The University at Lewisburg
and the Civil War

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BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS
LEWISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA
1963
UPON the University at Lewisburg the Civil War, from its beginning to its end, had a somewhat disturbing but, except for a few weeks in 1863, not a disruptive effect. The coming of this war should not have been a shock either to the faculty or to the students, for the University, chartered in February, 1846, had had its beginning and had reached its early maturity in a period of sectional cold war, during which successive crises were loosening the bonds of American nationality. Consequently, both the faculty and the students had had, so to speak, a time of preparation of hearts and minds for this war; they had passed through disturbing crises, they had discussed the issues which produced these crises, and, whether for this reason, or perhaps for the reason that there were no Southerners in the University, they had become of one mind before the challenge of disunion confronted them. Accordingly, when the war came, there was no "secession" from the University of either students or members of the faculty because of conflicting ideologies. So also of the members of the Board of Trustees, with one exception. The Reverend William T. Brantly, who had become pastor of the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Philadelphia in 1856 and a trustee of the University at Lewisburg in 1860, was, on July 29, 1862, dismissed from the Board of Trustees because, as the official record shows, he had "removed his residence from Pennsylvania to the Rebel- lious part of the Union." To be specific, Dr. Brantly, a Southerner who had spent his boyhood in Philadelphia and who had been educated in Brown University, had accepted a call to become pastor of the Second Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia.

*In 1886 the University at Lewisburg became Bucknell University.
*University at Lewisburg, Minutes of the Trustees, July 24, 1860, and July 29, 1862. On July 27, 1859, Dr. Brantly had been elected a member of the Board of Curators of the University, but his seat on this board was vacated when he became a trustee. University at Lewisburg, Minutes of the Curators, July 27, 1859, and July 31, 1861. See also the Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle: July 27, 1860; August 2, 1861; September 9, 1862.
Owing to scanty records, we cannot trace in full the efforts of members of the faculty, whether on rostra or in pulpits, to guide, during the troubled years of the 1850's, the public thought about disturbing contemporaneous issues; but we can discover where their sympathies lay. We know that President Howard Malcom and Professors George R. Bliss and George W. Anderson participated in a public meeting held in Lewisburg on February 21, 1854, to express opposition to the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and that they also participated in another public meeting, held in the chapel of the University on July 4, 1854, to denounce the enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. We also know that in 1856 Professor Bliss in two published letters, not only supported John Charles Fremont, Republican nominee for the presidency, but also committed himself fully to support the Republican principle that there should be no further extension of slavery into American territories. Also, we have other evidence, less trustworthy but easy to accept, that Professor Bliss, a few years later, did some campaigning for Abraham Lincoln.

Naturally the students in the University at Lewisburg could take little part in shaping public opinion; but in their literary societies, in the Academy as well as in the College, they could, and they did, discuss all issues, intramural and extramural, that seemed important to them. Like students before their time and after their time, they were receptive rather than original; and for this reason the records of their doings, being mostly reflections of what was happening about them, are highly important sources of our cultural history. Fortunately, we have in the Archives of our University the complete minutes of the two collegiate literary societies—Euepia and Theta Alpha—from their formation in 1850 to a time well beyond the period of the Civil War; but, unfortunately, we have the minutes of only one society in the Academy, and these minutes extend only from 1850 to 1854. Nevertheless, from these surviving records we can trace, to some extent, the impact upon the students not only of the disruptive happenings of the 1850's, but also of the war that began in 1861.

Let us begin with the Academic society called Phirhoan, a society which, in the early 1850's, not only debated questions, but also decided each of its debates and recorded all such decisions. On March 1, 1851, it decided that slavery should be abolished in the United States. On March 26, 1852, it decided that, by extending its territory, the United States would strengthen the Union; and on December 3 of that year it decided that the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850 should be repealed. Thereafter, until early in 1854, it turned its attention principally to domestic social questions and to certain aspects of our foreign policy. It decided, inter alia, that young men in college should not habitually associate with ladies, that the Maine liquor law should be sanctioned by the people of the United States, that women should not have equal rights with men, and, after two discussions, that "Spirit-Rappings" were "a humbug." As to foreign affairs, it decided that the United States should aid another nation striving for freedom when asked by that nation to do so, but it also decided that it would not be proper for the United States to assist Turkey in the Crimean War. Finally, on March 2, 1854, while the Kansas-Nebraska Bill was under discussion, it decided that our form of government was in danger of being overthrown.

By contrast, the two collegiate societies, although not indifferent to the important problems of women and liquor, were deeply concerned, during the 1850's, with the issues raised by the sectional controversy of that decade. Unfortunately for us, they refrained from recording either their approval or their disapproval of orations delivered before the society, and they passed no judgment as to the outcome of any debate within their respective halls.

For some reason that is not clear, the Euepians were more interested in debating questions of national political concern than were the men of Theta Alpha. During the year 1851, Euepians discussed both the "rightness" of slavery and the desirability of repealing the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. In 1853 and 1854, when the question of organizing the territories of Kansas and

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5 Accounts of these two meetings in Lewisburg in 1854 are embodied in a long story on "Kansas A Free State" that appeared in the Union County Chronicle, February 8, 1861.

6 See two "open letters" that Professor George R. Bliss addressed to Senator William Bigler. Ibid., October 24 and 31, 1856.


8 University at Lewisburg, Phirhoan Society, Minutes, March 1, 1851-March 2, 1854.
Nebraska was before the country, the Euepians discussed the right of a state to secede from the Union, the constitutionality of a Federal law to prohibit the introduction of slavery into “newly acquired territory,” the advisability of enacting the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and, significantly, the consideration of whether it was “the imperative duty of every American citizen to yield implicit obedience to and as far as it is in its power carry out every law of this Republic.” Also, in 1854, the men of Theta Alpha considered whether the signs of the times pointed to a dissolution of the Union, a subject to which they returned in 1858 and again in 1860. In 1854, moreover, they listened to an essay entitled “Our Country’s Future.”

During 1856, when “Bleeding Kansas” and a Presidential campaign were matters of great interest, the Euepians were debating whether Representative Preston S. Brooks should be expelled from the House of Representatives for his assault upon Senator Charles Sumner, whether the Union should be dissolved, and whether Buchanan would be a better President than Fremont. In the same year the men of Theta Alpha discussed, inter alia, the power of Congress to exclude slavery from the territories, and, at one meeting, listened to an oration entitled “Our National Existence in Danger.”

Curiously, neither of these societies came to grips in 1857 with the consequences of the Dred Scott decision. In that year and in 1858 they were concerned about the proposed admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution and about the territorial expansion of the United States. In those years both societies discussed the desirability of annexing Cuba to the United States and of making Mexico a protectorate of the United States. In 1859 the two societies discussed, among other things, John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry, the Euepians asking whether this “outrage” was a natural consequence of slavery, and the men of Theta Alpha asking whether John Brown should be executed for his offence.

The increasing tension produced by the presidential campaign of 1860, by the election of Lincoln, and, presently, by the secession of several of the Southern states was as emotionally disturbing to the University as it was to the community of Lewisburg; and uncertainty and concern about the course that the Buchanan administration would pursue between the election and the inauguration of Lincoln is reflected as clearly in the activities of the collegiate literary societies as it is in the columns of the newspapers of Lewisburg. Eventually the attack upon Fort Sumter released pent emotions. “The news of Fort Sumpter surrendered has thrown us all out of sorts,” wrote Elisha Shorkley, a businessman of Lewisburg, in his diary for April 17. “Today a roll appears & names are being rapidly added. Our Flag has been insulted. A requisition from the Present, for 75,000 men. War— How full of dread. Our town [is] in banners & the roll of the drum is stirring to battle.” The next day his entry was as follows: “War and the necessary arrangements seems [sic] the idea of all hands. Drums & Banners tell of patriotism. Cold cloudy day. Eighty-four leaving for Harrisburg. . . . Retired at 10 all excitement. I pray there may be no battle.”

By April 19 the Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle was telling even more about the excitement, the banners, and the preparations for war being made in Lewisburg. “American national flags, &c.,” it said, “are displayed in Lewisburg, and the feeling appears to be almost unanimous, here, to stand by the Government in its present struggle with a despotism as treacherous as it is cruel.” In this issue we find the text of President Lincoln’s proclamation of April 15, calling for 75,000 militiamen to put down “combinations” obstructing the operation of Federal laws, and here we learn that of these troops Pennsylvania would be expected to provide sixteen regiments. Here also we learn that a military company, with members from Mifflinburg, Winfield, and other places, had been formed in Lewisburg under the name of the Lewisburg Infantry, and that this company’s offer of service had been accepted; and that Friday (April 19) had been ap-

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*Elisha Shorkley’s diary is in the Archives of Bucknell University.

The Lewisburg Infantry was mustered into service on April 20, 1861, for three months, as Company G of the Fourth Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. After completing its tour of duty, it arrived in Lewisburg on July 27, 1861. Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle, July 30, 1861. For the muster roll of this company, see ibid., May 17, 1861, and Samuel P. Bates, History of the Pennsylvania Volunteers, 1861-5 . . . (Harrisburg, 1899), I, 47. J. Merrill Linn, Class of 1851, University at Lewisburg, served as second lieutenant in this company.
pointed as the time for its starting to Harrisburg. Finally, we learn that the editors of this newspaper had stopped their press on this day so that they could give “some account” of the departure of eighty or ninety men from Lewisburg “to defend their country’s honor and the rights of humanity.” These persons, we learn, “rendezvoused at their temporary Armory in Chamberlin’s Block, at an early hour, and—preceded by the Republican and the Democratic flags of the last campaign side by side—proceeded about 8½ A.M. to the Railway Depot on foot.” There they found assembled about 1,500 men, women, and children, and there the Rev. Thomas M. Reese, of the Methodist Church, addressed the departing soldiers and those who had come to see them off “in most eloquent, manly and patriotic terms.”

One week later the Star and Chronicle told its readers that not only had Lewisburg provided the first company from the West Branch, but that a second Lewisburg company (with twenty-five outside members, some from Mifflinburg and some from Hartleton) had been formed under the proposed name of Slifer Rifles; that some Lewisburgers, some former students, and some graduates of the University were enlisting elsewhere; that the ladies of Lewisburg and its vicinity had been invited to meet in the Baptist Church in the afternoon of April 26 “to take means to prepare Surgeon’s bandages”; and that the Lewisburg Bridge Company had generously provided free use of its bridge to persons “going to and from the Railway with military companies.”

Lewisburg was now in the war, and the University was showing its approval of what the town was doing to forward preparations for fighting. By May 17 the patriotic activities of the University had attracted the attention of the editors of the Star and Chronicle, for in their issue of that date they “noticed” not only that “the Female Seminary and University Buildings in Lewisburg have the American Flag displayed,” but that the “College boys are drilled, military fashion, by Capt. J. B. Hutton, formerly a Lieutenant in the Centre County Infantry.” An even greater display of patriotism by the University was made nearly three weeks later when, on June 5, the Slifer Guards, “over fifty in number, left Lewisburg for Harrisburg.” These men “were escorted by Capt. James Hayes and his troop of forty or fifty on horseback—about an equal number of Home Grays, under Capt. [Jacob] Neyhart—and a portion of the University Company, commanded by Capt. Hutton, whose imitation guns and soldier-like movements commanded special applause. A very large throng assembled at the Depot, when Prof. [George R.] Bliss made some timely remarks to the Volunteers and their friends, and Eld. Rodenbaugh commended them in prayer to the blessing of Almighty God.” That night one of these volunteers, writing to the Star and Chronicle from Camp Curtin, near Harrisburg, tendered for himself and his associates “hearty thanks to Prof. Bliss for his inspiring words of cheer, to Capt. Hutton for his efficient services, the University Guards, Home Guards, the Troop, and your citizens generally, who kindly escorted us to the Depot to see us off ‘rejoicing on our way.’”

This was not the last appearance of the University Guards with their imitation guns, nor was it the last time that members of the faculty of the University would participate in patriotic demonstrations or in other affairs related to the prosecution of the war. Both the faculty and the students took prominent parts in celebrating the Fourth of July in Lewisburg in 1861. President Justin R. Loomis and Professor George R Bliss served on a committee to procure speakers, and Professor T. F. Curtis served as chaplain for the occasion. The role of the University Guards in this observance was somewhat spectacular. The evening before, they had marched to a hill (presumably present-day College Park) that was then owned by Major John Gundy. Here they pitched their tents, raised the American flag, ate their evening meals “gummed blankets” for the use of the men in this company who was subsequently elected second lieutenant in Company B of Campbell’s Artillery. Star and Chronicle, June 21, 1861.

“Hereafter, in this paper, the Union County Star and Lewisburg Chronicle will be cited as Star and Chronicle.

When organized, this company was given the name of Slifer Guards, in honor of Colonel Eli Slifer, a businessman of Lewisburg, who was then serving as Secretary of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

John Bowen Hutton, of Milesburg, was a freshman in the University at Lewisburg in 1860-61. In 1863 he served as a sergeant in the University Guards (Company A, Twenty-Eighth Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers). Star and Chronicle, June 26, 1863.

The Slifer Guards, commanded by Captain Thomas Chamberlin, became Company D of the Thirty-Fourth Regiment, Fifth Pennsylvania Reserve. Bates, op. cit., I, 678-680. In November, 1861, Colonel Eli Slifer sent as a present eighty “gummed blankets” for the use of the men in this company who were without such equipment. Star and Chronicle, November 25, 1861.

This letter was signed “T. G. O.” It was written by Thomas G. Orwig, who was subsequently elected second lieutenant in Company B of Campbell’s Artillery. Star and Chronicle, June 21, 1861.
meal, paraded, entertained visitors, and then held a religious service led by their own chaplain. Before retiring for the night, they posted a guard, seven in number, and provided that every hour this guard should be changed, so that each member of the company might perform this kind of duty. Called from their slumber by reveille at four o’clock the next morning, they immediately fell in, marched in parade, and fired a salute of thirty-four guns. Then they were called to morning service, at which they were favored with the attendance of a detachment from the Female Institute.” Whether the girls remained for breakfast the record does not reveal. However that may have been, after breakfast the University Guards struck their tents, and at about six-thirty o’clock began a return march to College Hill, where they presently arrived “without any casualty, with ranks unbroken, and much pleased with . . . [their] brief campaign.” They were now prepared to march, and did march, through the streets of Lewisburg in a long parade, and afterward they received, at the residence of Joseph Meixell, “an elegant Flag.” On this occasion both President Loomis and Professor Bliss made appropriate addresses.16

Thus far the work of the University had not been much disturbed, and for months thereafter it would be hindered little, because of the war. As late as Commencement Week, July 28 to August 1, 1861, the editors of the Star and Chronicle could say that the University had “suffered as little as any other from the times.” If it had been situated in one of the states of New England, the University might have pursued throughout the war a course no more disturbing to its work, and no more hazardous, than the one that it had pursued during the spring and summer of 1861. Despite some embarrassment from a temporary dwindling of its enrollment, and considerable discomfort from rising prices, it might well have continued to carry on its work much as it had before the war began. Its professors might have restricted to religious, patriotic, and humanitarian activities their efforts to further the cause of the North, and its students might have confined their efforts to drilling with imitation guns and to debating questions (as they did) touching the rightness of war, the wisdom of important decisions made by President Lincoln, the qualifications of Northern military commanders, the advisability of enlarging our navy, the possibility of British intervention in the war, the wisdom of encouraging mixed schools, the effect of the Emancipation Proclamation, and the wisdom, or lack of wisdom, in presuming that “the production & free use of wine in the United States” would “not diminish the amount of drunkenness.”17 But such tranquillity for the University at Lewisburg was not to be; for Pennsylvania, with its southern border inadequately defended, was vulnerable to enemy raiding parties, and even to invasion if the Army of Northern Virginia, advancing northward from the Shenandoah Valley, could by-pass, out-maneuver, or defeat the Army of the Potomac. Once the enemy had entered Franklin County in force, the way lay open to it through the Cumberland Valley to Harrisburg and the whole Valley of the Susquehanna. Because of a threat of invasion in 1862, because of an actual invasion in 1863, and because of a damaging raid in 1864, the University at Lewisburg, within each of those years, became, willy-nilly, to some extent, a participant in the Civil War.

The first armed participation of the University, made in 1862, was more spectacular than important, for the threat to Pennsylvania in that year arose when the University was not in session, and the threat was of short duration. It was caused by the movement northward of the Army of Northern Virginia after its second victory at Bull Run on August 30. Oddly enough, just as General Lee, on September 3, was recommending to President Jefferson Davis that the time was propitious for the Confederate troops to enter Maryland, General H. W. Halleck was suggesting to General George B. McClellan that it was very likely that the enemy, “baffled in his intended capture of Washington,” would...
make a raid into Maryland or Pennsylvania; and he told McClellan that a “movable army must be immediately organized to meet him again in the field.”

During the next few days events moved rapidly, and in both Washington and Harrisburg anxiety mounted. On September 4 General Lee, in a letter to President Davis, said that, if the results of his proposed invasion of Maryland would justify it, he intended to enter Pennsylvania. By September 7 he had established his headquarters near Fredericktown, Maryland. Meantime, on September 4, Governor Andrew Curtin, in a proclamation to the people of Pennsylvania, had earnestly recommended not only the formation throughout the state of volunteer companies and regiments, but also the closing daily of all places of business at 3:00 P.M., so that there would be ample opportunity for volunteers to drill. This news reached Lewisburg in the midst of some excitement and activity, when able-bodied men there were concerned about enlisting in old regiments in time to get the Federal bounty, or about enlisting in new regiments before the draft was applied. But the response to the governor’s proclamation to organize and drill was encouraging, and the editors of the Star and Chronicle urged the men of Pennsylvania who were “accustomed to hunt the deer and otherwise to use the gun, even if they be exempted or not drafted,” to offer their services immediately to help “guard the Potomac above Washington, and the mountain passes of Western Maryland and Southern Pennsylvania.” The emergency, they said, was so great that the country could not wait while raw recruits were being trained to use arms.

As the days sped by, the threat of invasion became graver. On September 9 the people of Lewisburg read in the Star and Chronicle of that date a notice in these words: “The rebels are in large force in the vicinity of Frederick, Md., and are also threatening Cumberland Valley, Pa. Our people are leaving Hagerstown. There is great alarm at Chambersburg. As yet, we have heard of no stand made anywhere by our forces.” Presently they would hear enough—and more. On September 10 Governor Curtin called upon all the able-bodied men of Pennsylvania “to organize immediately for the defence of the state,” and a day later, by order of the President, he called out fifty thousand of the “freemen of Pennsylvania” for immediate service “to repel the now imminent danger of invasion.”

Meanwhile, in Lewisburg, Captain George W. Forrest in the North Ward and Captain Charles C. Shorkley in the South Ward had been drilling companies, which, by September 9, were awaiting orders to go to Harrisburg. They did not wait long. In the morning of September 13, Captain Shorkley, with some seventy men from the South Ward, set out for Harrisburg, and in the evening of the same day Captain Forrest, with about forty men from the North Ward, also left for Harrisburg. On Monday morning these groups were followed by other recruits from Lewisburg, some from the South Ward and others from the North Ward. In Harrisburg, in the afternoon of September 14, the Third Regiment of Pennsylvania Militia was formed. It consisted of ten companies. Company A came from Milton. Company B, commanded by Captain Shorkley, was the South Ward Company of Lewisburg, and Company C, commanded by Captain Forrest, was the North Ward Company of Lewisburg.

“Star and Chronicle, September 5, 1862.”

“Harrisburg Pennsylvania Daily Telegraph, September 11 and 12, 1862.”

“Star and Chronicle, September 12, 1862. Elisha Shorkley, in his diary for September 8, 1862, wrote that military affairs were “all the rush,” and that there was drilling “in both wards, & full companies too.” Three days later he wrote in his diary as follows: “The excitement is intense. At 9 we haul the fires of the Foundry & quit the routine of business for that of soldierly.” Elisha Shorkley served as a corporal in Company B, Third Regiment, Pennsylvania Volunteers. His brother Charles commanded this company.”

“Star and Chronicle, September 19 and 30, 1862; Bates, op. cit., V, 1153-1154.”
Except for one person, the University was represented only in Company B. Because the students were then on vacation, this representation was not large; but it was of such character that it attracted considerable notice. It included four students whose academic status, according to the Catalogue of the University for 1861-62, was as follows: one was a freshman, one was a sophomore, one was a senior in the Academy, and one was a member of the Theological Department. Also in this company were two recent graduates of the University. These six persons were residents of Lewisburg. The startling fact about this company, however, is that the President of the University, Dr. Justin R. Loomis, and one of the professors, Charles S. James, were members of it. Although, according to a contemporaneous report, they had both been offered commissions, they declined to serve as officers because of their lack of military experience. They enlisted as privates. President Loomis, however, was made regimental chaplain, and Professor James was chosen to be one of the sergeants of Company B. Corporal Edwin C. Wolfe, of Company C, had been a member of the University in the Class of 1857, but had not finished his course. All told, the University was represented by nine persons in Company B and Company C.

The service of these men proved to be neither long nor hazardous. They were mustered in only for the duration of the emergency, which was virtually ended by the battle of Antietam. On September 24, after twelve days in the army, they were again home in Lewisburg, looking “bronzed and thin . . . [but] in good spirits.” They had advanced beyond Hagerstown, and more than once they had stood in battle formation; but they were never under fire. Nevertheless, as the enthusiastic editors of the Star and Chronicle remarked in welcoming them home, they “left when real danger threatened—did their duty, patriotically—were successful in their object—had ‘a good time’ in all respects—and in general will only have to regret that the ‘campaign’ was so short.”

One of the experiences that they no doubt would long remember was related by Captain J. Merrill Linn, who, on a tour of duty, visited Hagerstown while the Third Regiment was still on duty in Maryland. Near Hagerstown, on September 20, he fell in with the two companies from Lewisburg. Here, in part, is what he wrote about them:

The two companies from Lewisburg, and one from Milton, had been thrown out a mile beyond, towards Williamsport, [Md.], on picket duty during the night. They were bivouaced in a wood, and when I got there were variously engaged in preparing breakfast. . . . Prof. James’ party was engaged in cutting up a fine chicken, and from the drum-stick he held up triumphantly, it must have been a Shanghai. Mr. [William] Dreisbach was frying eggs, and Esq. [J. M. C.] Ranck, prodding some fat looking sweet potatoes boiling in a pot. Truly, I thought, as I sat down on a stump, Uncle Sam must have improved his commissary, if they draw all these things in their rations. It was a fine grove they were in, and soft grassy beds to lie on, but ne’er a rag to cover them.

—Star and Chronicle, September 24, 1862.

The muster rolls of Companies B and C are printed in the Star and Chronicle, September 30, 1862, and the muster rolls for the entire regiment are printed in Bates, op. cit., V, 1153-1156. In this last-named work it is said (p. 1153) that the Third Regiment was organized on September 11-13, 1862, and was mustered out on September 23-25, 1862. See also William L. Nesbit, “The First Emergency,” Bucknell Alumni Monthly, VII (May, 1923), 4-5.

Two privates in Company C, Samuel L. Beck, Jr., and Walter G. McMahone, who were employees of the Star and Chronicle, prepared a brief, day-by-day account of the activities of Companies B and C (with particular reference to Company C) that was published in the Star and Chronicle of September 20, 1862.

—Star and Chronicle, September 24, 1862.

Ibid. General George B. McClellan, in a message to Governor Curtin, dated September 15, 1862—8 A.M., announced a ‘complete victory’ at South Mountain and congratulated the governor “on the gallant behavior of the Pennsylvania Reserves.” The War of the Rebellion, Series I, XIX, Pt. 2, pp. 305-306.

—Star and Chronicle, September 24, 1862. After serving for three months as second lieutenant in the Lewisburg Infantry, J. Merrill Linn became captain of the Linn Rifles, a company which, on November 16, 1861, was
Regardless of the pleasure that these hard-boiled veterans may have derived from their short campaign to "save Maryland," what really mattered for the University was the return of President Loomis and Professor James the day before the opening of the fall term of the University.44

Nine months passed by before Pennsylvania was again threatened with an invasion. This time there was an invasion, one of the consequences of which was the suspension for six weeks of the collegiate and the theological branches of the University at Lewisburg. This invasion was not unexpected. After the victory of the Confederates at Chancellorsville, it was almost inevitable that General Lee would endeavor to carry the war into Pennsylvania, where a great victory for the Army of Northern Virginia—if such a victory could be achieved—might well decide the outcome of the war. A victory of such consequence seemed imperatively necessary to the Confederates, for, as General Lee remarked to President Davis, in a letter dated June 10, 1863, "We should not...conceal from ourselves that our resources in men are constantly diminishing, and the disproportion in this respect between us and our enemies, if they continue united in their efforts to subjugate us, is steadily augmenting."35

Moreover, a successful invasion of Pennsylvania, a land of plenty, would have a wholesome effect upon Confederate soldiers who often were ill-fed, scantily clothed, and, in numerous instances, compelled to march without shoes.36 Furthermore, the pleasure mustered into service for three years as Company H of the Fifty-First Regiment of Pennsylvania Volunteers. Captain Linn resigned his commission on April 14, 1864. For muster rolls of this company, see the Star and Chronicle, November 26, 1861, and Bates, op. cit., II, 35.

It was announced, as early as September 19, 1862, that both the University and the Lewisburg Academy would open at the appointed times, notwithstanding the absence of President Loomis and Professor James from the University and of Principal John Randolph from the Lewisburg Academy. Star and Chronicle, September 19, 1862. In Philadelphia, on September 29, it was announced that President Loomis and Professor James would be "relieved" in time to return for the opening of the fall term of the University. Editorial, "Lewisburg University," Philadelphia Christian Chronicle, September 25, 1862. In a telegram to General H. W. Halleck, dated September 23, 1862, Governor Curtin said that the Pennsylvania militia had been disbanded. The War of the Rebellion, Series I, XIX, Pt. 2, p. 352.


that such soldiers would experience in teaching the Yankees how discomforting an invasion can be to people whose country is invaded was an added reason for a large-scale Confederate advance into Pennsylvania. We may be certain, I think, that a young Confederate surgeon, Dr. Spencer Glasgow Welch, was voicing a view widely held in the Army of Northern Virginia when, on June 21, 1863, as A. P. Hill’s Corps (to which he was attached) was nearing Winchester, Va., on its way north, he wrote to his wife, saying that he would endure almost anything to have the pleasure of "getting into Pennsylvania and letting the Yankees feel what it is to be invaded."37

Well before this time apprehension in Washington of a Confederate invasion of Pennsylvania had induced action by which Pennsylvania was organized into two military departments—the Department of the Monongahela and the Department of the Susquehanna.38 Upon assuming command of the Department of the Susquehanna, General D. N. Couch, on June 11, issued from his headquarters in Chambersburg his first General Order, saying that he deemed it necessary, in order to prevent "serious raids by the enemy," to call upon Pennsylvanians to form an army corps of volunteer infantry.39 The next day Governor Curtin urged all Pennsylvanians to give proper attention to the general orders of the commanders of the newly established departments in Pennsylvania.40 Before such an organization could be started, however, a grave emergency had arisen. Lee’s army was on the march, and on June 14 the Secretary of War telegraphed to Governor Curtin the news that there was now a general movement of Confederates toward Pennsylvania.41 The next day President Lincoln called for Federal service 100,000 of the militia of Maryland, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio—Pennsylvania’s quota being 50,000—to be mustered into the service of the United States forthwith, and to serve for the period of six months from the date of such muster into said service, unless sooner discharged.42 Later in the same day Governor Curtin, in another


46 The War of the Rebellion, Series I, XXVII, Pt. 3, pp. 54-55.

47 Ibid., 79-80.

48 Ibid., 68.

49 Ibid., 112.

50 Ibid., 136-137.
proclaimed, affirmed that Pennsylvania was “again threatened with invasion” and called upon all Pennsylvanians capable of bearing arms to “enroll themselves in military organizations” pursuant to the recently issued call of President Lincoln.44

By this time Lewisburg was once again thoroughly aroused. On June 15 a Lewisburg girl, Sally Meixell, wrote in her diary as follows: “Bad war news. Lee’s reble [sic] cavalry are making a raid into Penna. The militia are called out.” That same day Elisha Shorkley wrote in his diary, saying: “The tocsin of alarm is being rung throughout the land. An invasion is threatened & we are all agog again. Business is on the wane & suffers in interest. War meeting.” The next day he wrote that the whole town was “afloat on the waves of excitement.” Also on June 16 the people of Lewisburg could read in the Star and Chronicle an “alarm” sounded by Governor Curtin on June 15, as well as an impassioned plea by him to prospective volunteers not to hold back for fear that they might be kept in the service for six months, but, in a time when the capital of their state was threatened, to trust his assurance that they would not be held beyond the end of the emergency. “I will accept men,” he promised them, “without reference to the six months.”

A response from Lewisburg came quickly. There, on the night of June 16, a meeting was held in front of the Lewisburg Bank to make preparations “to send on men AT ONCE for the defence of Pennsylvania.” The next morning “a large crowd gathered on Market St. Capt. T. R. Jones, late of the North’d Co. of the 131st,46 started with about 50 students from the University, and was followed before noon by Capts. Shorkley and Forrest, with some of those in service last Sept. Additions to these companies were made Wednesday night and Thursday morning. . . . Our College classes are to a man absent. . . .”47

Thus we learn that Lewisburg was sending out three companies of emergency troops, notwithstanding the fact that, as we shall presently see, not all the classes in the College were “to a man absent.”

The morning of June 17 was a busy time for Sally Meixell, who spent several hours working on and directing the making of three haversacks and parts of three others. Her work, however, was interrupted when John Probasco, one of the student volunteers, brought her his photograph. At eleven o’clock she went down the street with Hannah Bright “to see the Militia comps. off.” After bidding many of them goodbye, she allowed one of the departing seniors, William Wolverton, to kiss her cheek. Naturally, this was a time when everyone would be expected to be co-operative as well as self-sacrificing, and Sally averred that she had made this concession “to prevent a fuss.” However that may be, she remarked, as a clarifying afterthought, that “two town comps.” had left that morning, together with “Capt. Jones’ comp. of students.” “All the College & Academy students enlisted,” she continued, “except some seven, one a ‘sick’ copper head, the others wounded, too delicate, & too young.”48

The story of the enlistment of the most of the students of the College, as related thirty-five years later by one of them, the Rev. Owen Phillips fiches, is, in part, as follows:

. . . When Governor Curtin sounded the alarm in 1863 that Lee had entered Pennsylvania[,] the students could stand the strain no longer. The call came in the morning. That afternoon no studying was done. The Seniors were reading Tacitus. Meeting Dr. Bliss at the hour of recitation[,] they had his blessing on their resolve to go. During the afternoon friends in town made haversacks for the boys and filled them. On the next morning about nine they formed in the Lewisburg streets, and amid blessings and tears they marched to Montandon and took the cars.48

Captain Jones’s company, unofficially known as University Guards, proceeded to Camp Curtin. In the evening of June 22, at dress parade, Captain Jones told his company that it had been

Captain Jones’s comment about the enlistments is not entirely accurate, as the sequel will show. Her diary is in the Archives of Bucknell University. 48 O. P. Eaches, “The Emergency Company of 1863,” Bucknell Mirror, XVII (June 10, 1898), 119.

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