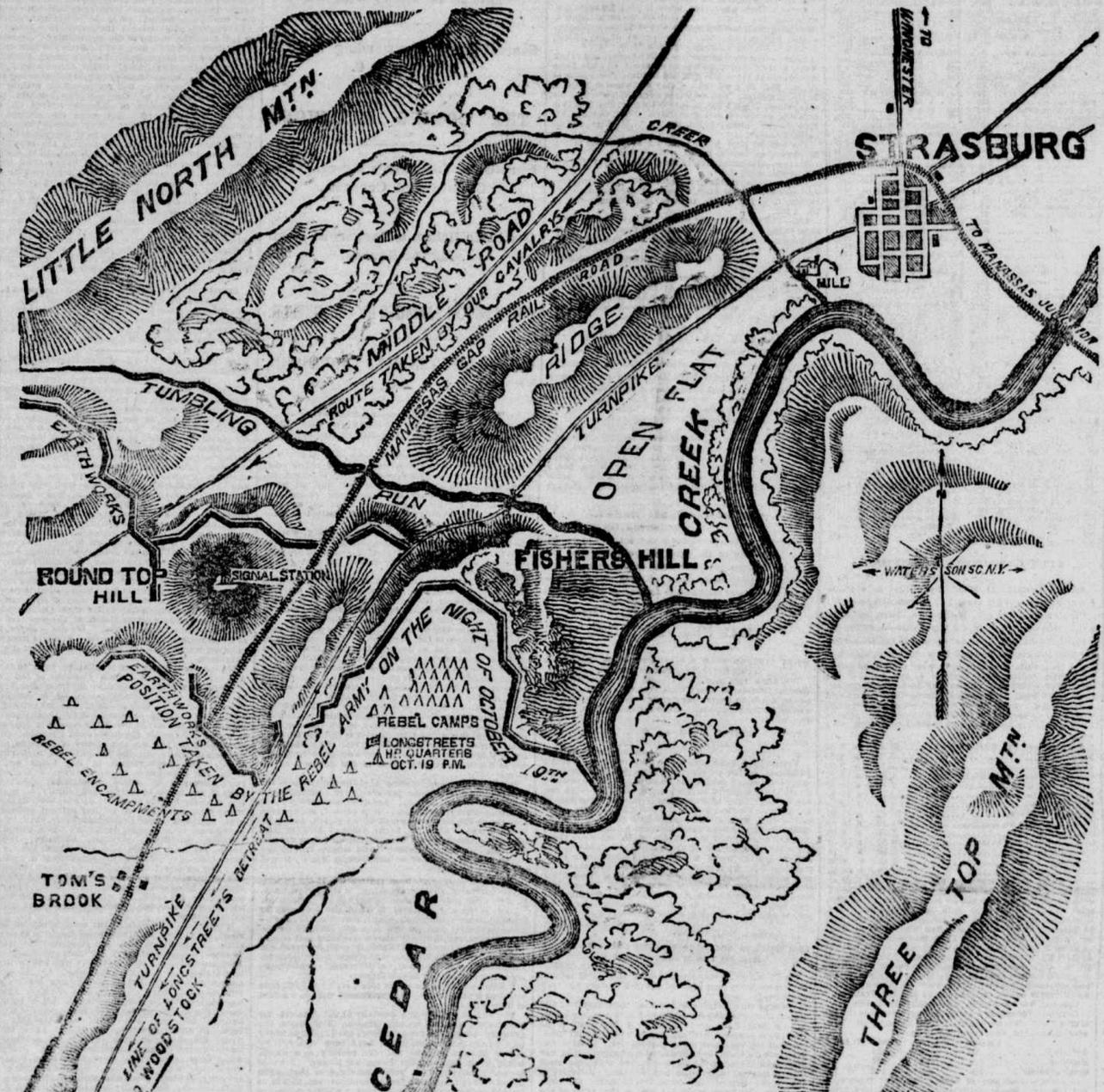
THE BATTLE OF CEDAR CREEK.

The son has again set on a battle field in the Shenandoah valley, and the rays of the morning sun are dimly lighting the pathway of the retreating rebel. General Sheridan's victorious troops are actively pursuing the broken and scattered remnant of Early's army, now rapidly flying up the valley.

The battle which has just ended, is, perhaps for the cause of the Union will doubtless be known to history as the "Battle of Cedar Creek," having been fought on the banks of that beautiful stream. No historic stream has been so extraordinarily and so often, and in one respect it surpasses in the history of warfare, either ancient or modern times. It has proved the magical influence a master mind exercises over the fate of a battle, and inspiring with renewed courage a retreating army, and turning a probable defeat into a decisive and glorious victory. The man who has this day achieved so wonderful a feat is Major General Philip H. Sheridan, the hero of the Shenandoah and the idol of the people he commands.

PRELIMINARY.

To make the account of our victory more intelligible it will be necessary to relate a few events which transpired previous to the grand struggle of to-day. On Saturday last, the 19th instant, General Sheridan proceeded to Washington, and left General Wright in command of the army. About midnight on Saturday orders were issued to have breakfasts thrown up in front of the Eighth and Nineteenth corps. Our army at that time rested on the north side of Cedar creek; the Eighth corps, or Army of Western Virginia, was on the left, the Nineteenth corps in the center, and the Sixth corps on the right. General Custer's cavalry division was on the right of the Sixth corps. At about three quarters of a mile in the rear of the Eighth corps was encamped the provisional division, under the command of Colonel Kitching, of the Sixth New York heavy artil-



ry. The Winchester and Strasburg turnpikes divided the Eighth and Nineteenth corps, General Crook's division, of the Nineteenth corps, having its left resting on the west side of the pike, and Colonel Thoburn's division, of the Eighth, resting on the east side.

Between the extreme right of the Nineteenth corps and the left of the Sixth was a small stream, which empties into Cedar creek. The ground occupied by the different corps was of considerable elevation, with a precipitous and rocky front, which rendered it highly improbable that the enemy would attempt to break through our lines in that direction.

By noon on Monday the arrangements were completed and the batteries in position. At a very early hour on Monday morning breakfast was served in front of Gen. Custer's division. At that time the First Connecticut Cavalry, Major Marcy commanding, was on picket, and, after being about forty men, the rebel cavalry and infantry were driven back.

In the attack the rebels had recourse to a novel system of warfare. Each cavalryman had an infantry soldier mounted behind him, and when the attack commenced the infantry stepped off and formed in line of battle.

The attack on Gen. Custer's pickets led many of our officers to believe that if any serious attempt were made by the rebels to drive us from our position, he would attempt to force the right of the line in front of Gen. Custer's position, which was conceded by many officers of experience and ability to be our weakest and most vulnerable point.

On Monday afternoon it was reported that a rebel cavalry had been captured in the neighborhood of Front Street with a despatch on his person stating that Longstreet was on his way down the Valley with reinforcements to co-operate with General Early.

On Tuesday General Wright ordered a reconnaissance to be made for the purpose of ascertaining the strength and position of the rebel army. For that purpose Colonel Fisher, commanding the Third brigade of Cavalry, Thoburn's division of the Eighth corps, was ordered, with the second battalion of the Fifth New York heavy artillery, Captain Wicks, and the Tenth West Virginia, Lieutenant Roberts and Moore, of General Crook's staff, accompanied the detachment. The troops proceeded in an oblique direction from the left of our line, across the fields and through the woods in front of our position, deploying skirmishers and carefully examining the ground passed over. The line of march was continued until an eligible position in front of Strasburg was gained. Fisher's Hill and Round Top Mountain were also distinctly visible. The whole country was then examined with great care. The rebel pickets were seen at various points, but no large bodies of troops were visible, and the enemy had withdrawn his infantry pickets from the vicinity of Strasburg. The party returned about midnight, and during the whole time they were out had not had occasion to fire a shot.

That night it was very generally supposed that the enemy was concealed behind obscure fortifications on Roundtop Mountain, awaiting an attack from General Sheridan. By some it was supposed that the force under General Early would form a junction with the troops reported to be under the command of General Longstreet, then represented to be at Millers Station, in the Valley, and where it was said they were forti- fied.

The report of the reconnoitering party was very satisfactory, so the enemy had not been seen in any force, and, for what we knew to the contrary, had disappeared from our front, leaving but a few pickets behind him. In fact that night it was generally rumored throughout the different corps that such was actually the case.

A reconnaissance in force was consequently decided on for the next day (Wednesday). General Early, commanding the Nineteenth corps, received orders to see the arrangements carefully executed and the reconnoissance made as thorough as possible. At a late hour on Tues-

day night General Emory issued orders for a strong force to be in readiness to start with him at daybreak on Wednesday morning for the purpose of beating up the enemy's quarters around Fisher's Hill; but about that time General Early must have issued similar orders, with this difference, that he required the whole of his army to accompany him, and not a brigade.

THE BATTLE COMMENCES.

The morning of Wednesday, October 19, was raw and misty. A dense fog enveloped the whole country in the vicinity of Cedar creek, making every object at a distance of fifty yards perfectly invisible. At four o'clock the air was at its roughest and the fog at its densest point, so General Early chose that opportune hour for the attack, by which he hoped to clear the Shenandoah valley of General Sheridan's Yankee army.

During the following account of the battle the reader must bear in mind the preceding description, and also that before the attack commenced our army was facing south on the left and centre, and south by west on the right.

Ghostlike and chilly was everything that morning. The veterans of the Sixth corps were wrapped in sleep on the right of our line, and beyond them still further to the right was General Custer's division of cavalry. The vigilant pickets of these commands were observing to the left, peering through the morning mist, for exposures that might tell them that the foe was nearer to be detected and proper precautions were accordingly taken. Through the misty morning air the pickets peered with curious eyes, when shadowy forms appeared as though rising from the ground; but in a few seconds a bright flash and a sharp report told them that once again Early's rebel horsemen were coming down on their lines. Shot was exchanged for shot, and for fifteen or twenty minutes quite a lively picket duel ensued, breaking the stumbers of thousands for a time. The firing, however, ceased almost as suddenly as it had commenced, and the army once again slept.

Quiet reigned along our lines, and even the mist, usually so noisy, appeared to be doing. Four o'clock approached and the rebel column was just in motion. Kitching's division was the first to move, and the real attack commenced.

The Eighth corps was the first to suffer. The demoralization on the extreme right had been intended as a feint to draw the attention of our pickets from their columns moving towards the left. The rebel units have moved their troops along the line of the Manassas Railroad and crossed the Cedar creek for the first time. The Eighth corps was the first to suffer. The demoralization on the extreme right had been intended as a feint to draw the attention of our pickets from their columns moving towards the left. The rebel units have moved their troops along the line of the Manassas Railroad and crossed the Cedar creek for the first time. The Eighth corps was the first to suffer. The demoralization on the extreme right had been intended as a feint to draw the attention of our pickets from their columns moving towards the left. The rebel units have moved their troops along the line of the Manassas Railroad and crossed the Cedar creek for the first time.

four thousand men, but all except about five hundred had been taken away to guard trains and perform other similar duties. Col. Kitching, however, succeeded in forming the small balance of his division on the left of the Eighth corps, and until that organization broke and fell back, made a brave and determined stand. During this stand Colonel Kitching succeeded in rallying a large number of stragglers and placing them in position to check the rebel movement.

The efforts, however, of General Crook and his staff were insufficient to stem the rebel advance. For upwards of an hour the unequal contest was sustained, when the corps began to waver, and soon afterwards fell back with great rapidity. Colonel Kitching was severely wounded in the foot while endeavoring to rally his men.

About this time the sun began to rise and the mist to dissipate, when a clearer view could be obtained of the operations on our left. The rebel plan of battle had already developed itself. It was evidently Early's intention to keep backing us on the left, thus to double up the army and get in between us and Winchester. The Eighth corps having been pressed back for a considerable distance, and their works occupied by the rebels, preparations were made by the Nineteenth corps to meet the advance. Unfortunately sufficient time was not allowed for the purpose. The retreat of the Eighth corps, at first slow and orderly, was, by the impetuosity of the rebel advance, converted into a very disorderly retreat.

On the left of the Winchester and Strasburg pike the hills were of considerable elevation, and on these eminences the Eighth corps had been camped when surprised. About sunrise, however, stragglers began to come down, and in an incredibly short space of time the whole corps was on the run. Many regiments of General Crook's corps behaved nobly, and contested the ground inch by inch. Others, however, to their shame be it spoken, broke up entirely and came streaming down the hills across the turnpike and away to the rear of the Nineteenth corps, and even much further. General Emory and staff and other officers did all in their power to stop these stragglers, but without avail. Strong, able bodied men, when stopped and asked where they were hurt, would rub the palms of their hands over their stomachs and reply—"I am sick."

Shells from the rebel guns began to drop in the ranks of the Nineteenth corps, and General Crook, whose division was on the left and resting on the turnpike, was hurriedly engaged getting his men into position to protect General Crook's flying troops. Suddenly the rebel line of battle was discovered parallel with the turnpike and extending far in the rear of the Nineteenth corps. Their plan of flanking on the left, which succeeded so well with the Eighth corps, was again to be tried on the Nineteenth corps.

General Wright at this time sent for the Sixth corps to come up, and General Emory superintended the formation of his corps into line of battle. General Crook, commanding the Second division of the corps, was hard at work reversing his line and having his guns trained on the rebel column. It was at this critical juncture that Colonel Daniel Mackay, of the Eleventh Indiana, commanding the Third brigade, Second division, Nineteenth corps, was seriously wounded and fell from his horse.

Reflections as fast and rapid as thought the rebel columns advanced, preventing the formation of a perfect line of battle by the Nineteenth corps. Lapping over their flank and pressing on in front came the rebel line of battle. General Emory, commanding the corps, had his horse shot under him while encouraging and forming his men. He instantly mounted one he engaged to as a officer, and was fortunately able to continue at the head of his men. General Crook, at the same time had the heat of his right foot carried away by a shell, but, singularly to relate, so that the General nor his horse sustained a day's march.

With wild yells and warbling yells the rebel ar-

my, both front and flank, continued. At this moment old Jubal Early's boom must have swelled with pride at witnessing the magnificent impetuosity of his gray-coated soldiers, and his heart doubtless beat high with the hope of at last annihilating the Yankee army. The Nineteenth corps, however, stood firm for some time longer, although outflanked and outnumbered. The wagons and ambulances were being driven rapidly away in a westerly direction. The greater part of General Crook's ambulance train had fallen into the hands of the rebels at an early stage of the battle. The Sixth corps had come up from their position on the right. It was then under command of Brigadier General James B. Ricketts.

Gen. Wright, on seeing the Nineteenth corps so completely outflanked, ordered both the Sixth and Nineteenth corps to fall back to some rising ground on the west side of the small stream already mentioned in a former part of this report. The Sixth corps covered the retreat, and gave the Nineteenth and Eighth corps ample time to cross the stream, when the Nineteenth went into position on the right, the Sixth in the centre and the Eighth on the left.

During the time the Sixth corps was crossing the stream General Ricketts was struck in the right breast by a bullet, and was compelled to leave the field, when General Early assumed command. The wound was a very dangerous one, but the ball has since been extracted, and the General is progressing very favorably. He is accompanied by Captain Richards, of his staff. The line above described was held for some time, under a terrific fire from the rebel artillery. Early's infantry, however, crossed the stream and again came into action, for upwards of ten minutes the musketry raged continuously, and the losses on both sides were great. Our line at that time was facing almost due east. Again, however, it fell back, but this time in a westerly and splendid style.

The principal efforts of the rebels were directed towards our left flank, which occupied a thickly timbered piece of ground. The cavalry division of General Custer and Merritt were sent round to strengthen this point, while the Nineteenth and Sixth corps swung slowly back, the left being the pivot on which the line swung. A short time before this movement was executed a musket ball had struck Major General Wright on the chin. It was a flesh wound, and for some time afterwards died very freely. Gen. Wright made every effort of his energy and command on the field close up to his main line of battle during the whole day.

The efforts made by the rebels to break our left and centre were terrific. There appeared to be no cessation to the yelling of the combatants, and the roar of artillery and musketry. Shortly after nine o'clock Custer's and Merritt's cavalry got to work on the enemy's flank, when for a time their advance was checked, but the artillery was never silent.

During the entire day the enemy handled their guns with great rapidity and precision—a feat which was remarked by scores near whom their iron companions were hurled unpleasantly close. The next position chosen was on the crest of a hill considerably higher than the one which had just been vacated. Early had already driven us several miles, and we were then between two and three miles from the Winchester and Strasburg turnpike. The rebels, however, seemed determined to push their advantage to the utmost, and again they directed their principal efforts towards our left flank. Throughout the above movement the veterans of the Sixth corps sustained their reputation. They stood in front of the rebel artillery with the most perfect coolness and intrepidity, although at times they received orders to be down and let the iron hail pour over their heads. They, when the rebel line advanced, they returned shot for shot and volley for

volley. When hardly pressed the solid columns appeared to melt away, but not to retreat. The warriors of the African race appeared to have forgotten how to retreat, and to feel that the salvation of the army depended on their standing firm; for after falling back a few yards the columns would be again formed and the battle renewed.

The position last occupied was not destined to be held for any length of time, as an order was shortly afterwards received to retreat by the order of columns to take up a new position. Had the rebel been carried out and the retreat continued the army would doubtless have struck the turnpike in the vicinity of Newtown. But the retreat was not destined to take us so far, for the tide of battle was about to be turned and the advancing rebel column driven back, routed and demoralized.

It was now about half-past ten o'clock in the morning. Long lines of infantry had commenced to file off through the woods and the battle was apparently over for a time.

The wagons had been passed down the road to Winchester with but slight loss, although the rebels had made several desperate efforts to secure so valuable a prize as the wagon train of the Union army.

Close on to eleven o'clock General Sheridan arrived on the field, and at once assumed command of the army. He had heard the news of the rebel advance at Winchester, and rode up from that place on a hard trot. He arrived on the field with his horse flanked with foam and bathed in perspiration. While passing along the road he was loudly cheered by the men, when the General raised his cap, telling them it was all right, that he wanted them to go back to their old quarters, and that he intended before sunset to make his headquarters in the same place where they were when he left. The General's short come up far in his rear. When the soldiers laughed at them for not keeping up they replied that "The devil might keep up, but they could not."

General Forgyth, General Sheridan's chief of staff, was then despatched down the line to order the troops to halt and inform them that the General had arrived. The announcement created the wildest enthusiasm all through the army. The men seemed inspired with fresh vigor and courage and appeared to feel that affairs would take a turn for the better. In a short time it was also generally known that General Sheridan had desired that they would go back to their old quarters, and the men, lately so weary and downcast, handled their pieces with fresh energy, and cast looks of defiance in the direction where the rebel columns were visible. Thoughts of disaster and defeat gave place to a perception of coming victory.

The different corps were promptly halted, and they presented a strange scene of warlike confusion, and apparently no ordinary efforts would be needed to restore order in the chaotic mass. Long lines of wagons and ambulances were still lying down the middle road towards Winchester; pieces of artillery were with great difficulty being drawn through the woods in an oblique direction towards Newtown. On every side, close at hand and far away in the distance, were lines of troops, upon whose arms and equipments the sun shone with great brilliancy. Horses stopped to graze, and the men who had been deprived of their breakfast by the rebels' early movement began quietly munching a hard tack and loudly telling of their feats during the last few hours.

General Sheridan proceeded to form his line of battle about a mile to the north of Middletown. The Eighth corps was placed on the left, and held the Winchester turnpike. General Wright's veterans took the centre of the line, and the Nineteenth corps the right. General Custer's cavalry was also placed on the left, to guard the flank of the Eighth corps. The rebel line of battle was formed on the outskirts of Middletown.

On the arrival of General Sheridan General Wright resumed command of the Sixth corps, General Getty came back to his division (the Second), while the Third (General Ricketts) was commanded by Colonel Keifer, of the One Hundred and Tenth Ohio.

General Sheridan at this time showed his knowledge of how to gain a soldier's confidence. He had the corps formed in lines of battle and then took through the ranks. Every man received him with the wildest enthusiasm, and occasionally the General resorted to his bow to inform the men of his intention to return to his old headquarters before nightfall. The men greeted the announcement with the wildest cheering, which again resulted in their intention of accompanying their dashing leader. The men were afterwards allowed an interval of rest, when some of the old veterans knelt down and bowed their heads.

REMARKS OF THE BATTLE.

During this intermission in the storm of battle the deadly elements were quietly gathering strength to renew the dreadful conflict. Shells from the rebel batteries were constantly dropping in and around our lines, but the men suffered little from this firing. Our batteries were also employed, waking up the rebel troops, but no fighting of any importance took place for over an hour.

SHERIDAN DIVIDES THE REBELS.

About half past one o'clock General Sheridan resumed command of the battle. The Nineteenth corps lines were thrown forward, and, with their batteries playing bravely on the rebel position, affairs began to assume a more cheerful aspect. The rebels had apparently got weary from their efforts in the morning, for their yell at the line was now faint and far less keen. Our line continuously advanced slowly it is true, but very surely. At this time General Wright was hit on the wrist, and the ball traversed his arm, separating his flesh in a very bad manner.

General Fisher of the Sixth corps, but who was wounded on the head, was also wounded on the head, and the loss of the time had been diminished, and the horses taken a short distance to the rear where the crest of the hill protected them from the rebel shells. The cavalrymen were for some time doing duty as infantry, and inflicted great loss on the rebels with their carbines and bayoneted rifles.

The rebels soon got the range of Merritt's and Custer's positions and commenced pouring in their shots very severely.

The charge which decided the fate of this eventful day was made at four o'clock in the afternoon. Fifteen minutes before that time General Custer's division of the Sixth corps formed in two lines of battle on a piece of open ground on the right of the turnpike. The other division of that corps and also General Emory's command (the Nineteenth corps) formed in a similar manner, but under cover of the woods.

At four o'clock the lines commenced to move forward. More than half the distance was traversed and scarcely a shot was fired. Then suddenly the rebel batteries opened with terrific volleys on our advancing lines. The shells whistled about their heads or burst in hubbub and success their heavy mortar. But mingling with the roar of artillery and the din of exploding shells was now heard the ring of musketry.

The firing was the most constant and rapid which has ever been heard in the valley, and was never equalled on the continent except at the battle of the Wilderness. Columns of Winchester left their horses and stood in neat groups in the streets listening to the sounds of the dreadful conflict which was then in progress ten miles away.

Our lines slightly wavered under the withering fire of the rebel batteries, but they did not give way or fall back.

When but a short distance from the rebel lines the first grand push was made. Our men were inside their lines and the day was won. Without any regard to the order of their going the rebels fled through the streets of Middletown, leaving their guns in our hands and many small arms and several standards of colors.

General Sheridan, with his usual promptitude, ordered the pursuit to be kept up. Our cavalry was at once ordered forward, and the rebels continued their flight over Cedar creek, on route for Strasburg, which place they also left in their rear shortly after sunset.

During the latter part of the day the rebel general Ramseur was mortally wounded, and he subsequently fell into our hands, and the rebel general Lee, commanding a brigade in Ramseur's division, is also reported killed, and the body in our hands.

The substantial fruits of this victory are now to be seen in the shape of forty-three pieces of artillery and a number of wagons and ambulances. General Custer has just sent in word that the prisoners he has captured are being constantly increased, and that assistance will be needed to guard them.

General Sheridan has kept his word, and re-established