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LEWIS ADDISON ARMISTEAD

by

FLAVIUS BURFOOT WALKER JR.

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Page 1.

Preface.

Lewis Addison Armistead is today chiefly remembered for one thing—the heroic charge of he and his brigade at Gettysburg. Where Armistead fell beyond the stone wall, also fell the hopes, and yea even perhaps the independence of, the South.

It was fitting that such a man as Armistead should be the hero of Gettysburg—the leader of Pickett's magnificent charge and the one who planted the flag of Virginia and of the South on the very crest of the hill—"The High Water Mark of the Confederacy." It was fitting because Armistead had ever been in the van of battle, constantly the leader of charges—for it was he who led the assault on Chapultepec and the Confederate attack at Malvern Hill. He had been in the past the captain of America's shock troops, and where his sword had pointed America had gained victory after victory—and where his voice had rung with the order to advance it had seemed that Destiny had answered with triumphant echo.

Lewis Addison Armistead was thus fitted by experience and renown to be the hero of Gettysburg, and the bearer of the Southern Cross to its furthest penetration into the Northern lines—and into the North itself. And no less fitted was he by tradition and birth for the rôle he so gallantly assumed on ^{that} the fateful July 3rd of 1863.

His uncle was Colonel George Armistead—the hero and commander of Fort McHenry—the first guardian and defender of "The Star Spangled

Banner"-for while Francis Key wrote,George Armistead fought. The result was twofold: America received a national anthem and won a great victory-a victory which is said by some to have saved our entire Eastern seaboard from Virginia to New York,from invasion and occupation by the enemy.

At Gettysburg,Lewis Armistead the nephew of the man who gave birth to one flag-gave,himself,immortal glory to another. The United States of America,today, a reunited nation sings again together the words Key wrote and which George Armistead,and his banner and his men inspired;but the world and history praises and records the gallantry and the valiance of the deed which Lewis Armistead and his Virginians wrought on that terrible day in July,1863. As long as memory and pride of race and lineage endures, Virginia and the South will recall the glory and honor,the sacrifice and devotion,which her sons demonstrated on Cemetery Ridge-for now Time,and its register History records that what Pickett,Armistead,Garnett,Kemper and all that noble band did that day,is destined to remain a monument to valor forever.

Gettysburg,however,does not tell the entire story of Lewis Armistead,nor does history in any connected and regulated pattern. To do what history has failed to do,^{by}~~not~~ filling in gaps and attempting to give greater coherence and understanding to cold facts and disjointed and ill-fitting links,is the purpose of this paper.

In the preparation of this ~~paper~~^{work} I am especially indebted to Miss Courtenay Armistead of this city. Without her invaluable aid in collecting and putting at the author's disposal all the known manuscript documents belonging and relating to General Armistead,the writing of this paper would have been impossible. Also,I would like to acknowledge here my gratitude to

other members of the Armistead family, too numerous to mention and many of whom are unknown to me, for help and information cheerfully given. In like manner I wish to express my thanks to Mr. George F. Scheer, Sr., ^(of this city) and the staffs of the Virginia State and the University of Richmond Libraries for aid rendered. Last, but by no means least, I would like to give thanks to my professor, Dr. R. C. McDanel, who was a continuous inspiration to the author and without whose advice, suggestions and help the completion of this work would have been impossible.

F.B.W., Jr.

Richmond, Virginia,
May 15, 1939.

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I.

Lewis Addison Armistead was born at New Bern, North Carolina, February 18, 1817, the son of General Walker Keith Armistead, U.S.A., and Elizabeth Stanley Armistead.¹

The Armistead family ~~is~~^{was} one of great antiquity-being a branch of the famous house of the same name, which had been located for many years in Yorkshire, England. The first of the name to come to the New World was William Armistead, who migrated to Virginia in 1635. From William Armistead have descended all of that name now in this country-and rarely have so many notable and distinguished men and women sprung from one progenitor.²

Many of the Armisteads have demonstrated a (yen) for the career military-and in regards to the father and uncles of Lewis Armistead this statement is in particular true. One uncle, Colonel George Armistead, was the hero of Fort McHenry, and it was his defense of the fortress that inspired Francis Scott Key to write the "Star Spangled Banner."³ A second uncle Lewis Gustavus Adolphus, "named for the Swedish hero, 'The Lion of the North,' fell at Fort Erie."⁴ Two other uncles were distinguished soldiers, and the father of the subject of this work was "graduated at West Point in 1803, fought in Canada, closed the Seminole war, and was, when he died in 1845, second in command in the regular army."⁵

1. Garber, Mrs. Virginia Armistead, The Armistead Family 1635-1910, p. 66.

2. Ibid., pp. 17-29.

3. Poindexter, Rev. James E., Address on the Life and Services of Gen. Lewis A. Armistead, p. 1.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

General Walker Keith Armistead married in 1814, "Elizabeth, daughter of John A. Stanley, of Newbern,⁶N.C."⁷ At the time of Lewis Armistead's birth, his mother was apparently visiting her home in the "Old North State," but according to some authorities General W.K. Armistead was at the time stationed there.⁸

As to the boyhood of Lewis Armistead, little or nothing is known. However in 1834 he obtained an appointment to West Point⁹, but was forced to leave in 1836 because of a youthful escape.¹⁰ As the details of this escapade or rather amusing, the author will give a brief (all ~~this~~^{that} is really known.) account of it.

It seems that Jubal Early insulted Cadet Armistead one day on the parade ground and the latter retaliated by cracking his mess-hall plate on Early's head. Thereupon, young Lewis Armistead was retired from West Point.¹¹

^{This} story, although not mentioned in the Dictionary of American Biography, which states that young Armistead retired from the Academy because of insufficient scholastic preparation¹² - has a peculiarly truthful note in it - for Early was always noted for his high temper and somewhat arrogant bearing, and it was perfectly natural for a spirited young Southerner such as Lewis Armistead to resent any insulting remark - especially

6. I have found the name of this town spelt both New Bern and Newbern. It would seem that either spelling is permissible.

7. Garber, Mrs. Virginia Armistead, The Armistead Family 1635-1910, p. 66.

8. For conflicting accounts of how General L.A. Armistead happened to be born in North Carolina, see Letter of Mr. F.M. Armistead, and Rev. Mr. Poindexter's Address on the Life and Services, etc., p. 1.

9. Poindexter (the author will hitherto refer to The Rev. Mr. Poindexter's Address on the Life and Services, etc., by merely using that worthy's surname), p. 1, gives the date of entrance as 1836, but all other authorities cite 1834.

10. Poindexter, p. 1, Armistead Family History (as Mrs. Garber's work will henceforth be referred to), p. 67, and told by Miss Courtenay Armistead in conversation with the author.

11. Poindexter, pp. 1-2.

12. Johnson, Allen (editor), Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. I, p. 347. Henceforth, if referred to will be simply noted as Dict. of Amer. Biog.

coming from ^{one} like Jubal A. Early. ¹³

II.

On July 10, 1839, young Lewis Armistead now twenty-two years of age, was commissioned by President Van Buren a second-lieutenant in the United States Army, and was at once assigned to the 6th Infantry. ¹⁴

It is an old family legend that General Andrew Jackson appointed Lewis Armistead to the army, but this is obviously impossible, since Van Buren was at the time president. It is undoubtedly true, however, that Jackson who was an intimate friend of General W.K. Armistead, put in a good word for his old comrade's son—and this recommendation certainly had much to do with Van Buren issuing young Armistead a commission. ¹⁵

From 1839-1840, Lieutenant Armistead saw service in the Second Seminole War—in which war his father commanded. ¹⁶ That the young lieutenant displayed ability there can be no doubt, for in March, 1844 he was promoted First-Lieutenant, and still later in the same year was appointed by President Tyler to act as a commissioner in adjusting claims of the Five Civilized Tribes, growing out of the Treaty of 1835. Lieutenant Armistead was to act in this capacity in co-junction with Colonel George C. Washington and General John T. Mason. "These offices arrived at Little Rock on their way to Fort Gibson, January 1, 1845." ¹⁷

13. Early was always noted for his arrogance and temper. Any work dealing in detail with different of the Southern generals, especially in regard to their personal characters will bear the author out in this statement. The present writer's uncle knew Early fairly well—and once in his presence made this same statement.

14. Hotchkiss, Major Jed., Virginia (Vol. III of Confederate Military History), p. 576. Hereafter, this work will be referred to as Confed. Milt. Hist.

15. Letter of Mr. H.M. Armistead, Sr., of Little Rock, Ark.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

The exact whereabouts of Lieutenant Armistead at the outbreak of the War with Mexico, is apparently not known-but that he was still with the 6th Infantry there can be little doubt.¹⁸ This regiment was soon ordered to Mexico, and with it went the young subaltern.¹⁹

In Mexico Lewis Armistead speedily made a name for himself. He led the assaulting column at Chapultepec where he was wounded, and was made Brevet Captain for bravery at Contreras and Charubusco and Brevet Major at Molino del Rey.²⁰

After the conclusion of the Mexican War, Major Armistead was sent with the 6th Infantry "Out West"-to garrison that great country and to protect its inhabitants from the Indians. Armistead seemed greatly dissatisfied with the sort of life he was leading, for in a letter to his brother Frank S. Armistead (later a colonel in the Confederate Army), dated Feby. 4., "52" at Fort Dodge, Iowa, he wrote in part:

The true, the only secret to success, to contentment, to virtue, virtue, and to piety even, is in constant employment-all the rest is vain and ideal-as to happiness, you must not expect to find it in this world-but trusting in the mercy of God, and in the atonement of a blessed Savior-look far beyond-feeling confident, that the reward of a well spent life, is sure and steadfast as eternal truth-and that the consummation of the Christian's hope is peace and joy forever-without such a hope, how vain are all the sacred ties of earth-without such a hope, how can we ever expect to meet those in heaven whom we have loved so fondly here-without such

18. I have been unable to find any reference to his whereabouts at this time in any of the material consulted.

19. Wilcox, General Cadmus M., History of the Mexican War, p. 367. Consult throughout volume for references to the 6th Infantry.

20. Poindexter, p. 2., Confed. Milt. Hist., p. 576, Letter of H. M. Armistead, and others.

a hope, what were life, but a dark and gloomy shadow, "a vale of tears", a land of death; and man left without God, sinking even below, "the brutes that perish! Never let a moment pass unemployed. You can not imagine, how much can be effected, in one short year, by devoting to study only an hour a day—No man strides with a step to greatness, or to fame, but slowly and steadily he treads his path, undismayed by difficulties or danger, treating with scorn the vain and idle, that loiter near the way, tempting him to share, what they call pleasure; poor fools! how much mistaken.....

Fabius writes to me that Uncle Edward is confident in being able to obtain, a cadet's warrant for you this year—I do not wish to decide for you, but am willing to give you the benefit of my experience, resulting from near thirteen years service in the army, and my advice, my experience is, that it is a system of favoritism, and of thankless drudgery, and a life in which a man is more tempted to dissipation, than in almost any other he may chance to choose; and when he dies, he leaves his family poor and dependent, for the pay, except in the highest grades, is not more than sufficient to support him, and keep up the appearance which the world demands. My advice, is, therefore, with many thanks to Uncle Edward, to decline it, and to stay where you are. Our dear Father advised me not to enter the army,—and for many years past, I have truly, and sorrowfully repented, that I did not follow his advice—Now, choose for yourself.....²¹

Frank Armistead, however, did not follow his brother's advice, for he entered the U.S. Military Academy, where he graduated in 1856.²²

This letter, notwithstanding, reveals Lewis Armistead as a religious and

21. Manuscript letter of General Lewis A. Armistead, which the author has in his temporary possession. —

22. Armistead Family History, p. 166.

thoughtful man, as well as a repentant one.

Major Armistead had married about ten years previously (that is around 1840-1844), Cecilia Lee Love, daughter of Richard M. Love, of Fairfax County, Virginia.²³ There were several children by this marriage, but all died (including the mother), except one in a severe epidemic of smallpox in the autumn, of 1855.²⁴ General Lee writing to Mrs. Lee from Fort Riley, Kansas, November 5, 1855, described the death of Mrs. Lewis Armistead at that post, declaring: "A soldier has a hard life and but little consideration," speaking, "in part for Armistead and in part for himself."²⁵

The child who survived was Walker Keith Armistead, born at St. Davids, Alabama, December 11, 1844. When grown this Walker Armistead married Julia Frances Appleton of Boston, Mass., a granddaughter of Daniel Webster.²⁶

From 1855-1861, Lewis Armistead's life was one of constant journeys and intermittent fighting. Immediately after the death of his wife, the 6th Infantry "marched overland to a post that is now Los Angeles," a distance of "2200 miles through a wilderness."²⁷ The regiment was still centered at Los Angeles, and in Southern California generally, when the War between the States broke out.²⁸

23. Armistead Family History, p. 68.

24. From a conversation with Miss Courtenay Armistead.

25. Freeman, Douglass Southall, R. E. Lee, A Biography, p. 562. Hereafter this work will be referred to as merely Freeman.

26. Armistead Family History, p. 68.

27. Letter of H. M. Armistead.

28. Ibid.

III.

Major Armistead was at the time of the outbreak of the Civil War, a soldier of experience and renown. He had been made full Captain March 3, 1855—and since that time had won a well-earned reputation as an Indian fighter. In 1859 "he commanded a detachment against the Indians, defeating them."²⁹ Thus he renounced security and material well-being when he threw his lot with his native state in May, 1861.³⁰

News travelled slowly in those days—and particularly across the vast—and often barren—stretches and plains of our "Far West." It was not strange, then, that in March, 1861, Major Armistead was busily engaged in quieting the Indians.³¹ However, apparently as soon as he heard of the secession of his native state he resigned from the U.S. Army—for his resignation is dated May 26, 1861.³²

At that time the 6th Infantry was mainly based at Los Angeles.³³

Pickett, Garnett, and Hancock were among the officers. Albert Sydney Johnston commanded the United States troops in California. He was stationed at San Francisco. He resigned and came to Los Angeles. Mrs. Hancock had joined her husband by way of the Isthmus. She says of the break up and the resignations of those who were leaving to join the South, "The most crushed of the party was Major Armistead, who with tears which were contagious streaming down his face and hands upon Mr. Hancock's shoulders while looking him steadily in the eyes, said, 'Hancock, goodbye. You can never know what this has cost me. And I hope God will

29. Armistead Family History, p. 67.

30. Dict. of Amer. Biog., p. 347.

31. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Vol. I, Part I, pp. 454, 429, etc. Henceforth this work will be referred to as simply Official Records. (Series I.).

32. Dict. of Amer. Biog., p. 347. Vol 2

33. Letter of Mr. H.M. Armistead.

strikes me dead if I am ever induced to leave my native soil, should worse come to worse.' Turning to me he placed a small satchel in my hand, requesting that it should not be opened except in the event of his death, in which case the souvenirs it contained, with the exception of a little prayer book intended for me and which I still possess, should be sent to his family. On the fly leaf of this book is the following, 'Lewis A. Armistead. Trust in God and fear nothing.' At the same time he presented Mr. Hancock with a new major's uniform, saying, 'he might sometime need it.'.....

Armistead died in the way he prayed for..... Three out of the six from whom we parted that evening in Los Angeles were killed in front of General Hancock's troops." (Reminiscences, pp. 68-70). ³⁴

Albert Sydney Johnston, Major Armistead, and other officers left Los Angeles by night, fearing arrest.³⁵ They then began their long and wearisome journey to join their Southern brethren in Texas. Near Fort Yuma they had an opportunity to loot and burn the post, but gallantly refrained from doing so. In a letter to his wife, written from Vallecito, "130 miles from Yuma", Johnston mentions the above "opportunity at Fort Yuma", as well as the fact that Major Armistead was with him and his party. ³⁶

Johnston and the other officers reached Mesilla, Texas, in late July, 1861.³⁷ Here many of them lingered for awhile—including Major Armistead. While in Texas Armistead commanded some Confederate troops, and was

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid., and Southern Historical Society Papers, Vol. X, p. 424. The latter will in the future be referred to as Sou. Hist. Soc. Papers.

36. Sou. Hist. Soc. Papers., Vol. X, p. 424

37. Ibid.

instrumental in driving the Federal garrisons out of that part of the country.³⁸

Armistead at this time, or some time previously, had been commissioned a colonel in the Confederate States Army, for on Sept. 26, 1861, Col. James J. Archer relieved Col. Lewis A. Armistead in command of a regiment of Texas Volunteers.³⁹ Immediately after being relieved, Col. Armistead left for Richmond where he was almost instantly put in command of the 57th Virginia Volunteers (at the personal recommendation of General Robert E. Lee).⁴⁰

IV.

In November, 1861, Col. Armistead was ordered with his regiment to Western Virginia-now West Virginia. Here he joined Floyd's command for a short while, but soon afterwards was transferred to North Carolina. Here too, he lingered but shortly-for in February, 1862, we find him before Franklin in the Old Dominion-defending the Blackwater against the advancing enemy.⁴¹

38. Ibid, pp. 424-425.

39. Official Records, Vol. II, Part II, p. 314. *See?*

40. Ibid, Vol. V, p. 938, and letter of Gen. R. E. Lee, a photostatic copy of which is in my temporary possession.

41. Official Records, Vol. V, p. 938, and Vol. IX, pp. 438-439 (for information in above paragraph). For additional information see, Dict. of Amer. Biog., p. 347. *See?*

Evidently Col. Armistead was demonstrating marked talent for command—because in March, 1862, Kirby Smith writing to President Davis from Knoxville, Tenn., recommended that Armistead be promoted to the rank of Brigadier-General.⁴² Davis at once took General Smith's advice, and on April 1, Armistead was advanced to that grade.⁴³ With this rank he was assigned to the command of a brigade in Gen. Benjamin Huger's division.⁴⁴

Gen. McClellan, the Northern commander, was now slowly making his way up the Peninsula—and on May 31, 1862, Gen. J. E. Johnston, the Confederate commander before Richmond, struck him hard. The fierce engagement which resulted is today famous as the Battle of Seven Pines (or Fair Oaks as the Federals referred to it).⁴⁵

In this battle Gen. Lewis Armistead played a rather prominent part. His brigade had been fighting hard for some hours, when the enemy made a fierce counterattack. He and his men caught the full force of this charge—and as most of his troops were green—the majority soon fled. Unflinching, however, by this reverse Armistead rallied a few of his officers and men, and made a brave stand at a critical point—where at the time retreat might have ^{meant} been disaster for the Confederates. After fighting off

42. Official Records, Vol. X, Part II, p. 308. ✓

43. Dict. of Amer. Biog., p. 347.

44. Confed. Milt. Hist., p. 576, and Freeman, Vol. II, p. 90.

45. Confed. Milt. Hist., pp. 269-280.

the Yankees for some minutes, Armistead was reinforced by Gen. Pickett-
and the day ^{was} saved. The next day, though, Armistead's men redeemed them-
selves, they and Mahone's ^{troop} ~~men~~ being the only two brigades to see action
on June 1st.⁴⁶

On June 25th, just prior to the opening of the Seven Days' Battle,
Geⁿ. Armistead was stationed with his brigade about "5 miles from Richmond,
between York River railroad and the Williamsburg road, where he was engaged
in continual skirmishing until the advance to Malvern Hill."⁴⁷

At Malvern Hill, which was the last of the Seven Days' Battles and
which was fought on July 1st, 1862, Armistead first gave evidence ^(of?) to the part
he was destined to play on that tragic 3rd of July, 1863, at Gettysburg. In
this bloody repulse of the Army of Northern Virginia, Armistead's brigade
played a gory-and yet glorious role.⁴⁸

Gen. Lee determined on an assault upon the Northern position-
which was an exceedingly strong one, and which could be taken only by rough
the utmost exertion and bravery on the part of officers and soldiers
alike. Gen. Armistead was to be in command of the attack, and he was also
to give word ^{for the} onset to begin.⁴⁹

46. For an account of the details of the battle cited above see: Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. II., pp. 255-258; Soldier of the South, War Letters of General Pickett to his Wife, pp. 13-15; and others.

47. Confed. Milit. Hist., p. 576.

48. For accounts of the battle of Malvern Hill, and the part played in it by Armistead and his command, see: Henderson, Col. G. F. R., C. B., Stonewall Jackson, (henceforth to be mentioned as Henderson) pp. 384-395; Freeman, Vol. II, pp. 202-220; Confed. Milit. Hist., p. 576; and others.

49. Freeman, Vol. II, pp. 201-207.

Through some sort of error, all the brigadiers did not know that Armistead was in command—and he himself did not know it till later—and by that time much had been lost by delaying. Finally, Armistead thought he saw the opportunity, and with Gen. Lee's order to "charge with a yell", the assault began.⁵⁰

Unfortunately the dispositions of the troops had also become confused—but nevertheless the Southerners charged with great spirit. The fighting grew hotter and hotter—while the sun was meantime sinking lower and lower. It was a race against time. It looked for a moment that the twilight victory of Lee at Gaines' Mill was to be repeated—but darkness came on too quickly; and the advantage remained with the North.⁵¹

Armistead had led his men brilliantly—and the ardor of their attack was constantly mentioned in the reports of officers of both armies. An hour more of daylight and the South might have won her independence.⁵²

In August, 1862, General Armistead's command was formed into a Virginia Brigade.⁵³ There had been much dissension in several of the Southern States concerning the fact that often their troops were not led by native sons. To remedy this situation, a general shakeup in commands was resorted to—and in the process of this regroupings of commands and officers, General Armistead, and his apparently re-organized brigade, were transferred to Maj.-Gen. R. E. Anderson's Division.⁵⁴

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid, pp. 201-220.

52. Ibid, and Confed. Milit. Hist., p. 576. Also Official Records, Vol. XI, Part II, pp. 822, 504, 628, 639, 659, 668-671, 673-674, 678, 760, 787-791, 801-803, etc.

53. Official Records, Vol. XI, Part III, p. 664.

54. Ibid, p. 680.

In late August, 1862, Lewis Armistead participated with his brigade in the various movements which ultimately resulted in the great Confederate victory of Second Manassas. In this battle Armistead took an active part. 55
 Armistead was also instrumental in preventing Stuart from making a night attack upon the retreating and badly beaten Federals—for the night after the victory the latter wished to hurl his cavalry and Armistead's brigade upon the Yankees—but the counsels of the older and more experienced man prevailed against those of the brilliant, but sometimes slightly reckless, young cavalry leader. 56

That Armistead was right in delaying Stuart's proposed movement until the commanding generals could be consulted more fully there is little doubt. Most military authorities, then and now, have agreed that such an attack as the ^{one} Stuart proposed would have been exceedingly dangerous—and to employ slang phraseology "perhaps the game was not worth the candle." 57

On September 6, 1862, Gen. Armistead was appointed Provost Marshal-General of the Army of Northern Virginia (just prior to Lee's Sharpsburg Campaign). 58 This office was considered by Gen. Lee at ~~the~~ ^{the} time to be a highly important one—and Lewis Armistead's appointment to it is indicative of the great regard which Gen. Lee had for him—both as to his capacities as a soldier and a man. 59

55. Ibid, Vol. XII, Part II, pp. 546, 568. ✓

56. Ibid, p. 737.

57. Ibid, and others.

58. Ibid, Vol. XIX, Part II, p. 596.

59. Confed. Milit. Hist., p. 576-546. (Confed. Milit. Hist., 4-5-76).

As pointed out in the preceding paragraphs Gen. Armistead held a position of great responsibility and trust during the Maryland Campaign of September, 1862. In his capacity as Provost Marshal-General he brought up the rear of the army as it advanced.⁶⁰ Moreover at the battle (Sharpsburg) itself he took an active part, and during the retreat of the Confederate Army he guarded the ford at Shepherdstown.⁶¹

At the Battle of Fredericksburg, December 13, 1862, Armistead was present but apparently did not play a prominent part.⁶² His brigade is given, however, as among those which took part in the campaign and main engagement.⁶³

A few months previous to Fredericksburg—in late September, 1862—Armistead's Brigade had been transferred to Pickett's Division, with which command Lewis Armistead continued until his death.⁶⁴ The exact date of this transfer is seemingly not known—but at Fredericksburg Armistead and his brigade are given as in Pickett's Division;⁶⁵ and Confederate Military History states that it participated in the manoeuvres of that command directly after Sharpsburg (from inference, in the operations of Gen. McLaws against Harper's Ferry).⁶⁶

The spring of 1863 saw Armistead with Pickett and Longstreet engaged in operations in south-eastern Virginia—first near Petersburg and latter at the Siege of Suffolk.⁶⁷ Because of these manoeuvres he

(Armistead) was not present at Chancellorsville, May 1-6, 1863.⁶⁸

60. Confed. Milit. Hist., p. 577.

61. Ibid.; Letter of H.M. Armistead; and Official Records, Vol. XIX, Part I, pp. 143 and 804.

62. Henderson, pp. 579-592, Official Records, Vol. XXI, p. 539.

63. Ibid.

64. See footnote directly below.

65. Henderson, p. 591, Battles and Leaders, Vol. III, p. 146.

66. Confed. Milit. Hist., p. 577.

67. Official Records, Vol. XVIII, pp. 915 and 1038.

68. Henderson, pp. 644-697.

V.

In June, 1863, Robert E. Lee began his second great invasion of the North—and with him went Pickett and Armistead.

The Southern soldiers were in high spirits as they crossed Maryland and began to enter into Pennsylvania, and no division was in better spirits than that of George E. Pickett. Pickett describing a typical incident in the invasion, wrote thusly to his sweetheart:

Yesterday my men were marching victoriously through the little town of Greencastle, the bands all playing our glorious, soul inspiring, Southern airs: 'The Bonny Blue Flag', 'My Maryland', 'Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still', and the soldiers all happy, hopeful, joyously keeping time to the music, many following it with their voices, and making up for the want of the welcome they were receiving in the enemy's country by cheering themselves and giving themselves a welcome. As Floweree's band, playing 'Dixie', was passing a vine-bowered home, a young girl rushed out on the porch and waved a United States flag. Then, either fearing that it might be taken from her or finding it too large and unwieldy, she fastened it around her apron, and taking hold of it each side, and waving it in defiance, called out with all the strength of her girlish voice, and all the courage of her brave young heart:

"Traitors—traitors—traitors, come and take this flag, the man of you who dares!"

Knowing that many of my men were from a section of the country which had been within the enemy's lines, and fearing lest some forget their manhood, I took off my hat and bowed to her, saluted her flag and then turned, facing the men who felt and saw my unspoken order. And don't you know that they were all Virginians and didn't forget it, and that almost every man lifted his cap and cheered the little maiden who, though she kept on waving her flag, ceased calling us traitors, till, finally, letting it drop in front of her, she cried out:

"Oh, I wish—I wish I had a rebel flag—I'd wave that, too!"⁶⁹

But alas! this was only an incident. Barely had a week passed by before the first guns of Gettysburg were booming.

The 1st of July, 1863 (the first day of Gettysburg), found Pickett and his division in the vicinity of Chambersburg, Pa.⁷⁰ By dint of hard marching they reached the field of operations on the afternoon of July 2nd.⁷¹ Pickett at once went to report to his corps commander, Lt. Gen. Longstreet, and writes ^{to his fiancée} thus of their meeting and subsequent events:

Though my poor men were almost exhausted by the march in the intense heat, I felt that the exigencies demanded my assuring Marse Robert that we had arrived and that, with a few hours' rest, my men would be equal to anything he might require of them. I sent Walter with my message and rode on myself to Little Round Top to see Old Peter, who, I tell you, was mighty glad to see me. And now, just think of it, though the old war-horse was watching A.P. Hill's attack upon the center and Hood and McLaws of his own corps, who had struck Sickles, he turned, and before referring to the fighting or asking about the march, inquired after you, my darling. While we were watching the fight, Walter came back with Marse Robert's reply to my message, which was in part: "Tell Pickett I'm glad that he has come, but that I shall not want him this evening."

We have been on the qui vive, my Sallie, since midnight; and as early as three o'clock were on the march. About half past three, Gary's pistol signaled the Yankees' attack upon Culp's Hill, and with its echo a wail of regret went up from my very soul that the other two brigades of my old division had been left behind. Oh, God!-if only I had them!-a surety for the honor of Virginia, for I can depend upon them, little one. They know your soldier and would follow him into the very jaws of death, and he will need them-right there, too, before he's through.

At early dawn, darkened by the threatening rain, Armistead, Garnett, Kemper and your soldier held a heart-to-heart powpow.

70. Pickett's Letters, p. 53.

71. Ibid.

All three sent regards to you, and Old Lewis pulled a ring from his little finger and, making me take it, said, "Give this little token, George, please, to her of the sunset eyes, with my love, and tell her the 'old man' says since he could not be the lucky dog he's mighty glad that you are."

Dear old Lewis—dear old 'Lo', as Magruder always called him, being short for Lothario.....

Just as we three separated to go our different ways after silently clasping hands, our fears and prayers voiced in the "Good luck, old man," a summons came from Old Peter, and I immediately rode to the top of the ridge where he and Marse Robert were making a reconnaissance of Meade's position. "Great God!" said Old Peter as I came up. "Look, General Lee, at the insurmountable difficulties between our line and that of the Yankees—the steep hills—the tiers of artillery—the fences—the heavy skirmish line—And then we'll have to fight our infantry against their batteries. Look at the ground we'll have to charge over, nearly a mile of that open ground there under the rain of their canister and shrapnel."

"The enemy is there, General Longstreet, and I am going to strike him," said Marse Robert in his firm, quiet, determined voice.

About 8 o'clock I rode with them along our line of prostrate infantry. They had been told to lie down to prevent attracting attention, and though they had been forbidden to cheer they voluntarily arose and lifted in reverential adoration their caps to our beloved commander as we rode slowly along. Oh, the responsibility for the lives of such men as these!

Our line of battle faces Cemetery Ridge. Our detachments have been thrown forward to support our artillery which stretches over a mile along the crests of Oak Ridge and Seminary Ridge. The men are lying in the rear, my darling, and the hot July sun pours its scorching rays almost vertically down upon them. The suffering and waiting are almost unbearable.

Well, my sweetheart, at one o'clock the awful silence was broken by a cannon-shot, and then another, and then another, and then more than a hundred guns shook the hills from crest to base, answered by more than another hundred—the whole world a blazing volcano—the whole of heaven a thunderbolt—then darkness and absolute silence—then the grim and gruesome, lowspoken commands—then the forming of the attacking columns. My

brave Virginians are to attack in front. Oh, God in mercy help me as He never helped before.

I have ridden up to report to Old Peter. I shall give him this letter to mail to you and a package to give you if—Oh, my darling, do you feel the love of my heart, the prayer, as I write that fatal word 'if'?

Old Peter laid his hand over mine and said:—"I know, George, I know—but I can't do it, boy. Alexander has my instructions. He will give you the order." There was silence, and his hand still rested on mine when a courier rode up and handed me a note from Alexander.....⁷²

Alexander had now been laying down a barrage for nearly two
⁷³ hours. When the firing finally ceased Fickett and his brigadiers took advantage of "the glowering darkness" to form their men in attacking column—just before the brow of Seminary Ridge. Then word came from Alexander to charge for the ammunition was almost exhausted and they would
⁷⁴ need what was left to cover them in their advance. (This shortness of
⁷⁵ the ammunition supply was entirely unknown to General Lee).

Now let us turn to Armistead—and in the words of The Rev. James E. Poindexter, formerly a captain under Armistead—

"A short time," says Col. Martin, "before the advance was ordered, the General, as his custom was, marched up and down in front of his troops, encouraging them in every way", for the shock of arms so soon to follow. "Remember, men, what you are fighting for. Remember your homes and your firesides, your mothers and wives and sisters and your sweethearts."

When the signal guns were fired, he promptly called "attention", and instantly every man was on his feet. Coming then right ~~right~~ to the front of the Fifty-third Virginia, which was that day the battalion of direction, he said to Color-Sergeant Blackburn? "Sergeant, are you going to plant those colors on the enemy's works over yonder?" "Yes, General," was the firm reply, "if mortal man can do it, I will." Then the

72. Ibid, pp. 53-57 (from one dated Gettysburg, July 3, 1863).

73. Ibid, p. 59; Freeman, Vol. III, pp. 112-134; Battles and Leaders, Vol. III, pp. 293-391; McCabe, James D., Jr., Life and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee, pp. 400-403; and others.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid.

chief exhorted his men to follow their colors and to remember the brave words of Sergeant Blackburn, and giving the command, "Battalion, forward; guide-centre, march," he placed himself in front of the Fifty-third Virginia, and, marching on foot, twenty yards ahead of his brigade, watched and directed our advance. It was not long before the battle was raging in all its fury.

The brigades of Garnett and Kemper were in our front, and as we drew near the advance line Kemper rode back to Armistead, who marched on foot, and said: "Armistead, hurry up; I am going to charge those heights and carry them, and I want you to support me." "I'll do it", he replied. Then glorying in the conduct of his men, he said to Kemper: "Look at my line; it never looked better on dress parade."

And now came the supreme test. He quietly gave the order, "Colonel, double-quick." And putting his black felt hat on the point of his sword, he led the advance, all the time in front of his line of battle, marching straight ahead through a hail of bullets, "the very embodiment of a heroic commander." The sword pierced through the hat, and more than once it slipped down to the hilt, and we saw above it the naked steel. As often as the hat slipped down the old hero would hoist it again to the sword's point. And so, borne aloft with matchless courage, it caught the eye, it nerved the hearts of his devoted men, a standard as glorious, as worthy to be sung, as the plume that floated at Ivry above the helmet of Navarre.

And now the battle raged with redoubled fury. "As we got within forty yards of the stone wall," says Lieutenant Whitehead, "came all along the line the order to charge, and charge we did. From behind the fence the Yankee infantry rose and poured into our ranks a murderous fire. Garnett's brigade and Kemper's had almost entirely disappeared; their brave commanders, their gallant officers, were stretched on the field, and it remained for Armistead's men to do the work. After a desperate fight the Yankees began to give way; and as they fell back our men rushed forward to the stone wall with unfaltering steps, Armistead still leading the charge."

The advancing line halted here, but only for an instant. The veteran Armistead took in with the eye of a trained soldier the whole situation, and saw in a flash that to halt there meant ruin and defeat. Just ahead, bristling with cannon, was Cemetery Ridge. Just beyond it Hancock, "a foeman worthy of his steel", was hurrying up his heavy reserves. On the right and on the left the enemy's lines were still intact. On both flanks fierce assaults would soon be made on Pickett's men. "Colonel," said Armistead to the commanding officer of the Fifty-third, "we cannot stay here."

A word to Martin was enough. "Forward with the colors," he cried, and over the wall they went, Armistead and Martin; and with them went a gallant band resolved that day to conquer or die. The flag of the Fifty-third regiment, borne by Lieutenant Carter, flashed like a meteor in the van. The indomitable Armistead, his hat on the point of his sword, towered before them like a pillar of fire. "Follow me, boys; give them the cold steel." A hundred and fifty undaunted men followed their chief.

They left behind them the stone wall. They passed the earth works. They seized the cannon that, doubled shotted at ten yards distance, had torn their ranks with canister. Victory seemed within their grasp. But alas! the support they looked for never came. In the nick of time Hancock's reserves were hurried to the front. They came on, he says, "four lines deep," and firing at close range, poured into the little band that followed Armistead a destructive volley. In that "hell of fire," as Bilharz says, "nothing could live." The intrepid Martin fell maimed for life. Forty-two of his brave Virginians lay dead around him. And there, in the Bloody Angle, our heroic chief, grasping a captured cannon to turn it on the foe, fell amongst his devoted men, pierced with mortal wounds, "and sealing with his heart's blood the high-water mark of the Confederate cause."⁷⁶

As the Federals bore the wounded Armistead to the rear they met the "gallant Hancock hurrying to the front."⁷⁷ Each at once recognized the other, and Hancock dismounting and grasping Armistead by the hand, inquired as to his condition. The latter replied that he was mortally wounded. Hancock then attempted to cheer him up and ordered him to be given medical attention at once.⁷⁸

76. Poindexter, pp. 4-7. This account is borne out in all its essentials by all the others, however. For example, see Freeman, Vol. III, 112-134, and Official Records, Vol. XXVII, Part I, p. 74 and pp. 374 and 428. Vol. XXVII, Part II, pp. 298, 325, and 359.

77. Poindexter, p. 7.

78. Ibid.

Armistead was right, however, in regard to the seriousness of his condition. The old hero lingered throughout the 4th, but passed away
79
on July 5th.

"General Lee wrote in his report, 'Brigadier-Generals Armistead, Barksdale, Garnett and Semmes died as they had lived, discharging the highest duties of patriots with devotion that never faltered and courage that
80
shrank from no danger."

VI.

If the author was a novelist or a playwright it would have been fitting to have ended the story of Lewis Addison Armistead in the last chapter—with the great and heroic climax of July 3rd, 1863—but such cannot be, for this, fortunately or unfortunately as the case may be, is history and not fiction. Lewis Addison Armistead though romantic and appealing a figure as ever strode any stage, was nevertheless a living man—and like many other similar mortals, who perished as he, with his death there comes a post-mortem.

Twenty years after the death of General Armistead, Gen. Abner Doubleday, formerly of the U.S. Army, published a volume containing his memoirs. This work was called Chancellorsville and Gettysburg.⁸¹

Gen. Doubleday in this book made several very slanderous remarks

79. Ibid.

80. Confed. Milit. Hist., p. 577.

81. Sou. Hist. Soc. Papers, Vol. X, p. 284.

concerning Gen. Armistead's conduct at the beginning of the war and at Gettysburg. At the First Manassas he (Doubleday) alleged that Armistead at fought on the Northern side-and had been seduced by Southern affliations to later change his loyalty-and that he had joined the Confederacy only after much persuasion. The second accusation which Doubleday hurled against Armistead was that on his death bed at Gettysburg he had repented of his service to the Southern States, and had expressed regret that he died fighting for a cause which sought to extend slavery over the Free States.

The first of these charges is almost too ridiculous to warrant a serious answer. As the reader already knows Armistead did not reach Texas from California in 1861, until after the First Manassas had been fought. This can be proved by the most conclusive proofs and evidence: Official Records, in which Northern officers report the relieving of posts which the departing Southerners had left; letters and orders innumerable, both Union and Confederate mentioning the fact that Johnston (A.S.), Armistead, and others had passed their way, or halted at this spot or the other, etc.; the services which Armistead rendered the Confederacy in Texas in July, August, and September, 1861, and ad infinitum. The second of Doubleday's accusations has been proved to be equally false-from testimony of Union soldiers who shared cots next to the wounded Armistead in the Field Hospital at Gettysburg., from the doctor who attended him, etc. The only puzzle is: why did Doubleday bring such insulting-and yet ridiculous charges-against a man like Lewis Armistead, whose repu-

82. Ibid.

83. See footnotes in II and III, dealing with Armistead's career in the old army. For additional information consult Sou. Hist. Soc. Papers, Vol. X, p. 284, pp. 335, 423-428, and 429.

84. Ibid (Sou. Hist. Soc. Papers). Also Vol. XI of same, pp. 283-286.

tation had always been spotless and above question? The only two possible answers are either pique or carelessness.

It must be admitted that a man's reputation is one thing that should not be handled in a loose manner-and since even after Doubleday was proven a liar-he made amends by inserting only a small footnote stating that he might have been mistaken concerning Armistead, in the second edition of his book-it would seem that the author's first supposition is the correct one.

85

An individual so small as to try and ruin the reputation of a man, dead and unable to defend himself, because of some personal grudge, is of too small a character and vision to mention further. The author will here dispense with further discussion of Abner Doubleday-~~as~~ a person of too mean a temperament and too biased a mind to warrant further study.

VII.

Lewis Addison Armistead's reputation is today secure. History knows him as a courageous soldier and a gallant gentleman. His greatest praise is that he is admired equally by North and South-former Federal and former Confederate both do his memory homage.

85. Ibid. (In relation to footnote in 2nd edition of Doubleday's book).

Armistead was always first in battle and last to leave. He never asked his men to do a thing he would not do himself-and in all that was dangerous and in all that was glorious he was a leader.

Today there stands a monument at Gettysburg where he fell a monument to valor forever. ⁸⁶

The Hero of Gettysburg lies buried in St. Paul's Cemetery, Baltimore, in a vault-beside him in death lies George Armistead-the Hero of Fort McHenry. ⁸⁷ But neither are really dead-for they live together eternally through their immortal deeds-each giving birth and added glory to a flag. One flag is praised today through song by the voices of a reunited nation-the other banner, the Southern Cross, will live as long as men are brave-and revere the memory of the valiant and the heroisms which they wrought.



86. Parade, p. 7.

87. Ibid.

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