

BATTLEFIELDS REVISITED.

A 45th Pa. Cavalry Goes Over the Place
His Regiment Fought at South Mountain
and Antietam.

HAVING a few days of vacation to spare, I made up my mind to take a trip to South Mountain and Antietam, and thinking perhaps some of the boys of the old Sixth Corps, and especially those of my own dear regiment, the 45th Pa., would like to hear how those battlefields look after the lapse of nearly 30 years leads me to give a short description of them, for I consider it quite a privilege once again to be able to visit and view those grounds, where so many of our boys laid down their lives.

Leaving the goodly city of Philadelphia early on Friday morning, Aug. 23, I arrived safely in old Frederick City in time for dinner. By the way, I should have stated that at Wrightsville, Pa., I met our old friend and Adjutant, Haiding, on the train, and we traveled some distance together. After dinner we took a stroll around the town. Frederick is the same sleepy place it was when we marched through on Sept. 12, 1862.

I soon took the stage for Middletown, eight miles away, and I assure you I appreciated the drive much better than I did our march over the same road. There are some very fine views, especially the one when you reach the top of the summit that divides Frederick from Middletown and look over Middletown Valley.

Arriving at Middletown, I put up at the City Hotel. Middletown, if you remember, is a town of one street, all down hill one way and up hill the other. The landlord of the hotel gives you plenty to eat and a good bed; you are not bothered for a shiner or tip; he does everything for you; the balance you can do yourself. Another thing, he does not appear to be one bit more afraid to kill chickens than we used to be. Middletown is just four miles from where we fought and where Reno monument is located. Early on Saturday morning we—that is, my friend Carter and myself, a resident here, and a G.A.R. member, belonging to the Post at Frederick—started for old South Mountain. Do you remember at the edge of the town the little creek which we forded dryshod, the rebels having burned the bridge on the right of the road? On the left was the still-smoking ruins of a barn and a smithshop. How after marching a short distance out the National Pike the rebels got the range on us and commenced shelling us? We then fled off to our left, under the brow of the hills, their shells then flying high over our heads. Soon after we climbed the mountain road. Well do I remember that Sunday morning.

The old stone wall which we lay behind before we were ordered forward remains the same as of old, and when I stood on top of it, and looked down the road over which we had marched, I can assure you I did some thinking. The two little houses near by remain the same, and the tree under which our band sought shelter, when a solid shot struck a top branch, scattering the band in all directions—some of them I am told never stopped short of Harrisburg—well, the tree is still standing in all its glory. And the section of the battery that ran down the road, the rebels yelling Bull Run!

Jumping down off the wall I proceeded to and through the woods where so many of our boys lay down their lives,—and none has more reason to be thankful to the Lord than I,—coming to the edge of the woods and the fence through which we fired over into the little house, in which we found so many dead rebels. The fence has been changed, and is now down by the little mountain house where the wall was in which we buried so many rebels. They have all been exhumed and taken South and the wall filled in.

I suppose you all know that the Reno monument stands on the road about half way between the little house and the edge of the woods through which we fought; it is of granite, surrounded by a stone wall, and covers 140 feet of ground. I think it is about time that we were erecting a stone to mark the ground over which we fought; for almost invariably the accounts I read speak of the 45th N. Y., instead of the 45th Pa., doing the fighting and making the charge that drove the rebels from the field.

After taking a view of the surrounding country—for it is grand beyond description—and once again going over our battle-ground and recalling different events, I reluctantly bid farewell to old South Mountain; I think for the last time, feeling more than sad for the many dear boys who fell. We started for the old Stone Bridge. Afterwards we changed our minds and thought we would take the National Cemetery in drive. Will only state that the cemetery is very fine, and is kept in very good condition. Some 20 of the 45th Pa. boys sleep their last sleep here.

Remaining here only a short time, we drove to Sharpsburg and took dinner, after which we started for the more than historical Horseshoe Bridge. Arriving there we drove under the shade of a tree, tied our horses, and started to take a good view of everything.

Do you recall the lane here down which we marched that connects with the main road that runs along the creek and over the bridge? How we came down the lane, fled to our right up along the main road, then to our left over the bridge, then again to our right along the creek for a short distance, and then by regimental front up the steep hill to the fence on top? How a grape-shot struck a top rail, sent it flying through the air, striking, I think, Berkowicz, of Co. B? The fence has been removed, but the house and barn down to which we got back the same, and what I thought at the time was the outskirts of Sharpsburg, but it is nearly a mile away. This road very simple at this late day, but how different nearly 30 years ago. Do you know, I can see Gen. Burnside yet running down the said hill with his hat in his hand. Going down to the creek to wash my hands I drank a little of the water and thought of the night before the battle; how I had filled my canteen, and how on my way back to the regiment a poor fellow kept calling "Water, water," and when I tilted his head and gave him a drink, "Oh! how good! Oh! how good!" I can hear his voice and words to this day. It makes me feel sad. How thankful we who have been spared should be. Taking one look more we returned to Sharpsburg, and from thence to Keedysville and to Boonsboro, where we struck the National Pike, passing the house of Mrs. Dahlgren. To my right I can see old South Mountain looming up. There is a sort of fascination about it for me, and I sit and gaze at it as long as it is in sight.

Arriving safely in Middletown in time for supper, I spent Sunday resting. Sitting on the front porch I imagined I could see ourselves marching along with that mighty host. Little did I dream then that nearly 30 years after that I would be sitting here.

On Monday I started for Gettysburg, via Frederick, and from there I returned home. And I can assure you I thoroughly enjoyed my trip, and wish you all could take the same. Hoping some of you may be interested in this short and imperfect description, especially the 17th Mich., for they were on our right on the 14th of September—Post 2, G.A.R., Philadelphia, Pa.