

**HOSPITAL SCENES AFTER  
THE BATTLE OF  
GETTYSBURG, JULY, 1863**

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Hospital scenes after the battle of Gettysburg, July, 1863 by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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OF

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JULY, 1863.



BY

THE PATRIOT DAUGHTERS OF LANCASTER

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# HOSPITAL SCENES

AFTER

## THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG.

JULY, 1863.

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It was a lovely June evening, when after having entertained a party of friends, I drove them into town, never dreaming of the state into which the usually quiet city had been plunged during the day. The first announcement made was, "the rebels are coming—they are at Columbia!" Their proximity was rather alarming. Truly, the quiet inhabitants of Lancaster had undergone a change; every one seemed intent on accomplishing some great object; what it was, I had some difficulty in discovering; first, to secrete everything they could from the invaders, and then to secrete themselves, or at least to send the timid members of their families to more distant cities. The stores were sending away their entire contents; droves of horses from the interior of the State were passing through to places of greater security, and their drivers were adding to the general consternation by telling of the doings of Lee's army in Franklin and Adams counties, how horses and cattle were stolen, how even boys were made to drive them back, how the grain had all been taken, and how York had been required to pay a hundred thousand dollars ransom. Things

did begin to look serious. What would be the fate of Lancaster county, with her well known stock and barns? We really began to tremble. Then came the Governor's call for troops and we had little time to think of ourselves; there were others to be cared for. The boys were to be fitted out, haversacks were to be made and filled, shirts and stockings prepared, and the many nameless etceteras provided. Then after our own had been supplied, both benevolence and patriotism dictated to think of others. Accordingly the society's rooms were opened, and all of us worked for our less fortunate soldiers, who had neither mothers nor sisters to interest themselves in their behalf. And as we worked, the sad, quiet expression of all faces told of the deep interest felt. To be sure, it was no new thing to meet and work; this had been done since the commencement of the war. Regiments had been furnished, hospitals supplied, returning regiments had been welcomed; in fact we have done what we could. But now each felt as if they were working for their homes, and for those who were going forth to protect them.

So the days passed slowly by. All who could get away from the city had gone, and the place, never very gay, now assumed the quiet aspect of despair. Its deep gloom was only interrupted by the passing through of thousands of troops for the defense of the State Capital, and the arrival of Milroy's wagon train, who were retreating from Winchester, exhausted and sorely smarting under their late defeat.— They encamped on an adjoining field, dusty and weary; their fires were soon lighted, and as their haversacks supplied both the utensils and materials for cooking, their preparations were soon completed.

We had taken care of the sick ones and fed as many of the others as we could, and after tea walked up, to try and find out if possible something of our expected enemy. They all had the same tale to tell, of hurried marches, jaded minds and exhausted bodies, and looked forward to a rest here for a few days, with evident satisfaction. But their pleasing anticipations were soon to be dissipated, for before morning the order came to break up camp, and by daylight they were many, many miles away.

This, to us, was one of the most eventful nights of the invasion.—

The bridge at Columbia was fired early in the evening, and though ten miles distant, we saw it distinctly. No lovelier evening can be imagined. The moon was shining in the clear and cloudless sky, and the lurid flashes from the burning bridge gave every thing an almost supernatural appearance. During the still hours of that summer night, we watched and waited, not knowing what the morrow would bring forth. The morning came, and with it the welcome intelligence that the burnt bridge had stopped the career of the invaders; and that finding no crossing, they had been obliged to retrace their steps, but that at any moment news of a severe battle might be expected. A few days brought the intelligence that a battle was in progress at Gettysburg and that Reynolds, our own brave Reynolds, had fallen! This was all; but it was enough to make us sad, and earnest, and grateful, that we had been spared from all the horrors of scenes which we knew were being enacted near enough to make us tremble. The two succeeding days were passed at the rooms of the society, in constant labor, preparing for the expected demands. Many boxes were packed and the gentlemen who volunteered to take our supplies to the battlefield, were furnished with whatever was requisite to assist them in their sad duties; and we were amply repaid for all our labors, by knowing that *our stores were the first that arrived on the battle-field*, arriving at a time when thousands were suffering and dying—dying there in a country that had been robbed of everything by the invaders, and in the midst of people, who were almost paralyzed by the dreadful scenes through which they had passed. The stores were given into the hands of the Christian Commission, with the proviso that our delegates were to have access to them, and use whatever they required. In return, this noble society shared their room with us, and when their Hospital stores arrived, made us heartily welcome to everything they had. The last of our goods had been despatched, the excitement of the week had subsided, the rooms were cleared from the litter of preparation, and two or three of our most active members were commissioned to devise plans for the future. A driving chilly storm had set in to add to the gloom and we talked over and pictured to ourselves, the situation of our poor soldiers exposed as



they must be, to the inclemency of the weather. At last there was a thought-pause, when one of us suggested that we ought to go to Gettysburg ourselves, for if ever our services as a society were needed, it was now. At first, all the difficulties of the undertaking were presented; and indeed they seemed insurmountable; for railroad communication had been stopped and we could procure no vehicles, all having been pressed into service, by those who had gone for the laudable purpose of seeing that most horrible of all spectacles, a battle-field.

We had almost given it up in despair, when Mr. Slagel, (a nephew of our kind and most excellent president, Mrs. Hubley,) came in; he said he had brought eleven horses and his wagon and carriage to Lancaster county when the rebels were expected, and if we thought of going to Gettysburg, he would gladly take us and our stores to Adams county to-morrow, if we could be ready. Our preparations were soon completed, and the next morning, though it rained in torrents, we started, a sad-looking party, but not looking any gloomier than we felt. Before arriving at Columbia, however, the sun began to shine at intervals, and with the change of the weather, came more hopeful anticipations. Soon the Susquehanna hills were seen in the distance, and knowing that the loss of the bridge had been supplied by a boat, we trusted that we should be quickly ferried across, and before dark, be many miles on our way to York. But the more haste the less speed, says the proverb; and we found it so, for the boat had already gone over, and we waited patiently for its return. Our party was not alone in this severe trial of patience, for the wharf was crowded with a motley mass of men, wagons and horses, forcibly reminding one of scenes in California, when the golden attractions of that famous land drew so many to its shores.

The Captain assured us that his orders were to forward immediately all hospital stores and nurses, and that he should make every effort to do so. But he was not consulted; for the moment the boat touched the shore, many who had been waiting since morning, jumped aboard and could not be dislodged. There we sat, and saw the boat float out in the distance, and woman-like only gave up, when the Captain told us he should make no more trips that day, as the river was too high.

We were sadly disappointed, and fully realized what a barrier our noble river had been to the progress of the invading hordes, and with what feelings they must have left its lovely banks. Here we ate our supper, and commenced our career in soldier-life.

I fear we presented a rather miserable appearance. The horses were embedded in the mud, and from want of use, and their sojourn on our plentiful farms, evinced their distaste to the four hour's detention. by plunging about in the most frantic manner, bespattering us with the liquid mud. It was very humiliating to present ourselves at the hotel in this style; but there was no alternative. There we had to remain until the next morning. We improved the hours before retiring in contracting the number of our packages; for five of us had been restricted to one small trunk; and though all had repeatedly declared that "they had nothing to wear," yet in unpacking the contents of the carriage, we found it truly alarming, and it required no small amount of management to bring order out of chaos. At last every thing was satisfactorily arranged, and with many injunctions to the little contractor, (who seemed to have supreme control of the arrangements at the Hotel) to call us early, we commended ourselves to the protecting care of a kind Providence, and slept.

The morning sun rose in a clear cloudless sky, and the beauty of this noble river never seemed so resplendant. Five o'clock found us at the appointed place, together with many others who had been there the day before, besides large accessions of new arrivals. Fortunately our horses were put on the flat, and ourselves in the carriages on the boat. There we ate our breakfast, waited four long hours, and arrived at Wrightsville at ten o'clock. As soon as we entered the place, we saw traces of our unwelcome guests; a large house, near the bridge was destroyed, and in passing through the main street, we saw many houses perforated by shot and shell. All around were rifle-pits thrown up, and there were many signs of war. But after leaving Wrightsville, (though the entire distance was traversed by the foe,) there were no depredations committed, not even a rail from any of the fences disturbed, showing the strict discipline under which they were kept, while in this part of the State. Not however, on account of any

regard for us, as one of their Generals asserted while at York; but they knew that if they relaxed their discipline, their army would become so demoralized, that they would lose all control of it. It was twelve o'clock when we arrived at York, where we met some friends returning from the battle-field, who gave us much valuable information as to what we would require. The most pressing want seemed to be tin-ware, wash basins, tin cups, &c., &c., which of course we immediately procured. Here we dined, and though York had anything but an enviable reputation during the raid, yet we must bear testimony to the loyalty and kind hospitality of Mr. Alfred Gartman, who, though an entire stranger to most of us, gave us a warm welcome, and a dinner, which in after days, when we were our own cooks and when our store rooms were not always luxuriously supplied, we looked back upon with longing eyes. The day had become excessively hot; and we found that if we went through to Gettysburg, we would arrive there at night, which would be very undesirable; so we accepted Mr. Slagel's kind invitation, and found a cordial welcome to one of the loveliest spots and one of the kindest Christian homes that can be met with anywhere. Mrs. Myers and Mrs. Slagel were unremitting in their attentions, not only during our stay with them, but while at the Hospital, supplying our table every week with the best their farm afforded.

We arose invigorated by a good night's rest, and with a solemn feeling pervading our hearts, of the responsibilities of our undertaking and the nearness of our duties. We felt that God had so far smiled upon us, and would not now desert us, and that in His strength we would go forth. All around was in the height of summer beauty; the birds sang in the clear morning sky, and the stately hills looked down on orchards laden with their crimson fruit. Though late in the season, the harvest was just yielding to the sickle. All here, was beauty, quietness and peace, whilst all beyond was desolation, destruction and war. Here we listened to the sweet songs of birds, whilst within a few miles, the air was laden with shrieks of the wounded and groans of the dying.

We were but a few miles from Gettysburg, when we met the