

MEMORANDA ON THE CIVIL WAR.

The Question of Command on Cemetery Ridge.

IN the March CENTURY Mrs. Warren publishes a letter of General Warren, written soon after the battle of Gettysburg, showing that General Meade's orders to him on the afternoon of July 2d were to look, not specifically to Round Top, as I have stated, but — a much wider mission — to the left of the army. I regret that I did not see that letter before writing my brief account, in which I dwelt less on General Warren's services than I would otherwise have done, because they were so universally recognized. The duty confided to him was a very responsible one, and, as the result shows, could not have been intrusted to better hands. The quickness with which he comprehended the threatened dangers in all their magnitude, when a simple incident revealed them to *him* as it would have done to few others, the apt measures he adopted to avert them, and, above all, the promptitude — his leading characteristic — with which he *acted*, saved both the Round Tops to us, disconcerted the enemy's plans, and proved General Warren to be what he was, one of the ablest and most meritorious of our generals.

In the same CENTURY General F. A. Walker of General Hancock's staff comments on my expressed belief that, had my instructions for the cannonade of July 3d been carried out by Captain Hazard, commander of the artillery of the Second Corps, the Confederate assault would not have reached our lines; and considers this "a very severe impeachment" of General Hancock's conduct of his artillery. I fully appreciate and honor the motive of General Walker's courteous criticism, and his very kind references to myself, but he writes under misapprehensions which are widespread and misleading, and which, as they place me in a false position, I beg leave to explain. He says:

"In the first place, two antagonistic theories of authority are advanced. General Hancock claimed that he commanded *the line of battle* along Cemetery Ridge. General Hunt in substance alleges that General Hancock commanded the *infantry* of that line, and that he himself commanded the artillery.

"Winfield S. Hancock did not read his commission as constituting him a major-general of infantry, nor did he believe that a line of battle was to be ordered by military specialists. He knew that by both law and reason the defense of Cemetery Ridge was intrusted to him, subject to the actual, authentic orders of the commander of the Army of the Potomac, but not subject to the discretion of one of General Meade's staff-officers. . . .

"So much for the question of authority. On the question of policy there is only to be said that a difference of opinion appears . . . as to what was most expedient in a given emergency."

General Hancock's claim that he commanded all the troops of every description posted on his part of Cemetery Ridge is perfectly valid. It cannot be disputed, and I never questioned it. But all commands must be exercised subject to the established principles for the government of armies. Under these, commanders of special arms issue their own orders direct to their subordinates serving with army corps, who must submit them to the corps commanders with whom they

serve. The latter, being supreme on their own lines, can modify or countermand these orders, but by doing so they make themselves responsible for the result. Thus all conflicts or theories as to authority are avoided. Our "Regulations" (Scott's), adopted in 1821, reads:

"The superior officer of the corps of engineers, or of the artillery, serving with one of the army corps . . . will receive the orders of the commandant thereof, to whom the said superior officer of engineers or of artillery will communicate any orders he may receive from his own particular commandant-in-chief, attached to general headquarters."

Separate paragraphs provided rules for the military "staff" and administration, — the latter including the supply departments. "Staff-officers" are forbidden to give orders except in the names of their generals. From this rule administrative officers are specially exempted, their chiefs directing their respective departments in their own names, but subject to the control of their generals, with whom they serve.

All these regulations are essential to the management of a large army, but are only partly applicable to a two-company post, the school in which most of our officers both of the war-office and of the regiments were trained. So in the "Regulations" of 1861-3, they were all condensed into one short paragraph:

"Staff officers, and commanders of artillery, engineers, and ordnance, report to their immediate commanders the state of the supplies and whatever concerns the service under their direction, and receive their orders; and communicate to them the orders they receive from their superiors in their own corps."

Closely examined, this is correct; but it is obscure and misleading. It lumps together officers of the staff and of administration as "staff-officers," and so connects them with those of the special arms as seemingly to confirm the erroneous idea that engineer officers are staff-officers and of course that artillery officers must be the same. It is an odd notion, which could not find a lodgment in any other army than our own, that an artillery commandant-in-chief, a "corps commander" himself to all intents and purposes, and provided with a staff of his own, is "one of the staff-officers" who runs about a battle-field carrying "the actual and authentic orders" of the general-in-chief to other corps commanders. A "staff-officer" is an officer below the rank of brigadier, attached to the person or headquarters of a general as his aide or assistant.

To illustrate the general principle as to the service of the special arms, I quote from the "Instructions of Frederick the Great" to his artillery. He was himself, by the way, an "artillery specialist" of the highest order, yet I have never heard it suggested that this unfitted him for "ordering a line of battle." He was also a disciplinarian of the sternest school, yet he "almost preached insubordination" in order to reduce to a minimum the mischief that meddling with the artillery by any general, even the general-in-chief, might occasion. He says:

"It sometimes happens that the general in command, or some other general, is himself forgetful, and orders the fire to be opened too soon, without considering what injurious consequences may result from it. In such case the artillery officer must certainly obey, but he should fire as slowly as possible, and point the pieces with the utmost accuracy, in order that his shots may not be thrown away."

As to the other question, that of policy, each general must decide it for himself, and General Hancock presumably acted according to his best judgment in the emergency suddenly presented to him when the cannonade opened. I do not know his reasons for countermanding my orders, and therefore cannot discuss them, even were I disposed to do so. As to the hypothetical case presented by General Walker, the possible effect of the enemy's cannonade on the *morale* of the troops, and his question, "Who was the better judge, General Hunt or General Hancock?" I may be permitted to reply, that a corps commander ought to be, so far as his own corps is concerned. It is, however, one of the necessary duties of an artillery commander to study the qualities of the other arms, for these must be considered in organizing and distributing the artillery, and are, as we see in this very case, important elements in determining its service. I had studied the Army of the Potomac, believed in its high qualities, and when, for special reasons, I instructed our batteries to withhold their fire for a given period, I knew the severity of the trial to which I was subjecting all the troops. I knew, also, that while the batteries would be the direct object of the enemy's fire, their men must stand idle at the guns and bear its full fury, while the infantry, lying on the reverse slope of the ridge and out of the enemy's sight, would be partly sheltered from it. Yet I felt no misgiving as to the fortitude of my cannoners, and no doubt as to that of the infantry. I think I was justified by the event, for the troops on General Hancock's line where my instructions were not followed, and those on General Newton's line (on Hancock's immediate left), where they *were* followed, were in equal "heart and courage" for the "fearful ordeal of Longstreet's charge." The object of my orders, however, was to spare them this ordeal altogether by breaking up the charge before it reached our lines. Had my orders been fully carried out, I think their whole line would have been — as half of it was — driven back before reaching our position, and this would have given us our only chance for a successful counter-attack. As it was, the splendid valor of Pickett's division alone enabled the Confederates, although defeated, to preserve their *morale* intact.

Henry J. Hunt.

A Just Man and a Great Historical Work.

In the recent death of Lieutenant-Colonel Robert N. Scott of the Third Artillery, well known in connection with his work of compiling the War Records, the nation has met with a loss which is in many respects irreparable. It is not too much to say that no one now living possesses the intimate knowledge which Colonel Scott had gathered of the numerous disputed and still partly obscured points of our war history. The loss would be less if he had left written notes of his conclusions and of the records which sustained

them. Fortunately, however, the extended work upon which he was engaged — much greater, of its kind, than any Government has heretofore undertaken — is more advanced than many who have watched it since its inception suppose it to be.

Robert Nicholson Scott was born at Winchester, Tennessee, January 21st, 1838. His father was a widely known Scotch Presbyterian clergyman, and a man of untiring energy and great ability. In 1857, while with his father in San Francisco, young Scott was appointed second lieutenant in the Fourth Infantry. He was then nineteen years of age. Older officers under whom he served say that he was a marked man with them from the first. While full of life and sociability, there was a gravity, a large-mindedness, and a mature judgment manifested in the discharge of all duties committed to him that attracted the attention of his superiors. In November, 1861, he joined the Army of the Potomac with the rank of captain. He was engaged in the siege of Yorktown, was wounded at Gaines's Mill, and was brevetted Major for gallant conduct in that engagement. From June, 1863 to September, 1864 he was senior aide-de-camp to Major-General Halleck. He was lieutenant-colonel of volunteers on General Halleck's staff, and on duty with that officer at the headquarters of the army and the Military Division of the James until July, 1865. He went with General Halleck to the Pacific coast as adjutant-general of the Military Division of the Pacific, and served there with that officer until 1869, when he accompanied him to the Military Division of the South, where he served with him until 1872. It was during this long service with General Halleck, throughout which he held the most confidential relations with that officer, that he gained a knowledge which no other man of his rank, and few of any rank, acquired of the secret history of the war. A great part of Halleck's most confidential correspondence with Lincoln, Stanton, and the chief officers of the army is in the handwriting of Colonel Scott. On the 1st of January, 1878, he was ordered to Washington to take charge of the work of compiling the War Records. He was the author of a digest of military laws which is now the accepted authority to the time of its date. In addition to his duties in compiling the records, he was twice called on to assist in revising army regulations. He was assigned as the military secretary of the joint commission of the two Houses of Congress for the reorganization of the army under the Burnside bill, and at the time of his death was a member of a board to untangle, re-arrange, and revise the present compilation of army regulations. This wide range of duties performed under, or in association with, officers of great prominence, made him more generally known among those of high rank than almost any other officer of equal age and position. To this distinction can be added, as a crowning glory, that he gained and held the unqualified respect and cordial esteem of all.

To rich and varied stores of the most confidential knowledge concerning the moving reasons and forces which operated about the great headquarters, and of the real personal and official relations of those in command, Colonel Scott added severe, continuous, and methodical study. To guide him and give effect to his work he was possessed of thorough impartiality, unswerving