



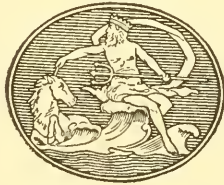
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Col. Theodore Lyman

MEADE'S
HEADQUARTERS
1863-1865

Letters of
COLONEL THEODORE LYMAN
FROM
The Wilderness to Appomattox

SELECTED AND EDITED BY
GEORGE R. AGASSIZ



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To
ELIZABETH RUSSELL LYMAN
*and the Inspiring Influence
of her Beloved Memory*

Introduction

Theodore Lyman — man of science — soldier — and man of the world — touched life at many points. He could draw easily on his varied experience, from a well-trained and well-stored mind. This, added to good looks, charm, and good humor, a ready wit and great tact, made him a striking and telling personality, whether in the camp, a scientific meeting, or social gathering.

Among his many activities, he served, from 1883 to 1885, as a member of the House of Representatives at Washington, being elected on an independent ticket from his Massachusetts district. As he was the only independent member then in Congress, he held there a position of unusual influence. At that time the Harvard Club of Washington celebrated its birth by having a dinner. The first two speakers, a member of the cabinet and a senator, indulged in dry and inappropriate political harangues; and the event threatened to be *un dîner manqué*. The chairman next called on Lyman, who regretted that the previous proceedings had been tinged with a levity unworthy of so serious an occasion, proposed to do something solemn, sang a comic song, and saved the day.

The Lyman family of New England is of old English stock. Its founder, one Richard Lyman, came to America in 1631, on the good ship *Lyon*, which among its sixty odd passengers included John Eliot, and the wife of Governor Winthrop and her children. The first Theodore Lyman, a direct descendant of Richard in the fifth generation, was the son of the pastor of Old York in the District of Maine.¹

¹ Maine was then a part of Massachusetts.

Toward the end of the eighteenth century Theodore left York, and came to Massachusetts Bay, where he settled in Boston. There he became a successful man of business, and laid the foundation of the family fortunes.

The second Theodore (1792–1849) was born in Boston, and graduated from Harvard in 1810. He was a man of note in the community of his time; had studied abroad and travelled in Eastern Europe, an unusual circumstance in his day; and was Mayor of Boston in 1834 and 1835. In 1820 he married “the beautiful and accomplished” Mary Henderson of New York.

Their only son, Theodore Lyman, the third of that name, and author of the present letters, was born on August 23, 1833, in the well-known family homestead at Waltham, Massachusetts. But almost his whole life was passed in Brookline, where his father afterwards built a house, a pleasant and spacious dwelling, set in ample lawns and spreading elms.

Young Theodore received his early education from private tutors, and spent the years 1848 and 1849 in Europe. His mother died when he was three years old, and the year of his return from abroad he lost his father. This left him at sixteen an orphan, heir to an independent fortune and the Brookline estate. Two years later he entered Harvard with the Class of '55. It was natural that one so charming, high-spirited, and companionable should feel himself warmly drawn toward the social side of college life. In his studies, for the first two years, he hovered about the middle of his class. It was not till his junior year that his intellectual ambitions were aroused, and in his senior year his true abilities asserted themselves. For in that year he received the highest marks in the class, and graduated fourth. After leaving college, he turned his attention to

Natural History, and worked under Louis Agassiz. Devoting himself to the study of Ophiurans while maintaining a broad interest in the outside world, Lyman became the authority of his day on that group.

In 1858 he married Elizabeth Russell, daughter of George R. Russell, an East India merchant of Boston. Lyman took his bride home to his Brookline house, where they lived some two years, before starting to travel in Europe. There a daughter was born, and there they remained until she was old enough to be brought safely home.

In the winter of 1856, the year after he graduated, Lyman was sent by Agassiz on a scientific pilgrimage to Florida waters. In Key West he ran across Captain George Gordon Meade of the Engineers, who was superintending the construction of lighthouses in that district. In those days a traveller was a *rara avis* in Florida, and a lonely wanderer found but scant accommodation. Captain Meade had a ship at his disposal, and was delighted to have the chance of offering Lyman the hospitalities of his floating home, for a far less agreeable man would have been a godsend in the wilderness. The Engineer Officer was eighteen years the senior of the Roving Naturalist, but they proved congenial companions, and the intimacy so formed was afterwards maintained.

And thus it chanced that, on his return from Europe Lyman, from September 1863, until the end of the Civil War, was a member of the staff of General Meade, commanding the Army of the Potomac. The present volume is composed of a selection of Colonel Lyman's letters to his wife from the front. His vivid picture of the life and actions of that army has an added interest from the contrast that it offers to the late World War. Still, the con-

test was titanic for the times; and during the four years of the Civil War there were mustered under the Union Flag over two and three quarter millions¹ of men. This was a far greater proportional drain on the American youth of that day than the drafts for our recent armies. Nevertheless, in no battle of that war was an army of much over 100,000 men engaged. But one must remember that Napoleon had less than 75,000 men at Waterloo, and that the eighteen miles or so of intrenched line before Petersburg could, in 1865, justly be considered vast.

Five years later the Franco-Prussian War taught us to think of battles on a larger scale; while the opening of the century saw Russia and Japan fighting along battle-lines of sixty miles, with armies of half a million. To-day the white races of the world lie panting from a struggle in which armies of millions have wrestled along battle-lines stretching across the Continent of Europe.

Small as they were in the light of our recent experiences, the battles of our fathers might have furnished valuable military instruction for Europe. As Lyman says, it was shown that an army could dig itself in in a few hours, and completely intrench itself in three days. Had the French war office profited by this lesson, and, instead of building what proved useless fortifications, established an intrenched line along the Belgium frontier, there would be to-day, in all probability, no devastated France.

GEORGE R. AGASSIZ

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

September 15, 1922

¹ This includes re-enlistments and 90-day men.

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[*Drawn by Colonel Lyman*]

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MEADE'S HEADQUARTERS

1863—1865

I

FIRST MONTHS

THEODORE LYMAN reached Boston early in June 1863, hoping to obtain a Staff appointment. His first weeks were spent in settling his little family in Brookline, adjusting his private affairs, and sorting the collections of his beloved Ophiurans that had accumulated during his absence in Louis Agassiz's newly built museum.

Many of Lyman's friends thought that his desire to join the army was quixotic and unnecessary. Meanwhile Lee's advanced guard had crossed the upper Potomac, and Hooker had moved on Centreville from Falmouth. "There will be stirring times ahead," writes Lyman in his journal. "Every one takes the matter with great calmness; we are too dead!" Soon came Gettysburg; and shortly afterward Mrs. Lyman's cousin, Robert Shaw, fell at the head of his negro regiment in the assault of Fort Wagner. Again Lyman writes: "Bob was a shining example of great development of character under pressing circumstances. In peace times he would have lived and died a quiet, manly, happy-tempered fellow; but the peril forced his true spirit into action, and now his name stands as that of one who gave up a life spotless of low ambition, of cowardice, of immorality; a life torn from all that is attractive and agreeable and devoted to the cause of Eternal Right."

An entry in his journal says of a shooting-trip of his on some old haunts among the marshes of Cape Cod: "As I walked about this beautiful old place, with the clear air

and the fine breeze, the idea of going to war struck me with a ten-fold disagreeable contrast. N—— B—— was quite eloquent on the topic and strongly urged against it. But what's the use? A man must march when it is his plain duty; and all the more if he has had, in this world, more than his slice of cake!"

On August 10th Lyman wrote the following letter to General Meade, in command of the Army of the Potomac:—

As your time is valuable I will write in few words. I arrived here from Europe, with my family, some few weeks since; all well. In your letter to me, dated, Camp opposite Fredericksburg, December 22, 1862, you were kind enough to say: "I shall be delighted to have you on my staff"; and you go on to suggest that I should come as "Volunteer Aide" with a commission from the Governor of the state, and getting no pay; only forage for my horses. I clearly understand that this is *no promise*, only an expression of good will. Therefore I ask you frankly if you are now able and willing to take me as a Volunteer Aide? I am assured that Governor Andrew would, for his part, give me a commission. My military accomplishments are most scanty. I can ride, shoot and fence tolerably, speak French fluently and German a little, have seen many thousands of troops of most nations of Central Europe, and have read two or three elementary books. After all, I fear my sole recommendation is my wish to do something for the Cause. I will take anything you have to offer. If you have nothing, perhaps one of your generals would take me on his staff.

[To this General Meade promptly replied from the Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac.]



GEORGE GORDON MEADE

Your note of the 10th inst. is received. I continue in the same disposition as when I wrote you on the 22d of last December. If you are anxious to see service or think your duty requires you to do so, I shall be very glad to avail myself of your services, and the best position for you is the one I indicated — that of Volunteer Aide. This will leave you free and independent; and enable you, whenever you have seen the elephant, or have satisfied the demands of duty, to return to your family without embarrassment. If the Governor will confer on you the commission of Lieutenant-Colonel, it will give you the right to wear the uniform and bear the title, and I can arrange here for the position you will occupy. You will require two good horses, a competent man to take care of them, and the smallest outfit that you can well get along with, as our transportation is limited. You can take your own time in joining, as you come in an independent position. Now I beg you will let Mrs. Lyman understand that this is all *your doings*; and that she must not hold me responsible for anything beyond not throwing obstacles in your way, which, in view of your very agreeable company, she could hardly expect me to do.

[Armed with this letter Lyman was soon in the possession of his commission as Lieutenant-Colonel in the Massachusetts Militia, and received a special order giving him a furlough for a year, and detailing him to serve on the staff of General Meade. "God give me," he writes, "proper qualities to discharge my duties."

A few hurried days busy in buying horses and equipment, and he was ready to start. His journal closes with these words before leaving for the front: "A most splendid day. Mimi went with me a pleasant walk in the woods,

and we picked flowers. It will be hard to part — harder than we think for! How many a brave man has never come back! The retribution of Sin descends with compound force on the generations that come after. To-morrow I leave for the army. May I do my full duty; without that there can be nothing worthy.”

He left New York for Washington the next night, “getting a sleeping-car at Philadelphia.” In Washington he saw “the streets full of soldiers, many slouchy, some dirty; but nearly all tough and strong looking,” and he characteristically remarks of the Capitol, “The interior is an incongruous mixture of fine marbles, common plaster and tobacco juice.”

The following day found him about three miles from Warrington Junction, at the]

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC

September 3, 1863

Behold me, installed in solemn state! having thus far lost no limb. Betimes, at seven this morning, I was duly at the Alexandria ferryboat with horses, Silas and Albert. Having shown my pass, I assured the worthy corporal on guard that there was no liquor in the saddle-box, and was allowed to go on board, and twenty minutes took us to Alexandria, a town in no wise remarkable except for an antique pavement, much resembling that of Pompeii and of the Via Appia at Rome, in respect to deep holes and ruts. Here I was driven to the “Depot,” which consisted in one wooden counting-room, closely beset on all sides by puffing engines and innumerable freight cars. Having, at great risk, got into the shanty, I of course found a Marble-header at the head of all affairs, viz., Colonel Devereux. He received me with tenderness, my horses were put in the

best car and I was placed in a state chair until the train was ready, when the conductor solemnly took me and placed me first in the only passenger car. Shoulder-straps *is* shoulder-straps down here, and folks *is* obleeged to stand round. The conductor (the dirtiest mortal I ever saw, but extremely energetic and capable) said we should have no trouble with guerillas, as they had a very nice colonel in command near there, who had taken the wise precaution to seize the father and brother of the chief guerilla and then to send a civil message to him stating that, if any trains were fired into, it would be his (the Colonel's) painful duty to tie said relations on the track and run an engine over them! This had an excellent effect. I have only time to-night to say that we got down all safe. . . . You may rest easy on my account for the present. There is about as much appearance of an enemy near at hand, as there would be on Boston Common. The nearest of them (except a few guerillas) are many miles from here.

September 5, 1863

Our train consisted in a large number of freight cars, all marked "U. S. Military Railroads," and of one passenger car containing its precious freight of officers, not to speak of the female doctor who knocked Zacksnifska out of all sight and knowledge. She was going down to get the son of an old lady, who (the said son) had had a sunstroke, and this female doctor had great confidence she could cure him. She was attired in a small straw hat with a cockade in front, a pair of blue pantaloons and a long frock coat, or sack. Over all she had a linen "duster"; and this, coupled with the fact that she had rips in her boots, gave her a trig appearance. She was liberal in her advice to all com-

ers and especially exhorted two newspaper boys to immediately wash their faces, in which remark she was clearly correct.¹ . . .

. . . At Warrenton Junction there was luckily an ambulance from headquarters; and as its owner was only a diminutive captain, I had no hesitation in asking him to carry me up, with my traps. . . . So off we set, on a road which went sometimes over stumps and sometimes through "runs" two or three feet deep. We passed any quantity of pickets and negroes and dragoons in twos and threes; till at last, looking off to the left (or rather right), I beheld what seemed a preparation for a gigantic picnic: a great number of side-tents, pitched along regular lines, or streets, and over them all a continuous bower of pine boughs. These were "Headquarters." I put my best foot forward and advanced to the tent of the Commander-in-Chief, in front of which waved a big flag on a high staff. In my advance I was waylaid by a lieutenant, the officer of the day, who with much politeness said General Meade was out for a ride, but would I not walk into a tent and take some whiskey; which I accepted, all but the whiskey. He turned out to be a Swede, one Rosencrantz, and I rejoiced his soul by speaking of Stockholm. Presently there arrived the General himself, who cried out, "Hullo, Lyman! how are you?" just as he used to. He was as kind as possible, and presently informed me I was to mess with him. As the Chief-of-Staff is the only other man who is allowed to do this, you may concede that my lines have fallen in pleasant places! The said Chief-of-Staff is General Humphreys, a very eminent engineer. He is an extremely neat man, and is continually washing himself and putting on paper dickeys. He has a great deal of knowl-

¹ Dr. Mary E. Walker (1832-1919).

edge, beyond his profession, and is an extremely gentlemanly man. As to the Assistant Adjutant-General, S. Barstow, he was most hospitable, and looked out for getting me a tent, etc. He really has a laborious and difficult position, the duties of which he seems to discharge with the offhand way of an old workman.

Now I will pull up. As to my riding forth yesterday and to-day, in martial array, beside the General, and with dragoons clattering behind, shall not the glories thereof be told in a future letter? Meanwhile, if you want to feel as if nobody ever was or could be killed, just come here! This is the effect, strange as it may seem. For your assurance I will state, that we yesterday rode seven miles directly towards the enemy, before we got to a spot whence their pickets may sometimes be seen! . . .

[A few words will recall the position of the Army of the Potomac at that time. Halleck was virtually in command of the Union armies. In June, Lee turned the right wing of the Union Army, crossed the Potomac, and entered Pennsylvania. Hooker, then in command of the Army of the Potomac, followed on Lee's right flank, covered Washington, and crossed the Potomac. On June 27, Lincoln relieved Hooker and appointed Meade, who was then in command of the Fifth Corps. Four days later, Meade got in touch with the Confederate Army, and placed his forces in such a position, on the heights of Gettysburg, that Lee was forced to attack him. After three days' stubborn fighting, which culminated in the repulse of the magnificent Confederate charge under Pickett, Lee was forced to retreat. Meade followed him, but Lee succeeded in recrossing the Potomac before the former considered himself in position to attack him. Meade also crossed the

river into Virginia. Lyman joined the army in the midst of the manœuvres that ensued. It was a campaign of skirmishes and combats, but with no general battle before both armies went into winter quarters in December.]

September 6th, 1863

I promised to tell you how I invited General Meade to go with me and see General Sykes. If I didn't know anything, I *looked* like a Commander-in-Chief, for I had the best horse and the best accoutrements, and as for clothes, General Meade was nowhere; besides which, he had no sword, while I had. The cavalry escort reminded me exactly of the Guides that go with the little Prince along the rue de Rivoli. No two of them had caps alike, none had their jackets buttoned; all were covered with half an inch of dust, and all eschewed straps to their pantaloons. Nevertheless, had the Rebs appeared, I should have preferred these informal cavaliers to the Guides. Each man had a sabre with a rusty scabbard, and a revolver hung at his belt. They all ride well, and would be handsome horsemen, if "got up."

General Humphreys, with his usual bland smile, appeared on a small gray, which was of a contrary and rearing disposition; but the General remarked, with the air of an injured man, that he had had three valuable horses killed under him in battle, and *now* he should only get cheap ones. General Meade, whose saddle-flap was ornamented with a bullet-hole within an inch of his leg, was mounted on a small bay. And so we jingled off; sometimes in the road, sometimes in the open fields, sometimes in the woods and sometimes through creeks and mudholes. The Chief rides in a most aggravating way, neither at a walk nor a gallop, but at a sort of amble, which bumps

you and makes you very uncomfortable. . . . In due season we got to the 5th Corps Headquarters, near the Rappahannock, which is a very narrow affair at this point, and not over four feet deep on the shallowest fords. General Sykes looks a little like the photograph of General Lyon and has a very thick head of hair, which stands up like Traddles's. He is a mild, steady man, and very polite, like all the officers I have seen down here. Indeed, a more courteous set of men it would be hard to find. I have yet to meet a single gruffy one. They are of all sorts, some well educated, others highly Bowery, but all entirely civil. . . .

The astute Sykes talked some time with the Chief, and then we rode to the Headquarters of General Newton, who commands the 1st Corps, hard by. This chieftain had a very gorgeous tent, erected for the express accommodation of Mrs. Newton, who, however, was soon driven forth by the general order excluding all ladies from the lines; and the tent was all that remained to remind one of her presence. General Newton also has a thick head of hair, and is a tall and finely built man and "light complected." He was in great glee over a *tête-de-pont* he had erected, and hoped to decoy some unfortunate Rebels to within range of it. He produced a huge variety of liquids which I had to refuse. The drinks I have refused will be a burden on my conscience in time to come. They come from all sides and in great variety, even champagne! . . .

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF POTOMAC

September 9, 1863

In my last I forwarded a landscape with Headquarters of the 3d Corps in the verdant background. In this, I will describe the Review, at which, as the Gauls say, "I assisted." . . . Everybody got himself up in all available

splendor. Those that had scarfs put them on, and those that had none, tried to make up in the shine of their boots and newness of their coats. General Meade burst forth in the glory of a new saddle-cloth, which the expressman had, in the nick of time, brought fresh from Washington. As for myself, did I not put on the Brimmer scarf, and white gloves, and patent-leather boots; whereby, shining like a lily of the field, was I not promoted to ride immediately behind the Chief, thereby happily avoiding the dust? *Heure militaire*, we all mounted, the escort presented arms, and the cavalcade jogged off, *en route* for the parade ground, six miles distant. The road lay through pine woods, and barren fields, and all sorts of places like most roads hereabouts, and the cloud of dust we raised must have been extremely pleasant to the escort in the rear! At length we got in sight of a big U. S. flag, and, immediately after, beheld a long slope of clear ground, quite black with the lines of infantry, while long artillery trains were moving across the fields to get into position. It looked very handsome and warlike, and the muskets, which had received an extra burnish, were flashing away at a great rate. The procession rode up to the house and dismounted midst great cries of "Orderly!" to come and hold their horses. Then advanced convenient Contrabands and dusted us down; which improved our aspect not a little. After which the Corps Commander, General French, came forth, with proper greetings. He looks precisely like one of those plethoric French colonels, who are so stout, and who look so red in the face, that one would suppose some one had tied a cord tightly round their necks. Mounted on a large and fine horse, his whole aspect was martial, not to say fierce. In a few minutes we again got on, and moved towards the field; whereupon there arose a great and dis-

tant shouting of "Bat-tal-ion! Shoulder! Her-r-rms!" and the long lines suddenly became very straight and stiff, and up went the muskets to a shoulder. We rode down the front and up the rear of each line (of which there were three, each of a division with the artillery on the left flank) amid a tremendous rolling of drums and presenting of arms and dropping flags; the bands playing "Hail to the Chief." Miss Sturgis's mare behaved very nicely and galloped along with her neck arched, minding nothing except the flags, and those not much. Even the cannon did not disturb her behaviour. . . .

After the artillery had in like manner been reviewed, the General took a station by a little flag, and then all three divisions marched past, followed by the artillery. It was a somewhat sad sight to look at these veterans, with their travel-stained uniforms and their battered canteens; many of the regiments had no more than 200 men, and their flags were so tattered that you could barely read such names as Fair Oaks, and Williamsburg, where so many of the missing 800 now lie. The men looked spare and brown and in good health; and also as if they would then and there fight French Zouaves or anybody else you chose to bring on. . . . Some divisions at Gettysburg marched thirty-six miles in one day; and then fought for two days after that, with scarcely anything to eat or to drink. Among the troops were the 11th and 16th Massachusetts regiments and the 10th battery, and certainly none of the soldiers looked better. . . . The artillery looked even more serviceable than the infantry; and, independent of the large number of guns, was well horsed and well manned. As a rule I am much pleased with the aspect of our officers, high and low. They are cleanly and have a firm, quiet bearing. You can often pick out those who have been

through the thick of it, by their subdued and steady look. The dress of the soldiers is highly practical, more so even than the French. The knapsack is baggy and of a poor pattern, however. It is curious how everything has, by sheer hard service and necessity, been brought down to the lowest point of weight and complication. A dragoon tucks his trousers inside his boots, buckles on a belt, from which hang a sabre and revolver, gets on a horse with a McClellan saddle and curb bridle, and there he is, ready to ride fifty miles in one day and fight on top of it. . . . After the Review the generals were entertained in a bower, with champagne and other delicacies, while we of the Staff meekly had big sandwiches and buckets of punch. I tried a sandwich, but found it rather salt eating, and so confined myself to iced water, wherein I got ahead of wine-bibbers who arrived at home very cross and hot. The General, who is very moderate in his conviviality, soon broke up the meeting, and, amidst a most terrible clicking of spurs and rattling of sabres, we all mounted, and so home by a *short cut* which one of General French's aides was kind enough to show us, and which entailed a considerable amount of rough riding; so that, with Mause Headrigg, I had occasion to remark, "By the help of the Lord I have luppen a ditch!"

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF POTOMAC
September 11, 1863

The last two days have been most unusually quiet. I read a little in military books, write a few letters, look over the newspapers a little, talk to the Staff officers, and go to bed early. The conversation of the officers is extremely entertaining, as most of them have been in a good many battles. They say that General Meade is an extremely cool man. At Gettysburg he was in a little wooden house,

when the hot fire began. The shells flew very thick and close, and his Staff, who were outside, got under the lee of the house and sat down on the grass. As they sat there, out came General Meade, who, seeing them under such a slender protection against cannon-balls, began to laugh, and said: "That now reminds me of a feller at the Battle of Buena Vista, who, having got behind a wagon, during a severe cannonade, was there found by General Taylor. 'Wall Gin'ral,' said he, looking rather sheepish, 'this ain't much protection, but it *kinder feels as it was.*'" As a point to the Chief's anecdote, a spherical case came through the house at that instant, exploded in their circle and wounded Colonel Dickinson. . . .

I walked over and saw the Provost prisoners, the other evening. If you want to see degraded human nature, there was the chance. There was a bough covering, about forty feet square, guarded by sentries, and under it were grouped some fifty of the most miserable and depraved human beings I ever saw—deserters, stray Rebel soldiers, "bushwhackers" and camp-followers. They sleep on the bare ground with such covering as they may have, and get a ration of pork and biscuit every day. This is only a sort of temporary guardhouse, where they are put as they come in. War is a hard thing. This country, just here, was once all fenced in and planted; now there isn't a rail left and the land is either covered with dried weeds or is turned into a dusty plain by the innumerable trains of horses, mules and waggons.

[That evening there was a report that Lee was falling back. The cavalry were gathered for a reconnoissance in force. And Lyman was detailed to Pleasonton's Staff, to give him his first experience of actual fighting.]

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF POTOMAC
BETWEEN THE RAPPAHANNOCK AND RAPIDAN
September 17, 1863

Having again got "home," I find leisure and paper to write you a rather longer letter than you have got of late. Perhaps you would like to hear about our little cavalry performance. Of course there was not hard fighting, and a hundred or so will cover all the killed and wounded; nevertheless, as the whole was new to me and as the operations covered a good deal of country, they were interesting and instructive both. The whole Cavalry Corps (a good many thousand men) had been massed the day before, and had orders to cross the Rappahannock early next morning. I was to ride down in time to join General Pleasonton. The distance to the river is some eight miles, so I was up at 4.30 — rain pitchforks! dark as a box — thunder and lightning — everything but "enter three witches." However, in my india-rubber coat and much-insulted large boots, much of the water could be kept out, and, by the time we were saddled and had had some tea, behold it stopped raining and away I went, quite thankful, and with a tail of six orderlies and a corporal. The ground was very wet, and we went slipping and sliding, in the red mud, till we drew near the river, when, behold, the whole country alive with train-waggons, columns of infantry, batteries, and ambulances; the latter with the stretchers fastened outside disagreeably suggestive of casualties. The rear of the cavalry had just crossed, when I got there; and General Pleasonton was on the opposite bank, where I presently joined him, crossing by the railroad bridge. He had with him a good many aides, besides orderlies and escort. Just at this point we held the southern, as well as the northern, bank and the pickets were some two miles out.

The country is rolling, but not quite hilly; there are very large open fields (now filled mostly with weeds) and again, considerable woods. In these last our cavalry were hidden, so that you would have said there were not 300 of them all together. This I found, presently, was a great point, to conceal men, behind woods and ridges, as much as possible.

We all now rode to our extreme picket line and took a view; and there, sure enough, was Mr. Reb with *his* picket line, about one third of a mile off. We could see a chain of mounted videttes, and, behind these, on a little knoll, a picket reserve, with their horses tied to trees. We waited some time to give a chance to General Gregg who had crossed on our right, and General Kilpatrick on our left, to get into the proper positions. Then General Pleasonton ordered an advance, and, in a few moments, quite as if by magic, the open country was alive with horsemen; first came columns of skirmishers who immediately deployed and went forward, at a brisk trot, or canter, making a connected line, as far as the eye could reach, right and left. Then followed the supports, in close order, and with and behind them came the field batteries, all trooping along as fast as they could scramble. It was now between eight and nine and the sun was bright, so that the whole spectacle was, to a greenhorn like me, one of the most picturesque possible. Not the least remarkable feature was the coolness of Mr. Reb under these trying circumstances. Their videttes stared a few moments, apparently without much curiosity, then turned tail and moved off, first at a walk, then at a trot, and finally disappeared over the ridge at a gallop. We rode on about a mile, keeping a little behind the skirmishers; General Buford and his Staff being just ahead and to the left. To the left we could hear cannon, General Kilpatrick having got into a skirmish there.

Presently I saw a puff of smoke, on a ridge in front of us, and then *hm-m-why-z-z-z, bang!* went the shell, right by General Buford's Staff, taking the leg off a poor orderly. Much pleased with their good shot, they proceeded to give our Staff a taste; and missiles of various kinds (but all disagreeable) began to skip and buzz round us. It was to me extraordinary to see the precision with which they fired. All the shot flew near us, and, while I had gone forward to the crest of the ridge to get a better view, a shell exploded directly in the midst of the Staff, wounding an orderly and very neatly shaving a patch of hair off the horse of Captain Hutchins. However, two could play at that game, and Captain Graham soon made the obnoxious guns limber up and depart to the next ridge, where they would again open and stay as long as they could. By the time we had got a few miles further, the enemy had brought forward all his cavalry and began firing with rifles, to which our men replied with their carbines.

We now entered a wooded tract, interspersed with mud-holes and springy ground, and here the enemy made quite a hard stand, for the town of Culpeper lay a couple of miles beyond and they wished to gain time to get off their stores by the railroad. The advanced regiments were therefore dismounted and sent into the woods, while the artillery tried to find some place whence the guns could be used. It was at this place that I first heard the yells, for which the Rebels are noted. They were the other side of a high bank, covered with bushes, and they yelled to keep their spirits up as long as possible. But they were soon driven through the woods and then we came on an open country, in full view of Culpeper. This was a very interesting sight. The hills are, hereabout, quite large, and on the one opposite us stood Culpeper, very prettily situated,

the railroad running through the lower part of the town. Just in the outskirts the Rebels had planted two batteries, as a last check, and behind were drawn up their supports of cavalry. Our cavalry were coming out of the woods, on all sides, moving on the town in form of a semi-circle, while the guns were pelting those of the enemy with might and main. Suddenly we were aware of a railroad train slowly leaving the depot, and immediately several guns were turned on it; but it went off, despite the shells that burst over it. Then there suddenly appeared a body of our cavalry, quite on the left of the town, who made a rush, at full speed, on three cannon there stationed, and took the whole of them with their caissons. This was a really handsome charge and was led by General Custer, who had his horse shot under him. This officer is one of the funniest-looking beings you ever saw, and looks like a circus rider gone mad! He wears a huzzar jacket and tight trousers, of faded black velvet trimmed with tarnished gold lace. His head is decked with a little, gray felt hat; high boots and gilt spurs complete the costume, which is enhanced by the General's coiffure, consisting in short, dry, flaxen ringlets! His aspect, though highly amusing, is also pleasing, as he has a very merry blue eye, and a devil-may-care style. His first greeting to General Pleasonton, as he rode up, was: "How are you, fifteen-days'-leave-of-absence? They have spoiled my boots but they didn't gain much there, for I stole 'em from a Reb." And certainly, there was one boot torn by a piece of shell and the leg hurt also, so the warlike ringlets got not only fifteen, but twelve [additional] days' leave of absence, and have retreated to their native Michigan!

The Rebels now retreated in all haste, and we rode at once in, and found a good many supplies at the depot with

a number of rifles and saddles. As we rode up, the building was beset with grinning dragoons, each munching, with great content, a large apple, whereof they found several barrels which had been intended for the comfort of Mr. Stuart's dashing knights. I was surprised at the good conduct of the gypsy-looking men. They insulted no one, broke nothing, and only took a few green peaches, which, I fancy, amply revenged themselves. Culpeper is a really decent place, with a brick hotel, and a number of good houses, in front of which were little gardens. I send you a rosebud, which I picked as we rode through the town; there were plenty of them, looking rather out of place there, in the midst of muddy batteries and splattered cavalrymen! A queer thing happened in the taking of the three guns. An officer was made prisoner with them, and, as he was marched to the rear, Lieutenant Counselman of our side cried out, "Hullo, Uncle Harry!" "Hullo!" replied the captain uncle. "Is that you? How are you?" And there these two had been unwittingly shelling each other all the morning!

After resting the horses we pushed on to the south, towards what is called Pong Mountain, for you must know that this region is more hilly, and Pong Mountain is about comparable to the Blue Hills (not quite so high, perhaps). . . . We drove the enemy five miles beyond Culpeper, making fifteen miles, in all, and there a halt was ordered and pickets thrown out. Our Headquarters were a wretched house, of two rooms, inhabited by two old women. We gave them one room and took the other ourselves. And now I loomed out! The Staff had, in the way of creature comforts, nothing but sabres and revolvers. It was dark and raining guns, and the Chief-of-Staff had the stomach-ache! I took from my saddle-bags a candle and lighted the

same, prepared tea from my canteen, and produced a loaf of bread and a Bologna sausage, to the astonishment of the old campaigners, who enquired, "Whether I had a pontoon bridge about me?" Then I rolled myself in my coat and took a good night's sleep on the floor.

The next morning we started for Raccoon Ford, on the Rapidan, five miles distant. The enemy were mostly across and only opposed us with a few skirmishers. As we got in sight of it, the prospect was not cheering. The opposite bank, partly wooded and partly covered with cultivation, rose in steep, high hills, which completely commanded our side of the river. It was a fine sight to see the column splashing along the wood road, lying between fine oak trees; but the fine sight was presently interrupted by a shell, which exploded about 100 yards ahead of me and right among the horses' legs, without touching me! The General rode into the open field to reconnoitre the position, and I with him, because he wanted my glass; but Mr. Secesh has a sharp eye for gold cords round hats, and, in a minute, *wh-n-n-g, flup! wh-z-z-z!* a solid shot struck just in front of us, and bounced over our heads. The General ordered us to disperse about the field, so as not to make a mark; but, as I rode off, they sent a shell so near me that a facetious officer called out: "I guess they think you're somebody pretty distinguished, Kun'l." However, there may be a good deal of cannon shooting, without many hits; in proof of which I will say that we had a brisk fire of artillery from 10.30 to 2.30, together with a sharp spattering of rifles and carbines, and that our loss was five killed and fifteen wounded! Shells do not sound so badly as I expected; nor did I feel as I expected on the occasion. There is a certain sense of discipline and necessity that bears you up; and the only shell I "ducked" was the first one.

After some difficulty we got some guns in position and drove off those opposed. Then General Kilpatrick's division went to a better ford below, and tried to get over there; but the Rebels opened on him with fourteen cannon and silenced his guns after a hard fire. So we concluded the fords were not practicable for cavalry, which I think might have been apparent from the outset. Whereupon both parties stopped and stared at each other; and we heroes of the Staff went to a house (much better than that of last night) and partook of mutton which, during the day, we had valiantly made the prey of our bow and our spear. On our right General Gregg had driven the enemy beyond Cedar Mountain and nearly to the river, but was there brought up by a heavy force of artillery in position. All day Tuesday we lay doing nothing. I rode over with the General to Cedar Mountain, passing close to the battle-field, and ascended, thus getting a fine view of the Rapidan valley, which is very beautiful and would, in the hands of good farmers, yield a thousandfold. . . . We have taken on our reconnoissance in force about 150 prisoners, three guns, and five caissons. Yesterday the entire army crossed the Rappahannock, and I got orders to return to Headquarters, which I did.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF POTOMAC
September 22, 1863

We have had an Austrian officer, awfully arrayed, making a visit to see the telegraphs and the signal corps. He looked so natural with his sprig little bob-tail coat and his orange sash, and presented a funny contrast to our officers, who with their great boots and weather-beaten slouched hats looked as if they could swallow him and not know it. Captain Boleslaski (such was his name) was selected probably for two reasons, in this military mission: 1st, because

he could speak no word of English; and 2d, because he was very deaf. Notwithstanding which little drawbacks, he ran about very briskly, from morn to eve, and really saw a great deal. I roared French in his ear, till I nearly had the bronchitis, but succeeded in imparting to him such information as I had. He addressed me as "Mon Colonel" and looked upon me as the hero of a hundred campaigns; though he *did* rather stick me, when he asked me whether our pontoons were constructed on the system of Peterhoff or of Smolenski! He was much pleased with the attention he got, and was extremely surprised when he beheld the soldiers all running to buy newspapers.

Yesterday came General Buford, commander of the second Cavalry Division, and held a pow-wow. He is one of the best of the officers of that arm and is a singular-looking party. Figurez-vous a compactly built man of middle height, with a tawny moustache and a little, triangular gray eye, whose expression is determined, not to say sinister. His ancient corduroys are tucked into a pair of ordinary cowhide boots, and his blue blouse is ornamented with holes; from one pocket thereof peeps a huge pipe, while the other is fat with a tobacco pouch. Notwithstanding this get-up he is a very soldierly looking man. He is of a good-natured disposition, but not to be trifled with. Caught a notorious spy last winter and hung him to the next tree, with this inscription: "This man to hang three days: he who cuts him down before shall hang the remaining time."

September 24, 1863

Yesterday we were favored with the presence of Sir Henry Holland, the Queen's physician, who is one of the liveliest old birds for one of seventy-five that ever was seen. He travels two months every year, and has already

been four or five times in these United States. Dr. Letterman, the Medical Director, put him in an ambulance, and Colonel Townsend and myself completed the party. What pains wounded people may suffer in ambulances, I know not; but I do know that, when driven at a trot, over open fields and through little ditches, the jolting is not to be expressed in words. But the royal medical person maintained his equanimity wonderfully and continued to smile, as if he were having a nice drive over a turnpike. First he was halted on a rising spot, when he could see four batteries of horse artillery, which did defile before him, to his great admiration. Then we bumped him six miles farther, to the Headquarters of the 12th Corps, close to the river. Here he hobnobbed with General Slocum, and then got on a horse and rode about the camps. After which he was taken to a safe spot, whence he could behold the Rebels and their earthworks. He returned quite fresh and departed in a most amiable mood.

There seems to me no particular prospect of a battle. I thought this morning, that we should have a great fight within a couple of days; but movements, which I dare say you will read of in the papers before this letter reaches you, have just knocked it. *Entre nous*, I believe in my heart that at this moment there is no reason why the whole of Lee's army should not be either cut to pieces, or in precipitate flight on Richmond. In saying this to you, I accuse nobody and betray no secrets, but merely state my opinion. Your bricks and mortar may be of the best; but, if there are three or four chief architects, none of whom can agree where to lay the first brick, the house will rise slowly.

HEADQUARTERS, ARMY OF THE POTOMAC
September 29, 1863

I see such flocks of generals now, that I do not always take the pains to describe them. On Sunday there arrived General Benham, one of the dirtiest and most ramshackle parties I ever saw. Behind him walked his Adjutant-General, a great contrast, in all respects, being a trig, broad-shouldered officer, with a fierce moustache and imperial and a big clanking sabre. I gazed at this Adjutant-General and he at me, and gradually, through the military fierceness, there peeped forth the formerly pacific expression of Channing Clapp!¹ There never was such a change, Achilles and all other warlike persons; and is much improved withal. That same evening enter another general (distinguished foreigner this time), El General José Cortez, chevalier of some sort of red ribbon and possessor of a bad hat. He was accompanied by two eminent Señors, Mexicans and patriotic exiles. We were out riding when they came; but, after our return, and in the midst of dinner, there comes an orderly with a big official envelope, proving to be a recommendation from Mr. Seward. "Oh," says the General, "another lot, hey? Well, I suppose they will be along to-morrow"; and went on quietly eating dinner. Afterwards I went into the office of Général Williams (or "Seth" as they call him here) and there beheld, sitting in a corner, three forlorn figures. Nobody seemed to know who they were, but the opinion prevailed that they were a deputation of sutlers, who were expected about that time! But I, hearing certain tones of melancholy Spanish, did presently infer that they were the parties mentioned in the big, official envelope, and so it proved! They were speedily entered into the General's presence and, after a

¹A classmate at Harvard.