



Abraham Lincoln Counsels General Joseph Hooker (1863)

When he appointed General Joseph Hooker to be commander of the Army of the Potomac in January 1863, Lincoln wrote a letter of advice, which he handed to Hooker when they met at the White House. Lincoln adopted a fatherly tone in counseling his erratic general. As the letter reveals, Lincoln was disturbed by reports of the loose-talking Hooker having called for a dictatorship; before long, the president was more worried about Hooker's constant boasting about what he would do to Lee once campaigning resumed. "My plans are perfect," the Union commander bragged. "May God have mercy on General Lee for I will have none." Lincoln had heard similar bluster before from McClellan, with no positive results. Hooker's abysmal generalship in the Battle of Chancellorsville would solidify Lincoln's growing unease with "Fighting Joe," who shortly thereafter was removed from command of the Army of the Potomac.

Executive Mansion,
Washington, January 26, 1863.

Major General Hooker:
General.

I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me to be sufficient reasons. And yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which, I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and a skilful soldier, which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable, if not an indispensable quality.

You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm. But I think that during Gen. Burnside's command of the Army, you have taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country, and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the Army and the Government needed a Dictator. Of course it was not *for* this, but in spite of it, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes, can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of it's ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the Army, of criticising their Commander, and

FROM Roy P. Basler, et al., eds., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 6 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), pp. 78–79.

withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can, to put it down. Neither you, nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army, while such a spirit prevails in it.

And now, beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy, and sleepless vigilance, go forward, and give us victories.

Yours very truly

A. Lincoln



HENRY HALLECK

The Character of the War Has Very Much Changed (1863)

In the following letter to Ulysses S. Grant, Henry W. Halleck, the Union's chief general, discussed the government's policy toward slaves and the necessity of the army to carry out this policy. This concern was especially strong for the army's operations in the Mississippi valley, since the bulk of the slaves under Union control were located in this region, and where, as Halleck's letter makes clear, it was rumored that many officers opposed the government's policy. A loyal soldier, Grant was prepared to carry out this policy in any case, but in fact he harbored no personal misgivings over it.

Headquarters of the Army,
Washington, March 31, 1863.

Maj. Gen. U.S. Grant,
Commanding Department of the Tennessee,
near Vicksburg:

General:

It is the policy of the Government to withdraw from the enemy as much productive labor as possible. So long as the rebels retain and employ their slaves in producing grains, &c., they can employ all the whites in the field. Every slave withdrawn from the enemy is equivalent to a white man put *hors de combat*.

Again, it is the policy of the Government to use the negroes of the South, as far as practicable, as a military force, for the defense of forts, depots, &c. If the experience of General Banks near New Orleans should be satisfactory, a much larger force

will be organized during the coming summer; and if they can be used to hold points on the Mississippi during the sickly season, it will afford much relief to our armies. They certainly can be used with advantage as laborers, teamsters, cooks, &c., and it is the opinion of many who have examined the question without passion or prejudice, that they can also be used as a military force. It certainly is good policy to use them to the very best advantage we can. Like almost anything else, they may be made instruments of good or evil. In the hands of the enemy, they are used with much effect against us; in our hands, we must try to use them with the best possible effect against the rebels.

It has been reported to the Secretary of War that many of the officers of your command not only discourage the negroes from coming under our protection, but by ill-treatment force them to return to their masters. This is not only bad policy in itself, but is directly opposed to the policy adopted by the Government. Whatever may be the individual opinion of an officer in regard to the

wisdom of measures adopted and announced by the Government, it is the duty of every one to cheerfully and honestly endeavor to carry out the measures so adopted. Their good or bad policy is a matter of opinion before they are tried; their real character can only be determined by a fair trial. When adopted by the Government, it is the duty of every officer to give them such a trial, and to do everything in his power to carry the orders of his Government into execution.

It is expected that you will use your official and personal influence to remove prejudices on this subject, and to fully and thoroughly carry out the policy now adopted and ordered by the Government. That policy is to withdraw from the use of the enemy all the slaves you can, and to employ

those so withdrawn to the best possible advantage against the enemy.

The character of the war has very much changed within the last year. There is now no possible hope of reconciliation with the rebels. The Union party in the South is virtually destroyed. There can be no peace but that which is forced by the sword. We must conquer the rebels or be conquered by them. . . .

This is the phase which the rebellion has now assumed. We must take things as they are. The Government, looking at the subject in all its aspects, has adopted a policy, and we must cheerfully and faithfully carry out that policy. . . .

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

H. W. Halleck



Robert E. Lee Proposes to Take the Offensive (1863)

In the following letters, written shortly after fighting resumed in 1863 in the Virginia theater, Robert E. Lee advocated taking the offensive by invading the North. Several considerations entered Lee's thinking, but one important purpose, as the second letter to Jefferson Davis indicates, was to strengthen the peace movement in the North. His letter also provides an often overlooked context for Lincoln's letter to Erastus Corning (see p. 172) concerning civil liberties in the Union. Under Jefferson Davis, who actively supervised the war effort, the Confederate secretary of war was essentially a clerk. Consequently Secretary of War James Seddons's reply represented Davis's approval of Lee's plan.

Headquarters Army of Northern Virginia,
June 10, 1863.

His Excellency Jefferson Davis, Richmond:

Mr. President: . . .

Conceding to our enemies the superiority claimed by them in numbers, resources, and all the means

and appliances for carrying on the war, we have no right to look for exemptions from the military consequences of a vigorous use of these advantages, excepting by such deliverance as the mercy of Heaven may accord to the courage of our soldiers, the justice of our cause, and the constancy and prayers of our people. While making the most we can of the means of resistance we possess, and gratefully accepting the measure of success with which God has blessed our efforts as an earnest of

FROM *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. 27, pt. 3, pp. 880–82, 888–89.

His approval and favor, it is nevertheless the part of wisdom to carefully measure and husband our strength, and not to expect from it more than in the ordinary course of affairs it is capable of accomplishing. We should not, therefore, conceal from ourselves that our resources in men are constantly diminishing, and the disproportion in this respect between us and our enemies, if they continue united in their efforts to subjugate us, is steadily augmenting.

The decrease of the aggregate of this army, as disclosed by the returns, affords an illustration of this fact. Its effective strength varies from time to time, but the falling off in its aggregate shows that its ranks are growing weaker and that its losses are not supplied by recruits.

Under these circumstances, we should neglect no honorable means of dividing and weakening our enemies, that they may feel some of the difficulties experienced by ourselves. It seems to me that the most effectual mode of accomplishing this object, now within our reach, is to give all the encouragement we can, consistently with truth, to the rising peace party of the North.

Nor do I think we should, in this connection, make nice distinction between those who declare for peace unconditionally and those who advocate it as a means of restoring the Union, however much we may prefer the former.

We should bear in mind that the friends of peace at the North must make concessions to the earnest desire that exists in the minds of their countrymen for a restoration of the Union, and that to hold out such a result as an inducement is essential to the success of their party.

Should the belief that peace will bring back the Union become general, the war would no longer be supported, and that, after all, is what we are interested in bringing about. When peace is proposed to us, it will be time enough to discuss its terms, and it is not the part of prudence to spurn the proposition in advance, merely because those who wish to make it believe, or affect to believe, that it will result in bringing us back to the Union. We entertain no such apprehensions, nor doubt

that the desire of our people for a distinct and independent national existence will prove as steadfast under the influence of peaceful measures as it has shown itself in the midst of war. . . .

I am, with great respect,
your obedient servant,

R. E. Lee,
General.

War Department, C. S. A.,
Richmond, Va., June 10, 1863.

General R. E. Lee, Commanding, &c.:

General:

I have the honor to acknowledge yours of the 8th instant, just received. I concur entirely in your views of the importance of aggressive movements by your army. Indeed, in my present judgment, such action is indispensable to our safety and independence, and all attendant sacrifices and risks must be incurred. I steadily urge and sustain this view; at the same time, I am most anxious to assure your communications and supplies, and it is in this view I press upon your own consideration some of the dangers to which our destitution of a covering force to this city and the railroad may expose us. I have not hesitated, in co-operating with your plans, to leave this city almost defenseless, and since my letter of yesterday, learning that you had ordered away the small brigade left by General Pickett at Hanover, I have readily concurred in sending Cooke's brigade to the Junction. As General Wise is far down the Peninsula and in King William, this leaves us literally without force, should the enemy make a dash with their transports up the James. I have some apprehension, from intelligence recently received, that they are concentrating a force at Yorktown and Newport News with this view, but we must incur the hazard. The President has not been willing to order Jenkins' brigade from North Carolina, in view of the representations made by Generals Hill and Whiting, but he has communicated your late telegrams to the former, and submitted to his discretion the propriety of the removal. I trust he will concur in

the policy of encountering some risk to promote the grand results that may be attained by your successful operations. Our great want here is some cavalry, to scout and give timely notice, and I again invite your attention to this subject and

the suggestions made in my letter of yesterday.

With high esteem, very truly, yours,

J. A. Seddon,
Secretary of War.

4

RACHEL CORMANY

A Pennsylvania Woman Encounters Lee's Army (1863)

Samuel and Rachel Cormany met at Otterbein University, a denominational school run by the United Brethren Church in Ohio, in the 1850s. Both had grown up in farm families, Samuel near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania; Rachel in Ontario, Canada. They were married in 1860, and after living for two years in Canada, they moved to Chambersburg to be near his parents. Shortly thereafter, in September, fearing he would be drafted, Samuel enlisted in the Union army, a decision Rachel felt misgivings about but nevertheless accepted. She worried constantly about her husband's safety, and his absence meant she had to raise their year-old daughter Cora alone. By the time Robert E. Lee launched his invasion of Pennsylvania in 1863, Rachel had moved from the country and was living in the town of Chambersburg. In her diary, Rachel, who was a strong supporter of the Union cause, discussed the interaction between the Confederate soldiers and the town's citizens during the Gettysburg campaign.

June 15, 1863 Monday. This morning pretty early Gen Milroys wagon train (so we were told) came.¹ Contrabands² on ahead coming as fast as they could on all & any kind of horses, their eyes fairly protruding with fear—teams coming at the same rate—some with the covers half off—some lost—

men without hats or coats—some lost their coats as they were flying, one darky woman astride of a horse going what she could. There really was a real panic. All reported that the rebels were just on their heels. . . . For awhile before dark the excitement abated a little—but it was only like the calm before a great storm. . . .

June 16, 1863 Retired at 11 o'clock. All was very quiet, so we concluded that all those reports must be untrue about the Reb's being so near . . . At 11½ I heard the clattering of horses hoofs. I hopped out of bed & ran to the front window & sure enough there the Greybacks were going by as fast as their horses could take them down to the Diamond. . . . But a short time after the whole

¹Over the past several days General Robert Milroy's small force had been skirmishing with the Confederate army, and his supply wagons were retreating from the advancing enemy.

²A term applied to freed slaves within the Union lines.

body came. . . . It took a long time for them all to pass, but I could not judge how many there were—not being accustomed to seeing troops in such a body—At 2 o'clock A.M. all was quiet again save an occasional reb. riding past. We went to bed again & slept soundly until 5 the morning. All seemed quiet yet. We almost came to the conclusion that the reb's had left again, leaving only a small guard who took things quite leasurely. Soon however they became more active. Were hunting up the contrabands & driving them off by droves. O! How it grated on our hearts to have to sit quietly & look at such brutal deeds—I saw no men among the contrabands—all women & children. Some of the colored people who were raised here were taken along—I sat on the front step as they were driven by just like we would drive cattle. Some laughed & seemed not to care—but nearly all hung their heads. One woman was pleading wonderfully with her driver for her children—but all the sympathy she received from him was a rough “March along”—at which she would quicken her pace again. It is a query what they want with those little babies—whole families were taken. Of course when the mother was taken she would take her children. I suppose the men left thinking the women & children would not be disturbed. I cannot describe all the scenes. . . .

June 17, 1863 . . . All was so quiet during the night that I veryly thought the Reb's had left—but they are still here. All forenoon they were carrying away mens clothing & darkeys. . . . Some of the officers tipped their hats to us. I answered it with a curl of the lip. I knew they did it to taunt us. The one after he had tipped his hat most graciously & received in answer a toss of the head & curl of the lip took a good laugh over it. There were a few real intelligent good looking men among them. What a pity that they are rebels. After the main body had passed, the news came that our soldiers were coming & just then some ½ doz reb's flew past as fast as their horses could take them. we learned since that one of them fired Oaks warehouse & that he was very near being shot by the citizens. Among the last to leave were some with darkeys on their horses behind them. . . . None of our Soldiers came.

June 22, 1863 . . . The rebels are reported within 8 or 10 miles. Guess there will be nothing to hinder them from coming now—suppose they will be on here by tomorrow which will stop our mail again for some time. . . . Indeed I believe I shall pack up & leave in the morning. I cant bear to think of being shut up without any news another week.

June 23, 1863 . . . It was not long until the reb's really made their appearance—I do not think that they are Cav. but mounted infantry—they most of them have nothing but a musket to fight with. They rode in as leasurely as you please each one having his hand on the trigger though, to fire any minute—so now I judge we are shut out again for awhile—I just wonder what they want this time. . . . Evening—The Reb's have been cutting up high. Sawed down telegraph poles, destroyed the scotland bridge again, took possession of the warehouses & were dealing out flour by the barrel & mollasses by the bucket ful—They made people take them brea[d]—meat—&c to eat—Some dumb fools carried them jellies & the like—Not a thing went from this place. . . .

June 24, 1863 . . . At 10 A.M. the infantry commenced to come & for 3 hours they just marched on as fast as they could. it is supposed that about 15,000 have already passed through, & there are still more coming. . . . This P.M. the Rebs are plundering the stores. some of our merchants will be almost if not entirely ruined. . . . Some of the Rebs seemed quite jolly at the idea of being in Pa. . . .

June 25, 1863 . . . Evening. The other division that was to come today did not come, but those here have not been idle. They must surely expect to set up stores or fill their empty ones judging from the loads they have been hauling away & they take every thing a body can think of. . . .

June 27, 1863 . . . Before we got started [to go to the store] the rebels poured in already. they just marched through. Such a hard looking set I never saw. All day since 7 o'clock they have been going through. . . . While I am writing thousands are passing—such a rough dirty ragged rowdyish set one does not often see—Gen's Lee & Longstreet passed through today. A body would think the whole south had broke loose & are coming into Pa.

It makes me feel too badly to see so many men & cannon going through knowing that they have come to kill our men—Many have chickens as they pass—There a number are going with honey—rob[b]ed some man of it no doubt—they are even carrying it in buckets. The report has reached us that . . . at Harisburg the north has congregated en masse to oppose the invaders. Many think this the best thing in the wor[ld] to bring the war to a close—I hope our men will be strong enough to completely whip them—Now it is on our side—While down there our army was in the enemys country & citizens kept the rebels posted in our army movements—now *they* are in the enemys country. Scarcely any are willing to give them anything—in fact none give unless the[y] have to except perhaps the Copperheads.³ . . . They are going rather fast—wonder whether there is not fighting going on in front. They are poorly clad—many have no shoes on. As they pass along they take the hats off our citizens heads and throw their old ones in exchange. I was at the window up stairs with my baby nearly all day looking at them—at one time one of them said something that I did not like so I curled my lip as disdainful as I could & turned away[.] just look at he[r] he said to another[.] I saw a lot looking up, so I just wheeled & left the window at which they set up a cheer. Once before the same was enacted except the general cheer. I did wish I dared spit at their old flag—I pity some of the men for I am sure they would like to be out. . . .

June 28, 1863 . . . At 8½ A.M. the rebels commenced coming again. Ga. troops. I was told this morning of some of their mean tricks of yesterday & before. They took the hats & boots off the men—Took that off Preacher Farney. Took \$50. off Dr. Sneck & his gold watch valued very highly—took the coats off some, tetotally stripped one young fellow not far from town—Mr. Skinner.

³One of Lee's motives in launching his invasion was to strengthen the antiwar movement in the North. Although there was significant opposition to Lincoln and the Republican party in the area around Chambersburg, the civilian population displayed considerable resistance to the Confederate army, as Cormany's diary shows.

We have to be afraid to go out of our houses. A large wagon train & 500 or 600 Cavalry have just passed & it is now about 3½ o'clock. . . . Many of the saddles were empty, & any amount of negroes are along. This does not seem like Sunday. No church.

June 29, 1863 . . . Hoke [a local storekeeper] told me that the Reb's had taken about 500 \$ worth of sugar & molasses—they went into the private cellar & took Mrs Hokes canned fruit & bread. . . . Evening. A large waggon train headed by 10 pieces of artillery & I judge a regiment of of infantry just passed. The wagons were all well loaded. I judge they are bound for Dixie. . . . I felt real badly to see those poor men going through as they did. likely many of them will be killed. . . .

June 30, 1863 . . . The Rebs are still about doing all the mischief they can. They have everything ready to set fire to the warehouses & machine shops—Tore up the railroad track & burned the crossties—They have cleared out nearly every store so they cannot rob much more—Evening—Quite a number of the young folks were in the parlor this evening singing all the patriotic & popular war songs. Quite a squad of rebels gathered outside to listen & seemed much pleased with the music—“When this cruel war is over” nearly brought tears from some. they sent in a petition to have it sung again which was done. they then thanked the girls very much & left—they acted real nicely.

July 1, 1863 . . . They [the Confederates] are chopping &c at a great rate over at the R.R. all morning. I judge they are breaking up the iron by the sound. . . . Mrs. Fritz was here & told us . . . how the rebels . . . robbed the country people of nearly everything they had & acted very insultingly.

July 2, 1863 At 3 A.M. I was wakened by the yells & howls of this dirty ragged lousy trash—they made as ugly as they could—all day they have been passing—part of the time on the double quick. . . .

July 3, 1863 . . . Daddy Byers . . . came to see how I was getting along & told me how the rebels acted—they robbed him of a good deal—they wanted the horse but he plead so hard for him that they agreed to leave him & while one wrote a paper of security others plundered the house. I guess

Samuels silk hat & all that was in the box is gone. took Ellies best shoes—took towels sheets &c &c— After they were gone others came & took the horse too yet—they did not care for his security. Other of their neighbors fared worse yet. . . . There are no rebels in town today except the sick—& two or three squads passed through, in all not much over a hundred if that many. One squad asked the way to Getysburg & were sent towards Harisburg, they did not go very far until they asked again, when they were told the truth they came back very angry & wanted the man that sent them the wrong way but he was not to be found. Canonading was heard all day.

July 4, 1863 At daybreak the bells were rung— Then all was quiet until about 8 o'clock when a flag was hoisted at the diamond. Soon after the band made its appearance & marched from square & played national airs—two rebels came riding along quite leisurely thinking I suppose to find their friends instead of that they were taken prisoners by the citizens—some 13 more footmen came and

were taken prisoners. those were willing prisoners they had thrown their guns away before they reached this. . . . Evening. We have had a powerful rain. Wild rumors of a dreadful fight are numerous.

July 5, 1863 . . . I was told that 10, 4 or 6 horse waggons filled with wounded from the late battle were captured by citizens & brought to town—the wounded were put into the hospitals & the waggons & drivers were taken on toward Harisburg. Was also told that a great many more were out toward Greencastle—some went out to capture those but found that it was a train 20 miles long. P.M. . . . It is frightful how those poor wounded rebels are left to suffer. they are taken in large 4 horse waggons—wounds undressed—nothing to eat. Some are only about 4 miles from town & those that are here are as dirty and lousy as they well can be. The condition of those poor rebels all along from Getysburg to as far as they have come yet is reported dreadful. I am told they just beg the people along the road to help them—many have died by the way.

5

JOHN DOOLEY

A Virginia Soldier Survives Pickett's Charge

(1863)

Among the Confederate soldiers who charged the Union center on the third day at Gettysburg was John Dooley. His parents emigrated from Ireland in the 1830s after their marriage and settled in Richmond, where John Dooley (named after his father) grew up. His father was a successful merchant, and the family was prominent in the city's Irish community. He enrolled at Georgetown College when he was only 14 but left before he received a degree. Despite his Irish heritage, Dooley thoroughly identified with the South and the Confederacy, and he left college in 1862 to enlist in the Confederate army. He joined the famous Old First Virginia Infantry Regiment, in which both his father and older brother had served, in August of that year. This regiment was part of Longstreet's corps in the Army of Northern Virginia. Dooley,

who enlisted as a private and eventually held the rank of captain, kept a diary during his active military service. Captured at Gettysburg, he rewrote and elaborated on his original diary while a prisoner. What follows is his account of Pickett's charge, written after his capture. (Dooley's headings have been omitted.)

Gettysburg, July 3, 1863

The sun poured down his [*sic*] fiercest beams and added to our discomfort. Genl. Dearing was out in front with his flag waving defiance at the Yankees and now and then rushing forward to take the place of some unfortunate gunner stricken down at his post. The ammunition wagons fly back and forth bringing up fresh supplies of ammunition, and still the air is shaking from earth to sky with every missile of death fired from the cannon's mouth. Around, above, beneath, and on all sides they schreech [*sic*], sing, scream, whistle, roar, whirr, buzz, bang and whizz, and we are obliged to lie quietly tho' frightened out of our wits and unable to do any thing in our own defence or any injury to our enemies. . . .

Our artillery has now ceased to roar and the enemy have checked their fury, too. The time appointed for our charge is come.

I tell you, there is no romance in making one of these charges. You might think so from reading "Charlie O'Malley," that prodigy of valour, or in reading of any other gallant knight who would as little think of riding over *gunners and sich* like as they would of eating a dozen oysters. But when you rise to your feet as we did today, I tell you the enthusiasm of ardent breasts in many cases *ain't there*, and instead of burning to avenge the insults of our country, families and altars and fire-sides, the thought is most frequently, *Oh*, if I could just come out of this charge safely how thankful *would I be!*

We rise to our feet, but not all. There is a line of men still on the ground with their faces turned, men affected in 4 different ways. There are the gallant dead who will never charge again; the helpless

wounded, many of whom desire to share the fortunes of this charge; the men who have charged on many a battlefield but who are now helpless from the heat of the sun; and the men in whom there is not sufficient courage to enable them to rise,—but of these last there are but few.

Up, brave men! Some are actually *fainting* from the heat and dread. They have fallen to the ground overpowered by the suffocating heat and the terrors of that hour. Onward—steady—dress to the right—give way to the left—steady, not too fast—don't press upon the center—how gentle the slope! steady—keep well in line—there is the line of guns we must take—right in front—but how far they appear! Nearly one third of a mile, off on Cemetery Ridge, and the line stretches round in almost a semicircle. Upon the center of this we must march. Behind the guns are strong lines of infantry. You may see them plainly and now they see us perhaps more plainly.

To the right of us and above the guns we are to capture, black heavy monsters from their lofty mountain sites belch forth their flame and smoke and storms of shot and shell upon our advancing line; while directly in front, breathing flame in our very faces, the long range of guns which must be taken thunder on our quivering melting ranks. Now truly does the work of death begin. The line becomes unsteady because at every step a gap must be closed and thus from left to right much ground is often lost.

Close up! Close up the ranks when a friend falls, while his life blood bespatters your cheek or throws a film over your eyes! Dress to left or right, while the bravest of the brave are sinking to rise no more! Still onward! Capt. Hallinan has fallen and I take his place. So many men have fallen now that I find myself within a few feet of my old Captain (Norton). His men are pressing mine out of place. I ask him to give way a little to the left, and scarcely has he done so than he leaps into the air, falling

FROM Joseph T. Durkin, ed., *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1945), pp. 105–7.

prostrate. Still we press on—oh, how long it seems before we reach those blazing guns. Our men are falling faster now, for the deadly musket is at work. Volley after volley of crashing musket balls sweeps through the line and mow us down like wheat before the scythe.

On! men, on! Thirty more yards and the guns are ours; but who can stand such a storm of hissing lead and iron? What a relief if earth, which almost seems to hurl these implements of death in our faces, would open now and afford a secure retreat from threatening death. Every officer is in front, Pickett with his long curls streaming in the fiery breath from the cannons' mouth.¹ Garnett on the right, Kemper in the center and Armistead on the left; Cols., Lieut. Cols., Majors, Captains, all press on and cheer the shattered lines.

Just here—from right to left the remnants of our braves pour in their long reserved fire; until now no shot had been fired, no shout of triumph had been raised; but as the cloud of smoke rises over the heads of the advancing divisions the well known southern battle cry which marks the victory gained or nearly gained bursts wildly over the

blood stained field and *all that line of guns is ours.*

Shot through both thighs, I fall about 30 yards from the guns. By my side lies Lt. Kehoe, shot through the knee. Here we lie, he in excessive pain, I fearing to bleed to death, the dead and dying all around, while the division sweeps over the Yankee guns.² Oh, how I long to know the result, the end of this fearful charge! We seem to have victory in our hands; but what can our poor remnant of a shattered division do if they meet beyond the guns an obstinate resistance?

There—listen—we hear a new shout, and cheer after cheer rends the air. Are those fresh troops advancing to our support? No! no! That huzza never broke from southern lips. Oh God! Virginia's bravest, noblest sons have perished here today and perished all in vain!

Oh, if there is anything capable of crushing and wringing the soldier's heart it was this day's tragic act and all in vain! But a little well timed support and Gettysburg was ours. The Yankee army had been routed and Pickett's division earned a name and fame not inferior to that of the Old Guard of Bonaparte.

¹Contrary to Dooley's account, Pickett did not lead the charge, nor given his rank and position would it have been appropriate for him to have done so.

²In reality, only a couple hundred of the approximately 13,000 who made the charge reached the Union guns, and all of them were killed or, like Dooley, captured.

6

BENJAMIN HIRST

A Connecticut Soldier Helps Repel Pickett's Charge (1863)

Awaiting Dooley and his comrades in the center of the Union line was Sergeant Benjamin Hirst of Connecticut. Hirst was born in England and came to the United States with his family in the late 1840s. Like his father, he was a skilled weaver and found work in the textile mills, first in Pennsylvania and then at Rockville, Connecticut, where he was living when the war began. In the summer of 1862 he enlisted as a member of the Fourteenth Connecticut Volunteer Infantry, in which he served

as a sergeant. By July 1863 he was a hardened veteran, having participated in the heavy fighting at Antietam and having survived the Federal defeats at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. On the third day at Gettysburg, his regiment was stationed in the center of the Union line near the copse of trees that was the target of the Confederate assault. In addition to the many letters he wrote to his wife Sarah, he also kept a journal narrating what he termed "Important Events." The following excerpt from his journal, written several months after the battle, described the fighting on the third day at Gettysburg and Pickett's charge. (The paraphrasing has been supplied.)

July the Third At early dawn we quietly took our Position in Line, and our Co with Co B were sent out to relieve Co A and F and to push back the Rebel skirmishers who were a little too near our lines for our comfort, however we advanced in good order and took the required position in good shape. This was the first time our Company had been thus engaged, and when I was sent with 10 men, to relieve some other ones further to the Front, I felt a little timid about walking erect, with the Ball whizing about my ears from the Rebel Sharp Shooters. But I made out to Post the men (I found one of the men I was to relieve Dead at his Post, he was shot through the Head and from his position he seemed to be taking aim at a Rebel. I did not know he was Dead until I put my hand upon his shoulder, and spoke to him) and we were soon popping away as lively as Crickets. (I will here tell you of one incident which goes to show how soon we get insensible to danger; my Gun becoming foul, I got a Ball stuck in the Barrel so that I could not get it home or take it out, in this Dilemma, I placed it before me with the Butt resting against a fence rail, and with my shoe string I pulled the trigger fully expecting it to burst, but it came out all right and I was soon firing away again.)

In the mean time the Rebels again occupied the House and Barn I before mentioned, and the remainder of our Regiment were sent to drive them out, and to hold it, which was done in as Gallant a Style as could well be. The Regt held on until they

got orders to Burn them down, and the Boys soon had a Fire that effectually kept the Rebels out for the rest of the Battle. In this affair the Regt lost quite a number of good men, and one or two officers were wounded, and thus the forenoon wore away. [At about 10 A.M. Hirst and his squad were relieved on the advanced skirmish line and returned to the skirmish reserve posted along the Emmitsburg Road.]

About noon commenced the Fiercest Canonading I ever heard, the shot and shell came from Front and Right and Left. It makes my Blood Tingle in my veins now; to think of. Never before did I hear such a roar of Artillery, it seemed as if all the Demons in Hell were let loose, and were Howling through the Air. Turn your eyes which way you will the whole Heavens were filled with Shot and Shell, Fire and Smoke. The Rebels had concentrated about 120 Pieces of Artillery upon us and for 2 long hours they delivered a Rapid and Destructive fire upon our Lines, Principally upon the old Second Corps whom they desired to attack. To add to all this was our own Batteries in full Blaze, every shot from which seemed to pass over our heads; it was a terrible situation to be in between those two fires; how we did Hug the ground expecting every moment was to be our last. And as first one of us got Hit and then another to hear their cries was Awful. And still you dare not move either hand or foot, to do so was Death. Once I ventured to look around and just then I saw one of our Cassions blown up, while the same moment a Rebel one was blown up from the same Battery. But all this could not last much longer, our fire began to lose its vigour for want of Amunition, and as the Smoke

lifted from the Crest we saw our Guns leaving one after the other and soon a terrible stillness prevailed so that you could almost hear your heart thud in your bosom.

But what means that shout of derision in our Front. Up men the Rebels are upon us, there they come a Cloud of Skirmishers in front, with one[,] two, three lines of Battle, stretched all along our Front with their Banners flying, and the men carrying their Pieces at trail Arms. It was a Glorious Sight to see, Rebels though they were. The[y] seemed to march as though upon Parade, and were confident of carrying all before them. But away up that mountain slope in our Rear we knew that (biding their time) as Gallant a body of men as ever Rebels could dare to be were awaiting for them. Yes behind that long, low stone Wall is our own Glorious Second Corps so soon to immortalise themselves by hurling back that Rebelious Crew who brought their Polluting footsteps to our own dear North. Steady men, and Rally on the Reserve cries our Leader, as we take to our feet; we are driven in, but not in confusion. Sometimes we about Face and return their Skirmishers fire. But still we fall back up the Hill and over the Wall bringing our wounded with us.

And now we have a short breathing spell and can Note the Intense anxiety depicted on every countenance. You can see that: One is looking at the Far off Home He will never see again. Another one is looking at his Little ones, and he mechanically empties his Cartridge Box before him determined to part with Life as Dearly as possible. Other ones you can see are communing with Him before whom so many of us will have to shortly appear.

We must hold this Line to the Last Man. The Fate of the whole Army now rests with you. Don't Fire until you get the order, and then fire Low and Sure. It is the Clear Voice of Gen Gibbon as he rides along the Line, and gives a word of cheer to each Regiment as he goes along. A few more words from Gen Hayes, and our own Gallant Col Ellis

and there runs along the Line Ready, up with our Flags, Aim, Fire. And time it was too, for the Rebels seemed to me to be within 150 yards of us, and we could hear their Officers pressing them on to the charge, Fire, Fire, Fire all along our Line. There opened upon them such a Storm of Bullets, Oaths and Imprecations as fully satisfied them we had met before, under circumstances a little more favourable to them. Give them Hell x x x Now We've got you. Sock it to the Blasted Rebels. Fredericksburg on the other Leg. Hurah, Hurah, the first Line is broken. Never mind who is Hit. Give them Hell again. And soon the second Line is sent Howling back after the first one. Right Oblique Fire, Left Oblique Fire, and the supporting Columns are thrown in disorder and soon seek safety in Flight.

Then you ought to have heard the Exhultant Shouts of our Brave Boys as the whole Rebel Force gave way in utter confusion leaving thousands and thousands of Killed, Wounded and Missing in our hands. What a sight it was, where but a short time before had stood the Flower of the Rebel Army in all the Pomp of Pride and Power was now covered with Dead in every conceivable Posture, and such a Wailing Cry, mingled with Groans of the Dying is past conception. Oh for a thousand or two fresh men to charge upon the discomfited Foe, and push them Home. Could this have been done the Southron Army might have been Anihilated.

As it was they suffered a Tremendous Defeat. Our Corp alone Captured 30 Stand of Colers, our Division taking 13 of them, 6 of which were captured by our own little Regt, besides this we took more Prisoners then we numbered men. I did not have the oppertunity to see the whole Fruit of our Victory, but I saw a part of them brought in amid the Exhultant shouts of the Boys, and while I was rejoicing with them I was sent rolling in the Dust being Hit for the third time upon this Eventful day and was this time D[is]abled for ever carrying a Gun in Active Service again.