

## THE BARLOW-GORDON CONTROVERSY: REST IN PEACE

by John C. Fazio

[Editor's Note: Last year, the author penned articles about Francis and Arabella Barlow and John and Fanny Gordon. He promised to enlighten us about the controversy surrounding Barlow and Gordon that arose after the war. Here he enlightens us.]

The human interest story about the relationship between Francis C. Barlow, the Northern "Puritan" who rose to the rank of division commander, from private, in the Army of the Potomac, and John B. Gordon, the Southern "Cavalier" who rose in rank from captain to corps commander in the Army of Northern Virginia, is one of the most famous of the Civil War. The story concerns Gordon's perhaps life-saving ministrations to a stricken Barlow on Blocher's Knoll (now Barlow's Knoll) on the first day of Gettysburg, his arrangement of safe passage for Arabella, who then made her way to her husband and nursed him back to health, the later suppositions of the commanders that neither had survived the war, and their subsequent meetings, particularly the first, at a Washington dinner party, where they were, as it were, resurrected to each other.

The story was apparently first published in 1879 by various newspapers around the country after an unidentified Washington, D.C. correspondent for the *Boston Transcript* wrote it. One of the newspapers was the *Dublin Post* of Dublin, Georgia, Gordon's home state. We know it came from the pen of the correspondent because the *National Tribune*, another newspaper that published the story, gave it that attribution. It appeared later in *McClure's Magazine* (once in the 1880's and again in June, 1894), Vol. XXI of the *Southern Historical Society Papers* (1893), *Campfire and Battlefield* (1894), James A. Scrymser's *In Time of Peace and War* (1915), a volume titled *New York State*, issued in 1923 to commemorate the unveiling of a statue of Barlow on the knoll, *The Shaping of a Battle: Gettysburg* (1959), by James Montgomery, *Generals in Blue* (1964), by Ezra Warner, *John Brown Gordon: Soldier, Southerner, American* (1989), by Ralph Lowell Eckert, and *Gettysburg: The First Day* (2001), by Harry W. Pfanz. Articles on the subject include: "A Gettysburg Myth Exploded," by William F. Hanna, *Civil War Times Illustrated* (May, 1985), "The Barlow - Gordon Incident," by Gary Kross, *Blue and Gray Magazine* (December, 2001), a response to the Kross article by Gregory C. White, *Blue and Gray Magazine* (February, 2002), and "Encounter on Blocher's Knoll," by Richard F. Welch, *America's Civil War* (March, 2004). The story, and commentary on it, have obviously become a Civil War item.

Three months before his death in 1904, Gordon published his memoirs, titled *Reminiscences of the Civil War*, which he wrote during the period 1891-1897. In it, he said that when his men overran the knoll he saw Barlow fall from his horse. He rode up, looked at him, saw that he was not dead, and dismounted. He gave him water from his canteen, but because his wound was so grave, including paralysis, he fully expected him to die. He directed some of his subordinates to carry Barlow into the shade, but before leaving him, Barlow asked him to destroy some of his wife's letters that he had on his person and to tell his wife of their meeting on the field and that his last thoughts were of her. Gordon learned that Arabella was near the battlefield and so at the close of day he sent word to her of her husband's condition and granted her safe passage through his lines to be with him. About a year