

"Michigan Troops in the Battle of Gettysburg."

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MICHIGAN AT GETTYSBURG



ADDRESS OF
GEN. L. S. TROWBRIDGE.



JULY 1st, 2nd and 3rd, 1863.

JUNE 12th, 1889

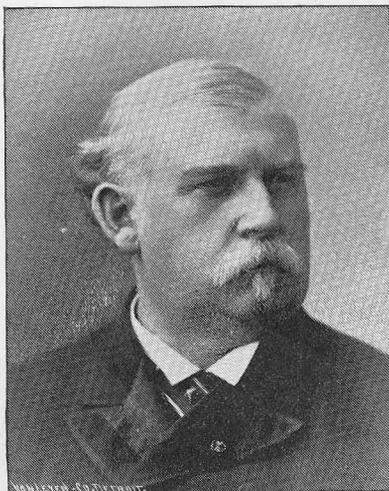
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GEN. L. S. TROWBRIDGE.

Address of Gen. L. S. Trowbridge.

Michigan Troops in the Battle of Gettysburg.

Mr. President, Fellow Soldiers and Fellow Citizens :

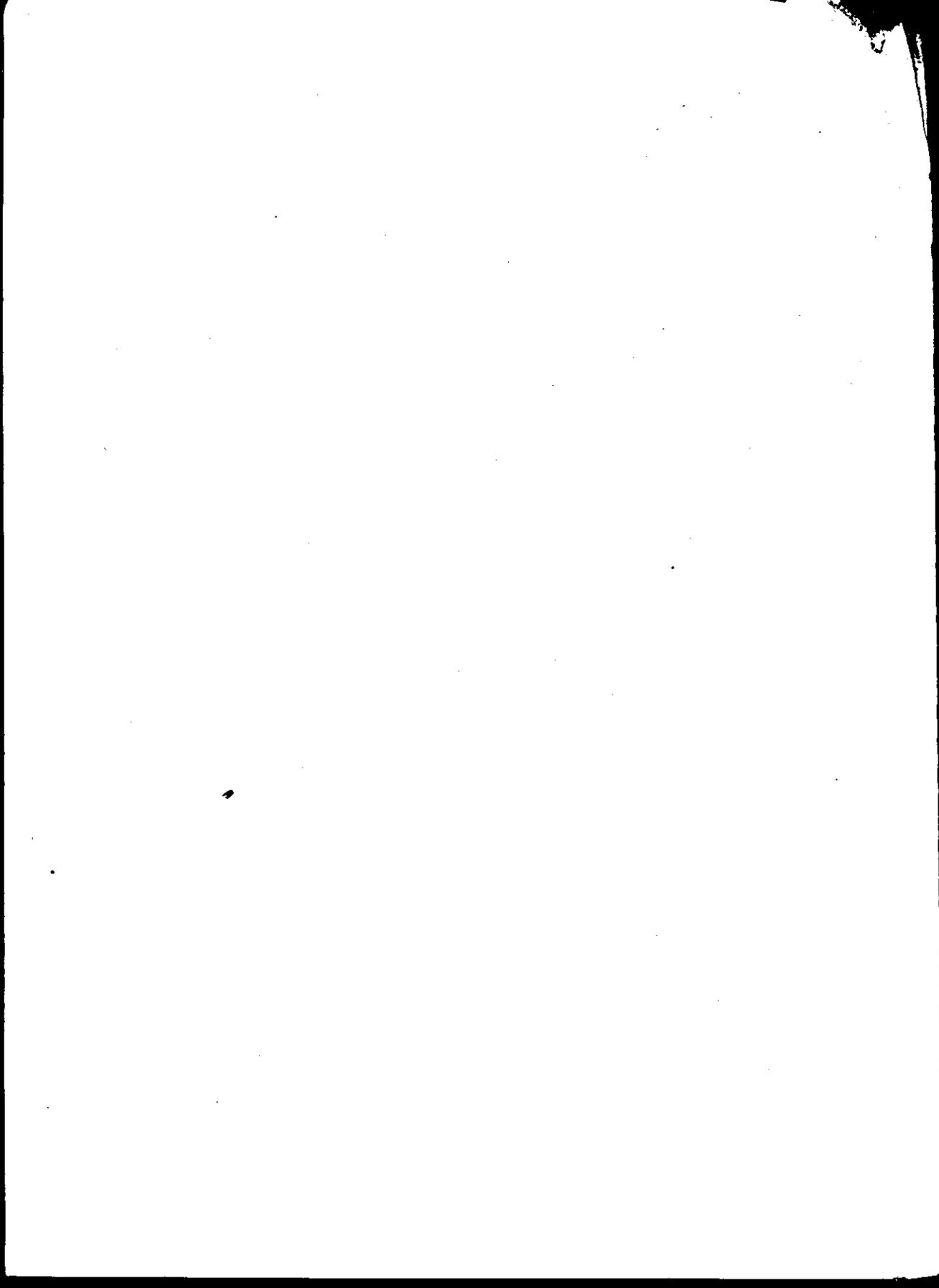
We stand on hallowed ground to-day. Upon the occasion which has brought us together, surrounded, as it is, by so much that is grave and pathetic, I do not feel that I can properly discharge the pleasant duty assigned to me without some reference to the great cause which made this occasion possible. The fierce conflict which raged over these fields a little less than twenty-six years ago was the natural result of causes of long standing—the full fruitage, so to speak, of seeds planted before the formation of the government. While the Battle of Gettysburg was, in a sense, the culmination or climax of the war, the war itself was the culminating contest of forces which, for years, had maintained a constant and ceaseless struggle.

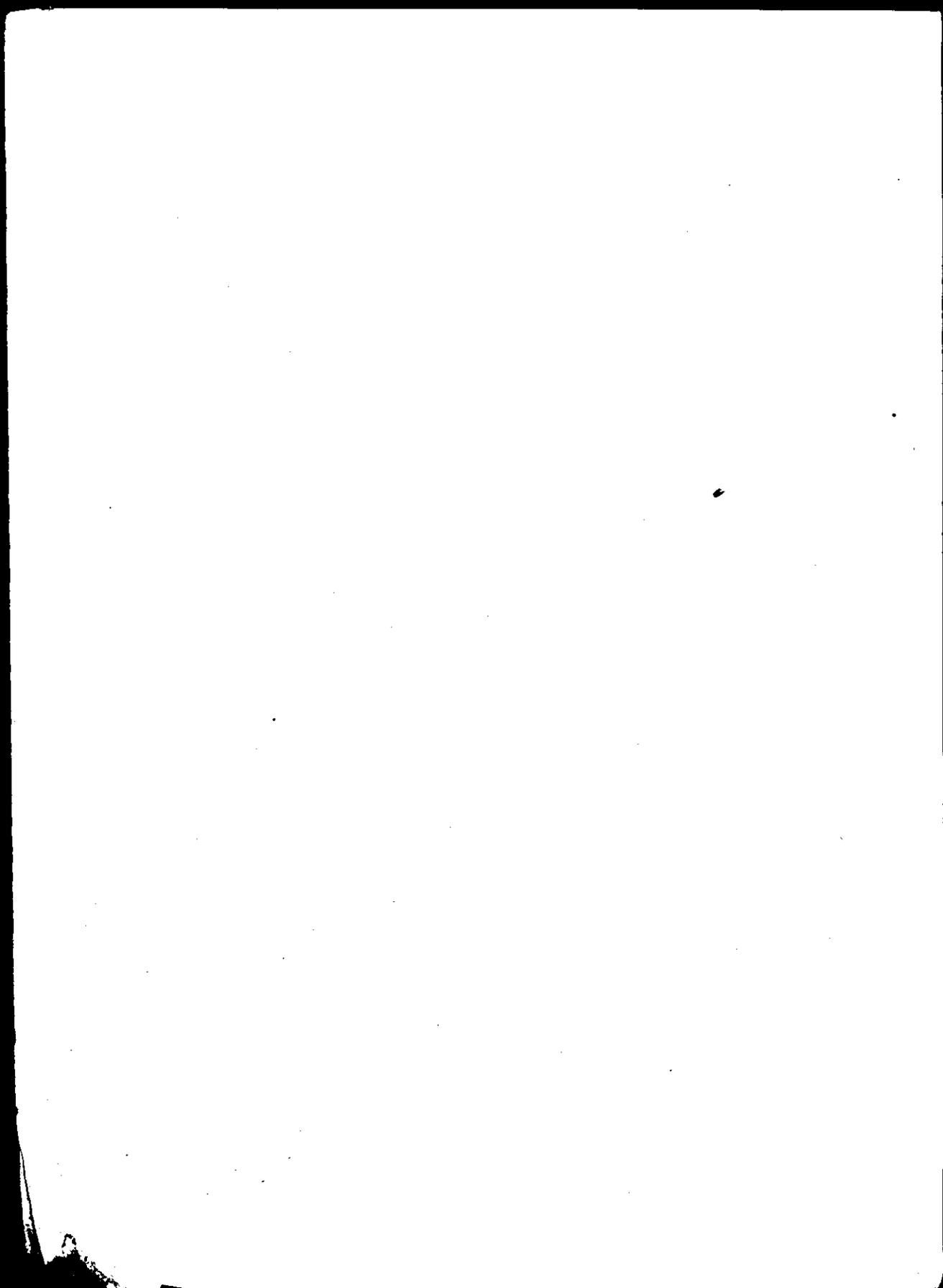
To the thoughtful student of history the story of the first century of our republic will present some striking and impressive lessons. Looking back over it, we find it difficult to understand how it could be that the founders of our government failed, as they did, to understand and appreciate the evils and dangers which lay concealed in the institution of human slavery. There were, indeed, a few who seemed to comprehend the dangers which it threatened, and whose minds were filled with gloomy apprehensions for the future, but they were very few, and marked exceptions to the great mass of their associates. The vast majority, men of clear perceptions and high ideals as they were, conceding the evil character of the institution, seemed to think it a small matter, and unimportant when compared with other great interests involved, and they trusted that in some way—how they could not tell—but in some way it would quietly disappear under the operation of natural causes.

Think for one moment of the startling inconsistency involved in the very origin and establishment of our independence. When, wearied, oppressed, and harrassed by the unreasonable exactions of their distant parent government, our forefathers determined to assert their independence, they deemed it necessary to so state their case as

to justify their course in the eyes of the civilized world. They therefore set forth their grievances in a declaration which has come down to us with almost the power and authority of inspiration. At the very outset of that declaration they declare as truths self-evident, needing neither argument nor demonstration, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. These were great truths and noble thoughts, worthy a brave and resolute people. They were old truths, but never before had been so distinctly stated or so boldly announced. But while they boldly proclaimed these great truths as self-evident, they knew that every day they were being practically denied. While flinging to the breeze their beautiful flag, and boastfully proclaiming this to be the land of the free and the home of the brave, they knew that, within the shadow of that flag, men were being bought and sold like cattle, families were being torn asunder, and the dearest rights of humanity utterly disregarded and basely violated.

What a hideous mockery the ringing sentences of the great declaration must have seemed to any thoughtful observer of the real situation. These truths are self-evident. They need no argument or demonstration. All men are created equal. They are endowed by their Creator with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that right is inalienable. There floats our flag, glorious symbol of these great truths, and the sure guarantee of their maintenance. Under its protecting folds shall all men be safe in the enjoyment of these God-given, inalienable rights. But hark! What means that sound of clanking chains; that mother's piercing shriek; that father's awful groan? What means that crack and whir of the lash, as it buries itself in the quivering flesh of a human body, right here under the shadow of that flag? And that gang of men going down the road yonder chained together, with tearful eyes and bleeding backs, torn from their wives and children—who are they? Are they convicted criminals going to their appointed tasks? Oh, no; they are not criminals at all. They are not even accused of crime. They are slaves under an institution handed down to us by our fathers. It is undoubtedly an evil, but it will soon pass away. But are they not men, and have you not declared as a truth self-evident that they are







endowed by their Creator with the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that that right is inalienable? How reads the great declaration? Oh, yes, that is true to some extent. They are men for some purposes. They are men sufficiently to swell the census returns and fix the ratio of representation in the halls of congress. They are at least three-fifths men, and good enough for that, but as to their having rights, why — that is another question.

Such was the rough logic of the discussion. Undoubtedly there were many who allowed the voice of conscience to be silenced by the demands of avarice and greed. As I have said, there were many who were willing to concede the evils of slavery, but who trusted that in some undefined, unknown way it would pass away under the operation of natural causes. It is not likely that any one dreamed that the small and harmless evil, as they deemed it, would one day drench the land in blood, and sweep into untimely graves thousands of the choicest spirits of our young manhood.

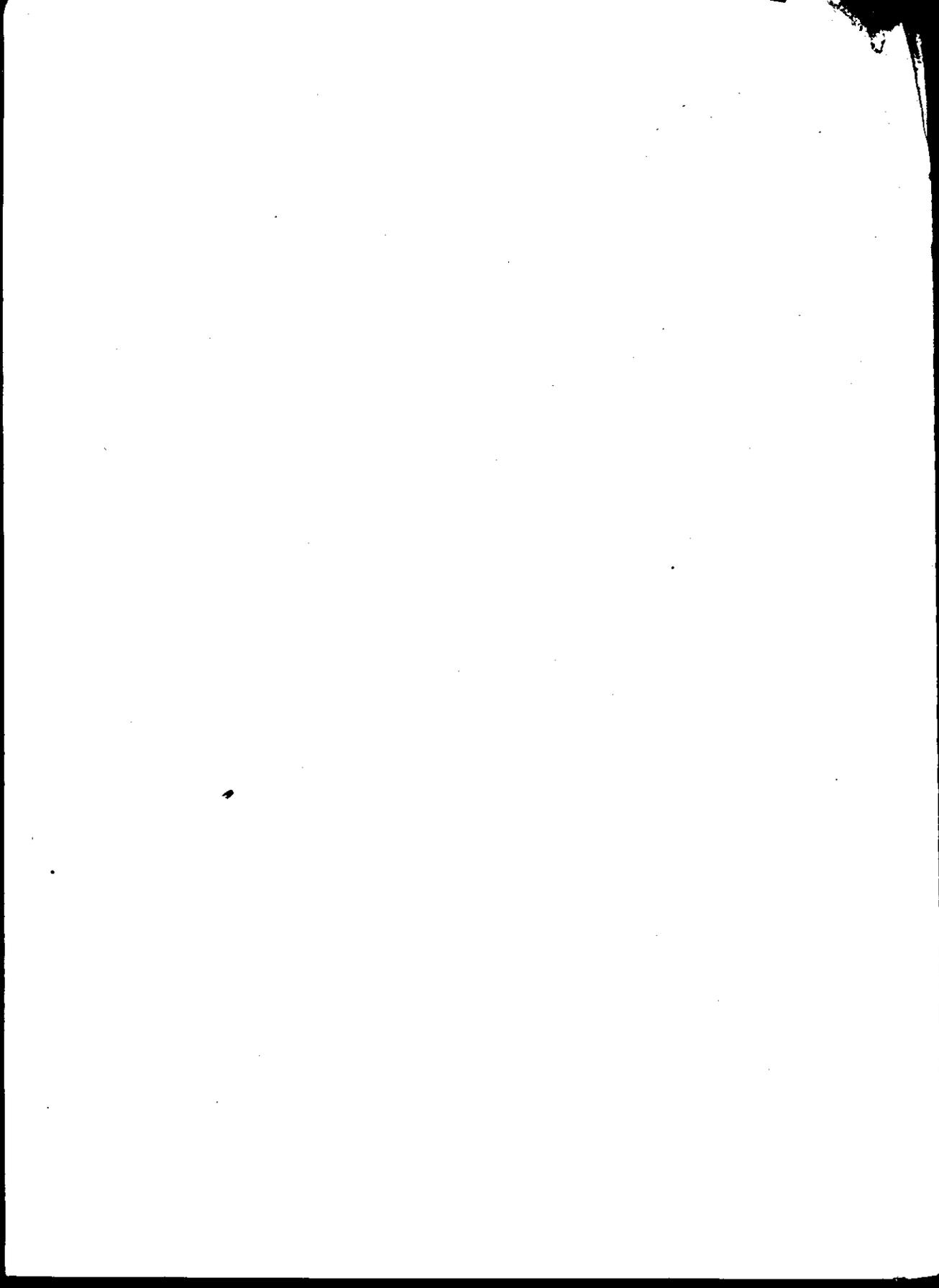
The wonder is that our forefathers were so slow to realize the inefficiency of all temporary measures, and the necessity for some remedy which should reach the root of the trouble. In medical science we understand that a remedy to be effectual must reach the roots of a disease. Applications which only treat the outward symptoms do not effect a cure. They may for a time soothe the pain and allay the outward irritation and inflammation, but they do not reach the cause of the pain. And so in the case of slavery. The poultice, or plaster, or surface dressing of compromise did not, and, of necessity, could not reach the virulent canker which was gnawing at the vitals of the republic. It might for a time allay the outward irritation, and soothe the patient into the fond hope of ultimate relief; but it did not, and could not reach the root of the disease. Sooner or later the inefficiency of this surface dressing will be discovered, and the sharp knife of the surgeon will be called into requisition.

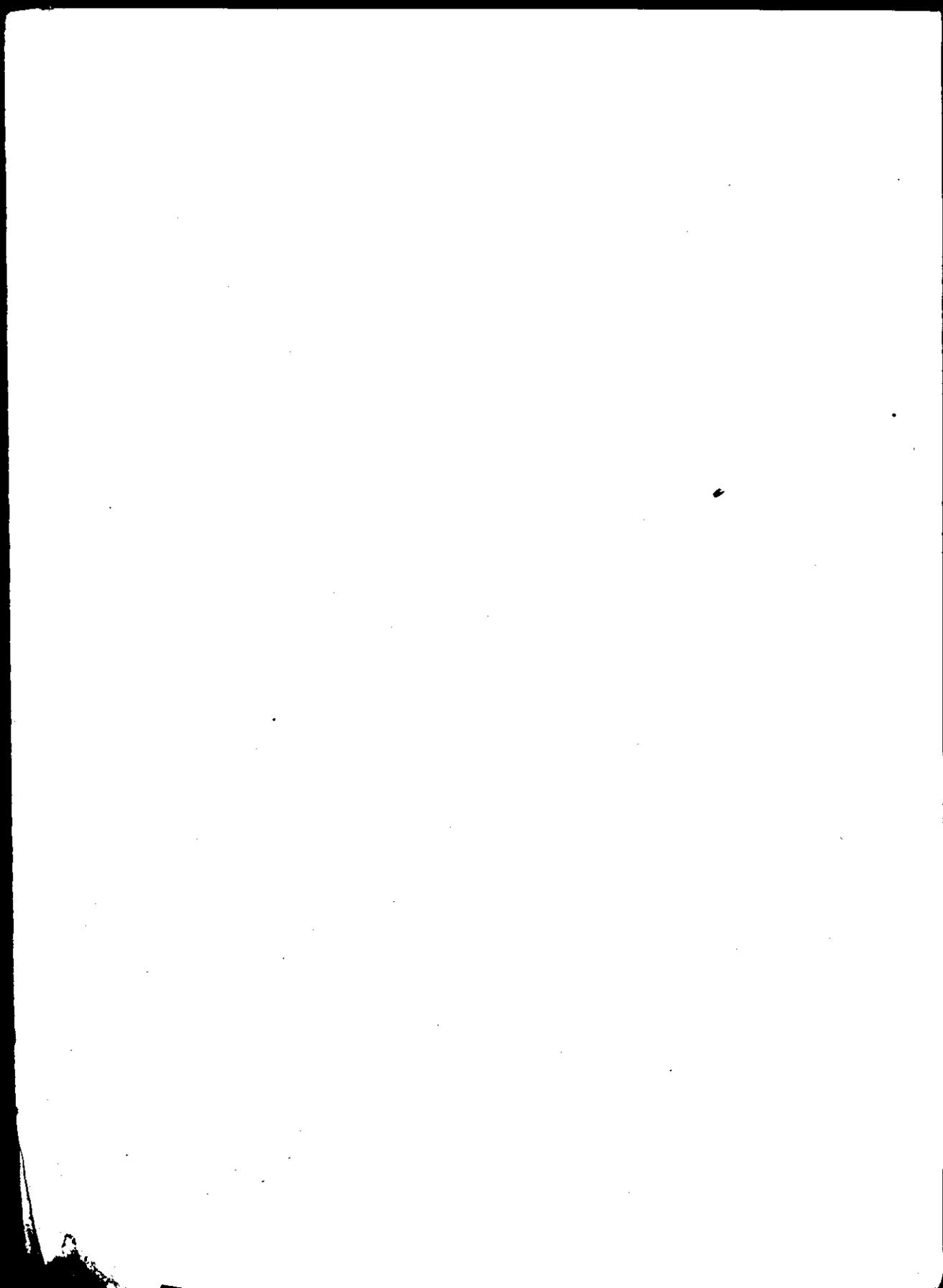
Mark the progress of the disease. Three-quarters of a century have passed since the utterance of the great declaration. The small and weak government, established under great discouragement, and with much distrust, has grown to be a great nation. Its name and fame have spread to the remotest nations of the earth. Its flag is seen on every sea. It is still boastfully the land of the free and the home of the brave. But the little harmless evil which was soon to pass away under the operation of natural causes has grown, too. The

invention of the cotton gin has opened new and broad fields for the use of slave labor. The nature of slavery has not changed, but the demands of human avarice and greed have grown apace. Slave labor has become immensely profitable. The slave power, with its political allies, has become a great factor in affairs of state. It has grown robust and stout. From a weak and harmless thing, only to be tolerated and soon to disappear, it has become the haughty, arrogant dictator. It dictates laws. It rules the State. Its victims, once numbered by thousands, have increased to millions. Their cries may be heard in half the land, but they fall on dull and listless ears. The men of conscience, who really believe the self-evident truths of the great declaration, busy with their shops, their farms, their merchandise, are occasionally startled by the increasing demands of this great wickedness, but for the sake of peace they yield, and every concession has been construed as a fresh indication of weakness or fear. With the increased pecuniary value involved in slavery, has come the necessity of further, and better reasons for its justification, which have been eagerly sought and easily found. Men high in church and state have proclaimed its divine origin. The sublime truths of the great declaration are pronounced glittering generalities. The executive and legislative departments of the government have been called in to its support, and have promptly responded to the call. Without delay they hasten to obey its every mandate. And, strangest of all in this strange history, the highest judicial tribunal in the land has solemnly declared that a black man has no rights which a white man is bound to respect, aye, and more than that, that the constitution by its own force carries this accursed thing to the remotest corners of our free territories. And that by the court of last resort. Ah, is it the court of last resort? We soon shall see. The purposes of God are ripening fast.

Slowly the curtain rises on the last act in the great tragedy of this strange history. The prophetic words of Mr. Seward and Mr. Lincoln, wise indeed beyond their time, are about to be fulfilled. The conflict between freedom and slavery is now seen to be irrepressible, and the question whether the whole land is to be free or slave, is soon to be determined. Two hostile ideas are to meet in deadly strife. Two conflicting civilizations are to test their strength on the field of battle. On one side the defenders of the institution of slavery have at last discarded compromise. They have drawn the









No. 100-100 Michigan Inf. Monument - Stone's Ass.

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sword, not to cut the disease from the body politic, but to murder the State, and establish a vast empire with slavery as its chief corner stone. On the other side it is the great free north girding its loins for one more struggle for human liberty. Disguise it as you choose, cover it up as you may, to that complexion must it come at last. There goes a cannon shot whose rebounding echoes are heard around the world. It is slavery's challenge to the conscience of the world.

The conflict is upon us with all its sickening train of misery and distress. For four dreadful years it drenched the land with blood. It swept into untimely graves thousands of our best beloved; our hills, and valleys, and plains were filled with mourning. But it reached an end at last, and, when it was over, there lay the great monster of human slavery, dead on the field of battle; slain by the sword to which it had appealed. And when the smoke of battle had rolled away, there was found on the corner stone of the great republic deeply graven by the point of the sword this new declaration of freedom: "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime, of which the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

My friends: Such was the contest in which the Battle of Gettysburg holds a most conspicuous place. Whether considered with reference to the magnitude of the forces employed, the vast extent of territory over which it raged, or the great questions involved in it, it has no parallel in human history.

It is true that in the beginning we aimed not at emancipation, but there was a divinity which shaped our ends. While in the beginning the defence of popular government was the inspiring thought with all patriotic citizens, before the struggle closed, even that great question was seen to be overshadowed by the necessity for the overthrow of the institution which, of itself, was the greatest danger to popular government. It is a gratifying thought now, that among those who rejoice most sincerely over the result, are to be found very many of those who were arrayed against us, and thousands of the brave men who so gallantly risked their lives in defence of slavery, now recognize in its overthrow a priceless blessing.

A writer in the Century Magazine, who himself followed the flag of the confederacy, in a little poem of rare force and beauty,

entitled "The High Tide at Gettysburg," voices, I am sure, the thoughts of thousands of his associates:

They fell who lifted up a hand,
And bade the sun in heaven to stand!
They smote and fell who set the bars,
Against the progress of the stars,
And stayed the march of motherland.

They stood, who saw the future come,
On through the fight's delirium!
They smote and stood, who held the hope
Of nations on that slippery slope
Amid the cheers of christendom.

God lives! He forged the iron will,
That clutched and held that trembling hill,
God lives and reigns! He built and lent,
The heights for freedom's battlement,
Where floats her flag in triumph yet.

By common consent the fierce contest which raged over these beautiful fields nearly twenty-six years ago, is considered the most illustrious of the many that marked that bloody struggle.

We have met to formally dedicate the beautiful monuments which our patriotic State has erected in honor of the brave men, who, on this altar of their country, freely gave their lives that the nation might live, and that the thought of self-government, by a free and intelligent people, should not perish from the earth. I am bidden to speak to you of the Michigan organizations which took part in this great battle. I shall not confine myself to the dry statistics of strength and losses in the battle. They can be found in the histories, and the figures have been collected and placed in the programme with which you are furnished. Neither can I speak in detail of the tactical movements of the troops. It will be sufficient if I point out, as accurately as I can, the points where they were principally engaged, with some reference to the manner in which they discharged their duty. Yet there would seem to be no necessity for the latter, for never yet anywhere, on any field, under any circumstances, have the soldiers from our State turned their backs upon the enemy in disgraceful flight, and there is yet to be found the occasion when Michigan troops have not filled the full measure of their high duties and responsibilities.

If I speak of the regiments in their numerical order, I must of









necessity depart somewhat from the natural story of the battle. There are many places on this historic field whose names are as familiar to us as household words. Little Round Top, the Peach Orchard, the Wheat Field, Cemetery Ridge, Culp's Hill, Reynold's Grove, and, to the cavalry, Rummell's Farm are names strangely and painfully familiar.

On the second day of the battle, when Longstreet made his desperate attempt to turn the left flank of Meade's army and get possession of the Round Tops, from whose commanding heights he could successfully inflade almost the entire Union line, in a portion of the line now known as the Loop, between the Wheat Field and the Emmitsburg road, stood the 1st Infantry, veterans of many a hard fought field, but especially distinguished for its heroic valor in the awful carnage of Second Bull Run. In the fierce contest at the Loop, one of the bloody salients of this line of battle, those brave men gallantly resisted the efforts of the enemy to dislodge them, and by their splendid courage contributed greatly to the defeat of the enemy's cherished purpose. Its commanding officer, the gallant Col. Abbott, being wounded.

A little to the right of the 1st stands the Peach Orchard, still preserving its character as a peach orchard, a place as familiar to all students of this battle as Cemetery Ridge or Culp's Hill, and rendered doubly dear to all Michigan people by the costly sacrifice of her brave sons. There fought the brave men of the 3d Infantry, veterans of many a fierce fight, who, under the leadership of its gallant colonel, gained fresh and immortal glory. It was to this regiment that Gen'l. Sickles sent his last order before being wounded; an order expressing the highest commendation and warmest appreciation of its gallant conduct. It is a cause for sincere gratitude that the bullet which pierced the body of the colonel on that day, did not reach a vital part, but that his life was spared, and he is permitted to honor this occasion as our presiding officer.

A name not less familiar than the Peach Orchard is the Wheat Field. There the 4th Infantry held its ground against great odds, and by its splendid courage vindicated its high reputation already earned in many a fierce contest. It was there that the brave Colonel Harrison H. Jeffords perished by a bayonet thrust while defending the colors of his regiment.

In the piece of woods lying just west of the Wheat Field was

the sturdy 5th Infantry, a regiment with the sad but proud and glorious distinction of having lost more commanding officers than any other regiment from the State. In this bloody contest this gallant regiment maintained its high reputation earned in the earliest stages of the war, and confirmed and increased by every conflict in which it had been engaged.

This action was no exception to others as regarded casualties to its commanding officers. The first, Col. Pulford, was stricken down only to be followed by the second in command, Maj. Mathews. Fortunately their wounds were not fatal, and they are still spared to their devoted friends.

Farther to the left, on the slope of Little Round Top, the 16th Infantry, with the other regiments of Vincent's brigade, arrived just in time to avert serious disaster. We all know how the movement of Longstreet was revealed to Gen. Warren by a flash—literally a flash—from the shining pieces of the Confederate column, as they chanced to catch the sunlight. We know how, catching the full force of the meaning of that flash of light, like an inspiration, ordering the signal corps to keep up a vigorous waving of their flags, he hurried off to find troops to meet the impending danger. The first organization which he met was Vincent's brigade, in which was the 16th, which he hurried to the point of danger. Its arrival was most opportune. In such an emergency hours, minutes even are of priceless value. A delay of even a few minutes would have largely increased the threatened danger. By their timely arrival and their stubborn resistance they saved the army from great disaster.

In this struggle on Little Round Top, as well as in the Wheat Field and beyond, there were four companies of sharpshooters from Michigan, in the 1st and 2d U. S. Sharpshooters, under the command of Gen'l. Hiram Berdan, who manfully did their duty.

These troops were all engaged in resisting the attempt of Longstreet to turn the left flank of Meade's army. They were all in the thickest of the fight and bore themselves in a manner most worthy—worthy the State which sent them out, and worthy the high reputation they had gained in many fiercely contested fields.

On the third day of the battle, when Pickett made his heroic attempt to break the lines on Cemetery Ridge, among the many organizations to meet the charge was the 7th Infantry and the 9th Michigan Battery. The 7th Infantry had gained imperishable renown



1911—MICHIGAN SHARPSHOOTERS' MONUMENT—LITTLE ROCK







1ST. ORCH. BRIG. 1ST. DIV. 1ST. CORPS

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at Fredericksburg, and in every engagement in which it had participated had maintained its high character. Here it lost its commanding officer, Lieut. Col. Steele, and by its heroic sacrifice again testified its devotion to the cause of human liberty. The 9th Battery discharged the full measure of its duty in defending this ridge against Pickett's fierce assault.

Having taken up the regiments substantially in their numerical order, I could not follow the order of the battle, and we are now taken back to the first day of the fight when such great results were accomplished by comparatively few men.

When the 1st Corps came on to the field on the morning of the 1st, among the first to be thrust into the baptism of fire was the 24th Infantry. Comparisons upon such an occasion as this are out of place, and yet it will not be improper to say that on no battlefield of the war was there greater heroism shown than by that regiment on that day. Confronted by vastly superior numbers, with most stubborn courage it maintained its ground until more than half its numbers lay dead or wounded on that bloody field. Out of twenty-eight officers in the fight twenty-two were either killed or wounded. Out of four hundred and sixty-eight men engaged, two hundred and ninety-four were killed or wounded. The loss was very great, but the emergency was great. Hours were most precious, and the check thus given to the enemy permitted the concentration of the Army of the Potomac and rendered possible the great victory of the third day.

It remains for me to speak of the cavalry. By the reorganization of the Cavalry Corps the four Michigan regiments, the 1st, 5th, 6th and 7th had been organized into a brigade under the command of Gen'l. Custer in Kilpatrick's division. This division, after some spirited engagements with Stuart's cavalry, reached Two Taverns early in the morning of July 3d. Kilpatrick was directed to take position on the left flank of the army, but Gen'l. Gregg, with a true soldierly instinct, anticipating the fierce struggle about to take place on the right, took the responsibility of detaining Custer and placing him on the right flank. I shall not attempt to give the tactical movements of each regiment, but shall content myself with speaking of the general result. In conjunction with the assault of Pickett on the infantry line, Gen'l. Stuart attempted with four brigades to turn the right of Meade's army, reach the Baltimore Pike, and by this diversion largely enhance the chances of Pickett's success. Had he succeeded

it is impossible to calculate the consequences. It is quite possible that the battle might have had a different ending.

Undoubtedly a force of six thousand cavalry in the rear of the Army of the Potomac, among the trains and the reserve artillery, might have wrought immense mischief. That he did not succeed was due in a large measure to the presence of Custer's brigade. I do not say that brigade did all the fighting, but it is no extravagance to say that the brunt of the fighting fell on that brigade. The Confederate officers who came here three years ago to assist in marking the locations of the various regiments, all, I think, without exception, spoke of the Michigan troops as those with which they were engaged. Did time and the occasion permit, a thrilling story could be told of that cavalry fight. It must suffice to say that all the regiments maintained the high character of Michigan soldiers. The 7th, under Col. Mann, in its gallant charge; the 6th in its irksome but important duty of supporting a battery; the 5th, under Col. Alger, now our honored and highly distinguished fellow citizen, with their Spencer rifles, holding the enemy in check until their ammunition was gone, then driving his dismounted men from the field in a mounted charge; the 1st, under that gallant soldier, Col. Town, in its dashing charge, unsurpassed by any in the war, hurling back in confusion a full brigade of the enemy, all, without exception, performed their duty nobly, and gained fresh laurels of honor for our beloved State.

I have spoken of the different organizations of Michigan troops engaged in the battle. I cannot close without one more reference. It is a curious fact that in popular estimation the whole thought of the Battle of Gettysburg seems to center about Pickett's charge on the third day. That charge and its repulse have been celebrated in song and story, and have received abundant attention at the hands of the historian. The men there engaged have received a soldier's reward, the crown of immortal glory. No word of mine shall detract in the smallest measure from the fame they so nobly won. But there were other services on other portions of the field which, in my judgment, have not received the attention which they have justly deserved. Time will not permit me to speak of them at length, and for my present purpose I must confine myself to one such instance. On the right of the infantry line, holding the important position of Culp's Hill, was the Twelfth Corps. On the second day of the fight, when its lines had been greatly weakened by sending reinforcements









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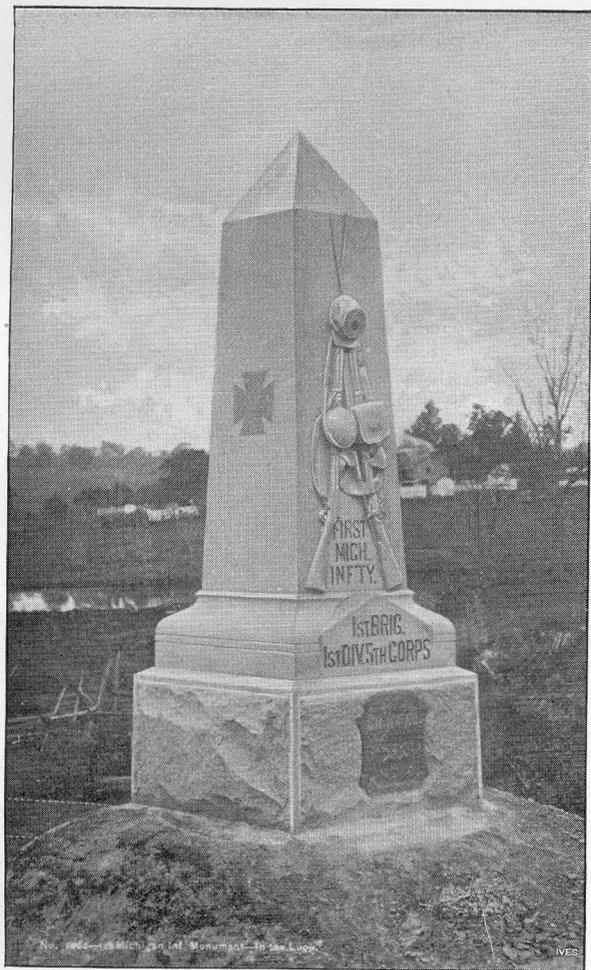
No. 1075—Michigan Cavalry Brigade Monument

to the Third Corps, the enemy had succeeded in forcing his way, against most heroic resistance, to the Baltimore Turnpike, and thus secured a position practically in rear of the Army of the Potomac, and full of threatening danger. It is impossible to over-estimate the possibilities of disaster had he been able to hold that position until Pickett made his charge. From that position he was driven by the returning troops of the Twelfth Corps, on the morning of the 3d, after a fight beginning about daylight and lasting several hours. Figures from the book of statistics recently published by Col. Fox, show that the killed and wounded in front of the Twelfth Corps exceeded by more than one hundred the killed and wounded in Pickett's charge. The Twelfth Corps was not composed of Michigan troops, but it was commanded by a Michigan man, one of the most worthy and distinguished soldiers produced by any State. It was through his skillful and brilliant generalship that that most important result was gained. A most accomplished soldier, a genial, courteous and courtly gentleman, a citizen whose patriotism was unmarred by the slightest appearance of self-seeking, he filled the full measure of our ideal as a patriotic soldier. All honor to brave, genial, unselfish General Alpheus S. Williams. We are happy to have with us to-day as our officer of the day one who was with him from the beginning till nearly the close of the war, Colonel Samuel E. Pittman.

Mr. President, though deeply tinged with sadness, the duty which brings us here is still a grateful duty. It is wise and patriotic to dedicate these beautiful monuments to our patriotic dead. We know full well that in the words of our martyr President, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." The cause for which they fought and for which they freely gave their lives was not the question of a passing hour, but in it were wrapped questions as broad as the wants of humanity, as lasting as time. Never before in the history of the world was any cause tested on the field of battle in which humanity had so much at stake. Not the humanity of a single race or age, but the humanity of all races and of ages yet to come. For here, on this field, not only the redemption of a race from slavery, but the possibility of self-government by a free and intelligent people hung trembling in the balance. We stand appalled before the huge hecatombs of human sacrifice which that great cause demanded, and

in agony we exclaim, oh! who shall measure the priceless cost of human liberty?

As we dedicate these monuments, let us all, especially you, my comrades, who were engaged in that great struggle, draw from this occasion fresh inspiration in the cause of loyalty. Loyalty to truth and righteousness; loyalty to the dear old flag; loyalty to the memory of the brave men who perished in that great struggle; loyalty to the bereaved and stricken ones at home; and loyalty to each other, as, in our declining years, we may stand in need of sympathy. Long after we shall have passed away shall these silent monuments, dumb and speechless though they be, proclaim the deep and lasting gratitude of a great people to their heroic dead.



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