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Life and Character

OF

General George H. Thomas.

GEN. JAMES A. GARFIELD.

ORATION

ON THE

LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

GEN. GEORGE H. THOMAS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Society of the Army of the Cumberland

BY

GEN. JAMES A. GARFIELD

AT THE

FOURTH ANNUAL REUNION

CLEVELAND, NOVEMBER 25, 1870

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ORATION.

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF

GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS.

COMRADES OF THE ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND :

In obedience to your order, I arise to discharge, as best I may, the most honorable and the most difficult duty which it was possible for you to assign me. You have required me to exhibit, in fitting terms, the character and career of *GEORGE H. THOMAS.*

I approach the theme with the deepest reverence, but with the painful consciousness of my inability to do it even approximate justice.

There are now living not less than two hundred thousand men who served under the eye of *GENERAL THOMAS*; who saw him in sunshine and storm—on the march, in the fight, and on the field when the victory had been won. Enshrined in the hearts of all these, are enduring images and most precious memories of their commander and friend. Who shall collect and unite into one worthy picture, the bold outlines, the innumerable lights and shadows which make up the life and character of our great leader? Who shall condense into a

single hour, the record of a life which forms so large a chapter of the nation's history, and whose fame fills and overfills a hemisphere? No line can be omitted, no false stroke made, no imperfect sketching done, which you, his soldiers, will not instantly detect and deplore. I know that each of you here present, sees him in memory at this moment, as we often saw in life; erect and strong, like a tower of solid masonry; his broad, square shoulders and massive head; his abundant hair and full beard of light brown, sprinkled with silver; his broad forehead, full face, and features that would appear colossal, but for their perfect harmony of proportion; his clear complexion, with just enough color to assure you of robust health and a well-regulated life; his face lighted up by an eye which was cold gray to his enemies, but warm, deep blue to his friends; not a man of iron, but of live oak. His attitude, form and features all assured you of inflexible firmness, of inexpugnable strength; while his welcoming smile set every feature aglow with a kindness that won your manliest affection. If thus in memory you see his form and features, even more vividly do you remember the qualities of his mind and heart. His body was the fitting type of his intellect and character; and you saw both his intellect and character tried, again and again, in the fiery furnace of war, and by other tests not less searching. Thus, Comrades, you see him; and your memories supply a thousand details, which complete and adorn the picture. I beg you, therefore, to supply the deficiency of my work from these living prototypes in your own hearts.

No human life can be measured by an absolute standard. In this world, all is relative. Character itself is the result of innumerable influences, from without and from within, which act unceasingly through life. Who shall estimate the effect of those latent forces enfolded in the spirit of a new-born

child—forces that may date back centuries and find their origin in the life, and thought, and deeds of remote ancestors—forces, the germs of which, enveloped in the awful mystery of life, have been transmitted silently from generation to generation, and never perish! All cherishing nature, provident and unforgetting, gathers up all these fragments, that nothing may be lost, but that all may ultimately reappear in new combinations. Each new life is thus the “heir of all the ages,” the possessor of qualities which only the events of life can unfold. The problems to be solved in the study of human life and character are therefore these: Given the character of a man, and the conditions of life around him, what will be his career? Or, given his career and surroundings, what was his character? Or, given his character and career, of what kind were his surroundings? The relation of these three factors to each other is severely logical. From them is deduced all genuine history. Character is the chief element, for it is both a result and a cause—a result of influences and a cause of results.

Each of these elements in the career of GENERAL THOMAS throws light on the others; for throughout his life, whether we consider causes or results, there appears a harmony of proportion, both logical and beautiful, which can spring only from a genuine soul, true to itself, and, therefore, false to none.

From the meager materials at our command, it appears that he was of Welsh descent on his father's side; though his ancestors resided for some time in England before they crossed the sea. Both physically and intellectually, GENERAL THOMAS bore unmistakable marks of that sturdy Cumbrian character which, for four centuries, defied the conquering arms of Rome, and which preserves to this day, in a small corner of Great Britain, a language, literature, and body of traditions all its

own. On his mother's side he was of French origin; she having descended from the Rochelles, a Huguenot family that fled from the oppression of Louis XIV., to find an asylum in the New World. Few elements ever mingled in our national life that added such purity and brilliancy as that which the religious wars of the sixteenth century sent to us from France; and it would be difficult to form a happier combination than the honest solidity of the Welsh, joined to the genial vivacity of the French.

Both branches of THOMAS' family settled in Southeastern Virginia, in the early days of that colony, and became thoroughly imbued with the American spirit.

His own birthplace and home was in that region of Southampton county, Virginia, which forms the water-shed between the James river and the streams that flow into Albemarle Sound. Southampton, like many of the counties in that region, was named by the colonists in memory of their old English home.

GEORGE HENRY THOMAS was born on the 31st of July 1816. We know but little of his early boyhood, beyond the fact that it was passed in a happy country home, in the society of brothers and sisters, and under the direction of cultivated, parents, who ranked among the most respectable and influential of Virginia farmers. One class of influences is specially worthy of notice. There was much in the surroundings of a young Virginian at that time to make him justly proud of his own State. The glorious part she had borne in the war of independence, and in that noble statesmanship which produced the Constitution and Government of the Republic, was not forgotten by her young men. But much more could be said of Virginia. When THOMAS was eighteen years of age, the Constitution of the United States had been in force forty-five years; and during that period Virginia had held the Presi-

dency thirty-two years, had filled the office of Secretary of State for more than twenty years, and had given to the Nation its greatest Chief Justice for thirty-four years.

These honorable evidences of leadership gave peculiar significance and popularity to the doctrine of a great Virginia statesman, embodied in the now sadly-famous resolutions of 1798, in which Virginia put forth the theory that the National Constitution was a compact between the several States, and that each State, in its own sovereign right, was the final judge of any violation of the Constitution, and also of the measure and mode of redress. During the first quarter of this century, Virginia did not see that the inevitable logic of this theory was, first, Nullification, and finally Secession. She saw in it only a safeguard against possible aggression on the part of the National Government or her sister States. It was gratifying to the pride of her citizens, to look upon their proud State as a virgin queen, foremost in founding a great republic, and nobly supporting it by her sovereign will. We shall never do full justice to the conduct of Virginians in the late war without making full allowance for the influence of these resolutions of 1798.

When THOMAS had reached the age of twenty, and had made some progress in the study of the law, his family secured him an appointment as cadet at the Military Academy at West Point. He entered in 1836; and, after a thorough and solid rather than a brilliant course, he graduated in 1840, ranking twelfth in a class of forty-two members, among whom were SHERMAN, EWELL, JORDAN, GETTY, HERBERT, KINGSBURY, VAN VLIET, and others, who afterward attained celebrity. As a cadet, he was distinguished for what BACON has called "round-about common sense" rather than for genius, and for the possession of an honest, sturdy nature that accomplished what-

ever he undertook by thorough, intelligent, persistent, hard work.

Assigned to duty on the day of graduation as second lieutenant of the Third Artillery, he served in the Regular Army for twenty years, during which time he rendered honorable and faithful service in the Florida war from 1840 to 1842; in command of various forts and barracks from 1842 to 1845; in the military occupation of Texas in 1845-46; in the Mexican war from 1846 to 1848, participating in the battle of Buena Vista and in nearly all the operations of GENERAL TAYLOR'S army; in the Seminole war in 1849-50; as instructor in artillery and cavalry at West Point from 1851 to 1854; on frontier duty at various posts in the interior of California and Texas, leading several expeditions against the Indians from 1855 to the autumn of 1860. During these twenty years he was repeatedly brevetted for gallant and meritorious services, and rose through all the grades to a captaincy of artillery; and in 1855 was made a major of the Second Cavalry, which regiment he commanded for three years. He was wounded in a skirmish with the Indians, at the head-waters of the Brazos river, in August, 1860; and, in the following November, went East on a leave of absence.

Here let us pause, on the threshold of the great events then impending, and inquire what manner of man THOMAS had become. He was forty-four years of age; had walked for nearly a quarter of a century, steadily and uncomplainingly, in the rugged paths of a soldier's life; had made himself complete master of all the details of his profession; had honored every station he had occupied; was in turn honored by his Government and his comrades; and was held in peculiar honor by the people of his own State. Virginia had presented him a splendid sword, as a recognition of his high qualities and gallant conduct in the Mexican war; and the proud

aristocracy of Southampton, to which his family belonged, esteemed him a bright ornament of their society. He had scarcely reached home, when the fearful portents of the storm began to appear. Sharing in the traditional sentiment of the army that a soldier should take no part in politics, he had never identified himself with any political party, and probably had never cast a vote. But we have no reason to doubt that he shared in the general sentiments of Virginia, and deprecated any agitation which should disturb her social institutions. During the winter of 1860-61, he watched with painful anxiety the culmination of that conflict of opinion which preceded the war; and he regarded the growing political strife as a measureless outrage, in which both contestants were wrong, but in which Northern agitators were the first aggressors. The teachings of the Constitution and laws, relating to the subject matter of the contest, were sadly obscured by the legal subtleties then employed to defend, or apologize for, a dissolution of the Union. The President had declared in his annual message to Congress, December 4, 1860, that "the Constitution confers upon Congress no power to coerce into submission a State that is attempting to withdraw from the Union," . . . and that "the sword was not placed in the hands of Congress to preserve the Union by force." To the officers of the army, this official declaration of their Commander-in-Chief amounted to a decree that should their States secede, neither he nor they could do any lawful military act to prevent it. They had a right to regard this decree, while it remained unrevoked, as an order for the regulation of their conduct.

Before the middle of February, 1861, seven States had passed ordinances of secession; the Confederate Government was actually set up at Montgomery; Southern leaders declared the Union lawfully and permanently dissolved, and

that there would be no war. Looking back from our present standpoint, we can hardly understand how widespread was the opinion, both North and South, that the Union was gone, and the Government was powerless to restore it. To an officer of the army the situation was painful and perplexing to the last degree. Dissolution of the Union without war, would carry with it the inevitable dissolution of the army; and, besides the shame and humiliation which an officer must feel at the ruin of a nation whose honor he had so long defended in arms, he saw that he must look about him for some new pursuit by which to earn his bread. What will THOMAS do? What path will he mark out for his own feet to follow through this bewildering maze? His State had not yet seceded; but her heart was on fire, and no one knew how far she would go, nor how many would follow her in the work of ruin.

Let us consider more closely his surroundings. He was a major of the Second Cavalry, a regiment organized in 1855 by JEFFERSON DAVIS, Secretary of War, out of the *elite* of the Army. Either by accident or design, three-fourths of its officers were from the slave States. Its roster [see Appendix A], as printed in the Army Register of 1860, shows a list of names now widely notorious in the history of the war. ALBERT SIDNEY JOHNSTON was its colonel, ROBERT E. LEE its lieutenant colonel, and W. J. HARDEE its senior major. Among its captains and lieutenants, were VAN DORN, KIRBY SMITH, JENIFER, HOOD, and FITZHUGH LEE. More than one-third of its officers afterward became rebel generals, and others held less conspicuous rank in the same service.

The regiment had served for five years on the Indian frontier; and its officers, thus remote from the social and political centers, had lived on terms of the closest official and personal intimacy. It is difficult to overestimate the combined influence of these brilliant and cultivated men upon the senti-

ments and conduct of each. We have seen already, how strong were the influences of family, neighborhood, and early life that bound THOMAS to his State. All these were now thrown violently into the Southern scale. Beside the fact that his wife was a patriotic Northern lady, there was scarcely a counter-vailing force in the whole circle of his domestic and social life. Given these facts and the impending conflict, what will be the conduct of a man possessing clear perceptions, high character, and real nerve? He would be less than a man who could choose his path without the keenest suffering. Only a man of the highest type could comprehend all, suffer all, and, resolutely striking through the manifold entanglements of the problem, follow, with steady eye and unfaltering step, the highest duty. While the contest was confined to the politicians, and found expression only in constitutional theories and legal subtleties, the wisest might well be perplexed. But the flash of the first gun revealed to the clear intellect of THOMAS the whole character and spirit of the controversy; and his choice was made in an instant. Relinquishing the remainder of his leave of absence, he reported for duty at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., on the 14th of April, the day that our flag went down at Sumter, and less than forty-eight hours after the first shot was fired.

His regiment, betrayed in Texas by the treachery of GENERAL TWIGGS, had come North to be reorganized and equipped; and he entered at once upon the work. Three days after his arrival at Carlisle, by fraud and intrigue in her convention, Virginia resolved herself out of the Union; and (pending a ratification of the act by a popular vote to be taken on the 23d of May) formed a treaty offensive and defensive with the rebel government of JEFFERSON DAVIS. The resolutions of 1798 had borne their bitter fruits. The same day, GOVERNOR LETCHER, as the chief of a "sovereign State," issued his procla-

mation, calling upon "all efficient and worthy Virginians in the army of the United States, to withdraw therefrom and enter the service of Virginia."

Three days later (April 20), ROBERT E. LEE resigned his commission, after a service of thirty years, and his example was followed by hundreds of Southern officers. With but two exceptions, all the officers from seceded States who belonged to the Second Cavalry joined the rebellion. THOMAS was one of the two. While his brother officers were leaving, and at once taking high command in the rebel army, a comrade asked THOMAS what he would do if Virginia should vote to secede. "*I will help to whip her back again,*" was his answer.

On the 23d of May, the people of Virginia enacted the mockery of an election, to ratify her secession from the Union against which she had already taken up arms.

Their overwhelming vote in favor of secession, swept away from our army nearly all the Virginians who had not left in April. With the news of this election, there came to THOMAS the passionate appeals of his family and friends, the summons of his State to join her armies, and the threatening anathemas of them all in case he should refuse. He answered by leaving Carlisle Barracks on the 27th of May, and leading a brigade from Chambersburg across Maryland to Williamsport, and, on the 16th of June, rode across the Potomac in full uniform, at the head of his brigade, to invade Virginia and fight his old commanders; and, a few days later, he led the right wing of GENERAL PATTERSON'S army in the battle of Falling Waters, where the rebels under STONEWALL JACKSON were defeated. Such was the answer that THOMAS made to the demands of rebellion!

Before leaving this period in the life of GENERAL THOMAS, it is due to his memory and to the truth of history that I should notice an attempt which was first made in the South, amidst the passions of war, to throw a shadow on his good name, by

declaring that he sought service on the rebel side, and only determined to stand by the Union when he failed to receive such rank as he desired among his enemies.

When peace reopened intercourse between the North and South, these voices of calumny were silent, and remained so as long as THOMAS was alive to answer. But when he was dead, his defamers ventured again to speak. The spectacle of a grateful nation standing in grief around his honored grave, awakened to new energy the envy and malice of those who had staked all and lost all, in the mad attempt to destroy that Republic which THOMAS had so powerfully aided to save. I should dishonor his memory, were I even to notice the wicked assaults made upon him in rebel journals, by writers who withheld their names, or shielded themselves behind the impersonality of a newspaper editorial.

One attack, however—and, so far as I know, only one—has had the indorsement of a responsible name. The *Richmond (Va.) Dispatch*, of April 23, 1870, contains a letter from FITZHUGH LEE, late a general in the rebel army, and before the war a lieutenant in the regiment of which THOMAS was major.

In this letter, LEE asserts: *That just before the war THOMAS' feelings were strongly Southern; that in 1861 he expressed his intention to resign; and about the same time, sent a letter to GOVERNOR LETCHER, offering his services to Virginia.*

To this statement I invite the most searching scrutiny. That prior to the war the sentiments of THOMAS were generally in accord with those which prevailed in Virginia, and that he strongly reprobated many of the opinions and much of the conduct of Northern politicians, were facts well known to his friends and always frankly avowed by himself. That in the winter of 1860-61 he contemplated the resignation of his commission, we have no proof except the declaration of FITZHUGH LEE. But it would not be in the least surprising or inconsis-

tent, if, at that time, it seemed to him more than probable that disunion would be accomplished, and the army dissolved by political action and without war. Should that happen, he must perforce abandon his profession and seek some other employment. If it should appear that at that time he made inquiries looking toward a prospective employment as professor in some college, the fact would only indicate his fear that the politicians would so ruin both his country and its army, that the commission of a soldier would be no longer an object of honorable desire.

The charge that he ever offered or proposed to offer his sword to Virginia, or to any rebel authority, except point foremost, and at the head of his troops, is utterly and infamously false. Not a shadow of a proof has ever been offered, nor can it be. When FITZHUUGH LEE'S letter was published, he was challenged on all sides to produce the letter which he alleged THOMAS had written, tendering his services to the rebellion. His utter failure to produce any such letter, or any proof that such a letter was ever written, is a complete refutation of the charge.

A few weeks after his first assault, LEE did indeed publish what purports to be a letter written by GENERAL THOMAS, dated New York city, January 18, 1861.

Whether this letter is genuine or not, and if genuine, whether printed as it was written, we have no other evidence than our faith in those who received and published it. But waiving the question of its genuineness, and of the correctness of the printed text, I appeal to the letter itself. It is not addressed to GOVERNOR LETCHER, nor to any rebel authority; nor does the writer tender his services to Virginia or to any government or person. It is a letter addressed to a gentleman who had advertised in the newspapers for some one to fill a professorship in a military college in Virginia. The letter

inquires what salary pertains to the situation. It expresses no intention or willingness to resign; and states as the writer's reason for making the inquiry, that from present appearances he fears it will soon be necessary for him to be looking up some means of support. This letter strongly confirms the views I have taken of GENERAL THOMAS' character and feelings.

Since the publication of LEE's letters, testimony has come from all quarters which annihilates forever all ground for this charge; and now, while the witnesses are living, I desire to put on record at least a small portion of their testimony. GENERAL HARTSUFF, now and for many years a soldier of whom the nation is proud, writes that he saw THOMAS many times, near the close of 1860, in the city of New York, and heard him discuss the state of the country, in company with many officers who afterward went into the rebel army. He says:

“GENERAL THOMAS was strong and bitter in his denunciations against all parties North and South that seemed to him responsible for the condition of affairs. . . . But while he reprobated, sometimes very strongly, certain men and parties North, in that respect going as far as any of those who afterward joined the rebels, he never, in my hearing, agreed with them respecting the necessity of going with their States; but he denounced the idea, and denied the necessity of dividing the country, or destroying the Government. This was before the actual secession of any of the States, when the prospect of war was not strong.”

These statements of GENERAL HARTSUFF are abundantly corroborated by other testimony. Let it be remembered that the question is not what were GENERAL THOMAS' opinions of the political causes that led to the war; nor who was at fault in bringing on the agitation; but it is this: Did he give any countenance, sympathy, or support to the idea of disunion, or of war against the Government?

Listen to the testimony of GENERAL R. W. JOHNSON, for

many years a gallant soldier of our army, and now an honored member of this Society. He says :

“After the surrender in Texas, my regiment (of which THOMAS was major) concentrated at Carlisle Barracks. I was intimately associated with GENERAL THOMAS from that time until the close of the war. During the PATTERSON campaign we messed together, and frequently conversed freely together in regard to the war. I remember to have asked him what he should do if Virginia seceded. His reply was characteristic of the man: ‘I will help to whip her back again.’ GENERAL THOMAS never flinched nor faltered, nor wavered in his devotion to his country.”

GENERAL PATTERSON, under whose command THOMAS performed his first duty in the field, in May and June, 1861, says of him :

“GENERAL THOMAS contemplated with horror the prospect of a war between the people of his own State and the Union ; but he never for a moment hesitated, never wavered, never swerved, from his allegiance to the nation that had educated him and whose servant he was. From the beginning I would have pledged my hopes here and hereafter on the loyalty of THOMAS. . . . He was the most unselfish man I ever knew ; a perfectly honest man, who feared God and obeyed his commandments.”

What weightier testimony can be conceived than that of his classmate and friend of many years, the GENERAL of our Army, the great soldier with whom THOMAS served so grandly in the darkest hours of the war. GENERAL SHERMAN has favored me with a letter from which I quote. After stating that he went to Williamsport to visit THOMAS early in 1861, he says :

“It was June 16, the very day PATTERSON’s army crossed the Potomac. I had a long personal conversation with THOMAS that day, and after discussing the events that then pressed so heavily on all who dreaded civil war, especially the course taken by our friends who had abandoned our service and gone South, I asked him how he felt. His answer was emphatic: ‘I have thought it all over,’ he said, ‘and I shall stand firm in the service of the Government.’”

GENERAL SHERMAN also writes, under date of August 1, 1870 :

“I have seen the letters published by FITZHUGH LEE, sustaining the assertion that, at the outset of our civil war, THOMAS leaned to the South. I understand the state of his mind at that dreadful crisis, and see how a stranger might misconstrue him. At the time to which FITZHUGH LEE alludes, the BUCHANAN administration was in power, and had admitted that the Federal Government could not coerce a sovereign State; and his cabinet did all they could to make army officers feel insecure in their offices. The Northern politicians, as a rule, had been unfriendly to the army, and when the election of LINCOLN and HAMLIN was complete, they (the officers) naturally felt uneasy as to their future, and cast about for employment. Several of them, I among the number, were employed at the military colleges of the South, and it was natural that THOMAS should look to his friend, and our classmate, GILHAM, then employed at FRANK SMITH'S military school at Lexington, Virginia. THOMAS also entertained, as you must know, that intense mistrust of politicians to which the old army was bred, and feared the complications of 1860 would result in some political compromise or settlement, if not in a mutual agreement to separate; in which case it is possible he would have been forced for a support to have cast his lot with the Southern part. It is more than probable that, at the mess-table, THOMAS may have given vent to some such feelings and opinions, then natural and proper enough. But as soon as Mr. LINCOLN was installed in office, and manifested the deep feeling of love for all parts of the country—deprecating civil war, but giving the key-note that the Union should be maintained, even if it had to be fought for, and that forcible secession was treason—then THOMAS, like all national men, brushed away the subtleties of the hour, saw clearly his duty, and proclaimed it, not by mere words, but by riding in full uniform at the head of his regiment and brigade, invading without a murmur his native State, and commanding his men to put down forcible resistance by the musket.”

This just and masterly analysis is more than sufficient to settle the whole controversy. But I can not dismiss the subject without opposing to his slanderers the stainless shield of

THOMAS himself—his own unimpeachable words, recorded by COLONEL A. L. HOUGH, his confidential aid at the time they were spoken. COLONEL HOUGH says:

“A slander upon the General was often repeated in the Southern papers during and immediately subsequent to the rebellion. It was given upon the authority of prominent rebel officers, and not denied by them. It was to the effect that he was disappointed in not getting a high command in the rebel army he had sought for; hence his refusal to join in the rebellion. In a conversation with him on this subject, the General said this was an entire fabrication, not having an atom of foundation; not a line ever passed between him and the rebel authorities; they have no genuine letter of his, nor was a word spoken by him to any one that could even lead to such an inference. He defied any one to produce any testimony, written or oral, to sustain such allegation; he never entertained such an idea, for his duty was clear to him from the beginning.”

Among these utterances of GENERAL THOMAS, one brief sentence, simple and sublime, is an epitome of his character and life. It is this:

“My duty was clear from the beginning of the war.”

It is not enough to compare the conduct of THOMAS at this trying period with that of Northern officers who remained true to the flag. The real measure of his merit is found by comparing him with such men as LEE and JOHNSTON. Let us compare and contrast the conduct of THOMAS with that of ROBERT E. LEE, who became the military chief and idol of the Southern Confederacy, and who, by the verdict of both friends and enemies, possessed many high qualities.

We have seen that, on the 20th of April, LEE resigned his commission. On the same day, he wrote to a relative words which will remain forever as the most veritable picture of his character. He said:

“The whole South is in a state of revolution, into which Virginia, after a long struggle, has been drawn; and though I recognize no necessity for this state of things, and would have forborne and pleaded to the end for redress of grievances, real or supposed, yet in my own person I had to meet the question whether I should take part against my native State. With all my devotion to the Union, and the feelings of loyalty and duty of an American citizen, I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, and my home. I have therefore resigned my commission in the army,” etc.

LEE here avows his devotion to the Union, his feelings of loyalty and obligation as an American citizen, and declares that there was no necessity for the rebellion; and yet, after these confessions and declarations, which surrender utterly and forever all grounds for the justification of his conduct, he abandons his Government, and offers his sword to Virginia and to that rebellion which he neither justified nor approved.

Like LEE, THOMAS deplored the suicidal strife, and denied the justice or necessity of rebellion. Like LEE, he was warmly attached to his family and friends, to Virginia and her glorious traditions. Like LEE, he acknowledged his obligations to the great Republic, of which all the people of Virginia were citizens, and to the support and defense of which he had registered his solemn oath when he became a soldier. But, unlike LEE, when the supreme hour of trial came, he rose to the full height of the great occasion, and, esteeming the sanctity of his oath and the life of the Republic more precious than home, or kindred, or State, drew his sword to put down a rebellion which, even by LEE'S confession, was both unnecessary and indefensible.

There was one thing in LEE'S conduct which would have been impossible to THOMAS' nature. Though LEE wrote his resignation April 20, it was not accepted by the Secretary of War till the 25th; and the letter of the Adjutant General, in-

forming him of the acceptance, was not written till the 27th. Yet, on the 23d of April, LEE accepted the appointment of Major General from the rebel Governor of Virginia, and the same day, issued and published a general order, assuming command of the military and naval forces of that State, which forces, five days before, had attacked the troops of the United States at Harper's Ferry, and also at the Gosport navy yard, and were at that moment levying war against the Government which he had solemnly sworn to defend "against all its enemies and opposers whatsoever." Instead of keeping this oath, he assumed command of the armed enemies of the Union two days before his contract of service was canceled—a contract which he had lately renewed by accepting from Abraham Lincoln the commission of Colonel in the army of the United States. [See Appendix B.]

If there had been no other sufficient motive, the religious respect with which THOMAS regarded his oath would alone have prevented him from following the example of LEE. I conclude the discussion of this topic by declaring what I doubt not will be the just and unalterable verdict of history, that this was no doubting THOMAS; that he did not need to behold the bleeding wounds of his country before he believed, for his "duty was clear from the beginning," and he followed it without a murmur. Both these men are in their graves, and the judgment of mankind will finally assign them their places in history. For the verdict, I confidently appeal from the Virginia of to-day to the Virginia of the future.

After serving through the brief campaign of the Shenandoah, GENERAL THOMAS entered upon a wider field of action, and began that career which his country knows by heart. It is not possible, within the limits of this address, to give more than the most meager outline of his military services during the war for the Union. I shall, therefore, attempt no more

than to state the nature and scope of his work, and to consider some of the qualities which he exhibited while performing it.

The fame of GENERAL THOMAS as a soldier is linked forever with the history of the *Army of the Cumberland*; for, in 1861, he mustered in and organized its first brigade, and in 1865, at Nashville, the scene of his greatest victory, he passed in farewell review, and mustered out of the service, more than one hundred and thirty thousand of its war-worn veterans. The Department of the Cumberland, embracing, at first, only Tennessee and Kentucky, was created by the War Department, August 15, 1861, and GENERAL ROBERT ANDERSON placed in command. At ANDERSON'S request, SHERMAN, THOMAS, and BUELL were made Brigadier Generals of Volunteers, and assigned to his command.

The remainder of 1861 was the period of organization. The first month's work that THOMAS performed in the department, was at Camp Dick Robinson, where he mustered into service, eleven regiments and three batteries of Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, and Tennessee troops. These he organized into the First Brigade, which formed the nucleus of the division, then of the corps, and finally of the great army which he afterward commanded so long.

In order to appreciate the career of GENERAL THOMAS, it is necessary to comprehend not only the magnitude of the work to be accomplished by the *Army of the Cumberland*, but also the relation which that army and its work sustained to the other great armies of the Union.

It is now easy to see that, between the Northern and Southern States, there are three great natural pathways of invasion; and to put down the rebellion, it was necessary that each of these be traversed and held by a great army. The first was the long and narrow slope from the chain of the Alleghany and Cumberland mountains to the Atlantic coast.

The second was the great Western slope from the same mountain chain to the Ohio, the Tennessee, and Tombigbee rivers, and extending southward to the Gulf. The third was the Mississippi river itself, and the immediate territory along its banks.

Peculiarities of topography and surroundings required, for each of these lines, different modes of supplying an army and of conducting campaigns. The army of the East, which operated on the first line, was in great part supplied from the sea; and many of its operations were carried on in conjunction with the navy. The army on the third, or Western line was supplied from the Mississippi river; and the gun-boat service formed a novel and important feature in its military operations.

The *Army of the Cumberland* held the center line, which was in many respects the most difficult of all. There could be but little naval co-operation with its movements; and only for a short distance could it be supplied by river transportation. Its main supply was by a single line of railroad, running hundreds of miles among a hostile population, and requiring a heavy force for its protection. The great central pathway led into the heart of the rebellion. It crossed the only line of railway (the Memphis and Charleston) which united the Eastern and Western States of the Confederacy. Extraordinary obstacles lay in the pathway of an army moving southward over this central route. Besides the broad and deep rivers which cross it, the great mountain chain itself, bending sharply near the Georgia line, sweeps westward until it loses itself in the low sand-hills and plains of Alabama and Mississippi, thus presenting a most formidable barrier to an army invading the Gulf States. The great gateway of the mountain chain is at Chattanooga, where the Tennessee river bursts through the barrier.

Nothing more strikingly illustrates the military genius

and foresight of GENERAL SHERMAN, than the fact that so early as October, 1861, he comprehended the vastness of the struggle upon which the nation had entered, and the vital importance of this central line of operation. At that time, being in command of the Department of the Cumberland, he sent to the War Department his estimate:

“That to advance on the line of the Louisville and Nashville railroad, would require an army of at least sixty thousand men; and to advance the great line of the center to its ultimate objective, and reap the legitimate rewards, would require an army of two hundred thousand men.”

This estimate was not only construed to his prejudice by the authorities at Washington, but you will remember that the public journals regarded his views as a conclusive evidence of insanity! At his own request, SHERMAN was relieved of the command, and, on the 15th of November, went to duty in another department, not to return again to the great line of the center until the country and its authorities had been educated up to his views of 1861.

On the 15th of November, GENERAL BUELL was placed in command of the department; and, as if to narrow the field of operations and restrict the views which GENERAL SHERMAN had expressed, the name of the department was changed, by order of the Secretary of War, to “The Department of the Ohio.”

The rebel authorities early saw the vital importance of pushing as far North as possible on this central line; and, before the end of 1861, they had established themselves in force on a line extending from the base of the Cumberland mountains, by way of Bowling Green, Forts Donelson and Henry, to Columbus on the Mississippi. While the forces at Cairo, under GENERAL GRANT, were threatening the left of this

line at Columbus, and GENERAL BUELL'S main force was preparing to move on Bowling Green against ALBERT SIDNEY JOHNSTON, who commanded the center and right, a rebel movement was in progress in Eastern and Southern Kentucky, which threatened the left and rear of GENERAL BUELL'S army, and would seriously disturb its movement against JOHNSTON.

In the early autumn of 1861, the rebel authorities had organized a brigade in Eastern Tennessee and Southwestern Virginia, for the special purpose of guarding the mountain passes at Pound Gap and Cumberland Gap. Before the end of the year, they had also organized two active forces to operate in front of these gaps—one under MARSHALL, which moved from the neighborhood of Pound Gap down the Sandy valley, and the other, a larger force, under ZOLLICOFFER, which occupied the road leading from Cumberland Gap to Lexington.

The first work of GENERAL BUELL'S campaign was to drive back these forces and occupy the two mountain passes, in order to protect his flank and rear. GENERAL THOMAS had been placed in command of the First Division of the army, and, on the 31st of December, was ordered to move against ZOLLICOFFER. In pursuance of this order, he fought and won the battle of Mill Springs, January 19, 1862, which was by far the most important military success that had yet been achieved west of Virginia; and, with the exception of the defeat of MARSHALL, near Prestonburg, nine days before, it was the first victory in the department. In this battle, GENERAL THOMAS laid the foundation of his fame in the army of the center. It was the largest and most important command he had held up to that time, and his troops came out of the fight with the strongest confidence in his qualities as a commander.

This battle fully launched him upon his career; and from that time to the end of the war, his life was so crowded with

events that I can do no more than note the stages of command and responsibility through which he passed; and even this I do, only to recall it to your minds as a subject of reflection.

From the 30th of November, 1861, to the 30th of September, 1862, he commanded a division of GENERAL BUELL'S army, without intermission, except that during the months of May and June he commanded the right wing of the *Army of the Tennessee*, in and around Corinth. On the 30th of September, 1862, he was appointed second in command of the *Army of the Ohio*, and served in that capacity in the battle of Perryville, and until October 30, 1862, when the old name of "Department of the Cumberland" was restored, and GENERAL ROSECRANS assumed command. That officer reorganized the army, then known as the "Fourteenth Army Corps," into three distinct commands--right, left, and center--and assigned THOMAS to the center, which consisted of five divisions. He held this command in the battle of Stone River, and until the 9th of January, 1863, when, by order of the War Department, the three divisions of the army were made army corps. One of these, the Fourteenth Army Corps, THOMAS commanded during the campaigns of Middle Tennessee and Chickamauga, which resulted in driving the rebels beyond the Tennessee river and gaining possession of Chattanooga. On the 19th of October, in obedience to orders from the War Department, he relieved GENERAL ROSECRANS and assumed command of the *Army of the Cumberland*. Soon afterward, two other armies, SHERMAN'S and SCHOFIELD'S, were brought to Chattanooga, the three forming a grand army under GENERAL GRANT, for the purpose of pushing the rebels further South on the great line of the center. The *Army of the Cumberland*, consisting of four corps, formed the center of the grand army. In this position THOMAS commanded it at the storming of Mis-

sion Ridge, and in that series of masterly movements and battles in Georgia, which resulted in the capture of Atlanta, September 1, 1864.

On the 27th of September, THOMAS was ordered to Tennessee to protect the department against the invasion of HOOD. While in this command, he conducted the operations which resulted in the combats along the Duck river; the battle of Franklin, November 30; the destruction of HOOD's army in the battle of Nashville, December 15 and 16, 1864; and finally in the capture of JEFFERSON DAVIS, in May, 1865.

From June, 1865, to May, 1869, he commanded most of the territory which had been the theater of his service during the war; and on the 15th of May, 1869, he started for San Francisco, where he remained in command of the Military Division of the Pacific until the date of his death, March 28, 1870.

He was appointed Major General of Volunteers, April 25, 1862; Brigadier General in the Regular Army, October 27, 1863, and Major General, December 15, 1864.

In the presence of such a career, let us consider the qualities which produced it and the character which it developed. We are struck, at the outset, with the evenness and completeness of his life. There were no breaks in it, no chasms, no upheavals. His pathway was a plane of continued elevation.

It was so at the Military Academy. Slowly, but steadily and thoroughly, he worked up the sturdy materials of his nature into that strength and harmony which culture alone can produce. At the end of his first year, on the basis of general merit, he ranked twenty-sixth in his class. Each year witnessed an upward movement. At the end of his course he stood twelfth in his class. He was successively corporal, sergeant, and lieutenant of cadets. The rules of the Academy make the slightest irregularity of conduct or appearance, a ground for demerit; and many cadets were marked hundreds

of demerits in the course of a year. THOMAS had but twenty during his first year, nineteen the second, eighteen the third, and fourteen the fourth.

In the army he never leaped a grade, either in rank or command. He did not command a company until after long service as a lieutenant. He commanded a regiment only at the end of many years of company and garrison duty. He did not command a brigade until after he had commanded his regiment three years on the Indian frontier. He did not command a division until after he had mustered in, organized, disciplined, and commanded a brigade. He did not command a corps until he had led his division in battle and through many hundred miles of hostile country. He did not command the army until, in battle, at the head of his corps, he had saved it from ruin.

This regular and steady advancement was suited to the character of his mind and the habits of his life. When, in September, 1862, he was offered the command of the army of the Ohio, he peremptorily declined it and urged the retention of GENERAL BUELL. It would have violated his law of growth, to leap from a division to the head of an army, without first having assured himself, by actual trial, that he could handle a corps. The law of his life was greater than his love of fame.

In such a career, it is by no means the least of a man's achievements, to take his own measure, to discover and understand the scope and range of his own capacity. Probably the best gauge of military ability is found in the number of troops a man can handle wisely and well in battle.

The most successful soldier of our war has said, that when he accepted the command of his Illinois regiment, he deeply distrusted his ability to handle so large a number of men. He knew he could handle a company, for he had done that in Mexico; but how much higher his range extended he did not

know. GENERAL SHERMAN has expressed the opinion that no man can effectually handle more than 70,000 men, in battle, in a wooded country like ours. THOMAS was right in declining to command the *Army of the Ohio* in 1862. A year later he had tested himself, and was ready to bear greater responsibility.

His career was not only great and complete, but, what is more significant, it was, in an eminent degree, the work of his own hands. It was not the result of accident or happy chance. I do not deny that in all human pursuits, and especially in war, results are often determined by what men call fortune—"that name for the unknown combinations of Infinite power." But this is almost always a modifying rather than an initial force. Only a weak, a vain, or a desperate man will rely upon it for success.

THOMAS' life is a notable illustration of the virtue and power of hard work; and in the last analysis the power to do hard work is only another name for talent. PROFESSOR CHURCH, one of his instructors at West Point, says, of his student life, that "he never allowed anything to escape a thorough examination, and left nothing behind that he did not fully comprehend." And so it was in the army. To him a battle was neither an earthquake, nor a volcano, nor a chaos of brave men and frantic horses, involved in vast explosions of gunpowder. It was rather a calm, rational concentration of force against force. It was a question of lines and positions; of weight of metal, and strength of battalions. He knew that the elements and forces which bring victory are not created on the battle field, but must be patiently elaborated in the quiet of the camp, by the perfect organization and outfit of his army. His remark to a captain of artillery while inspecting a battery, is worth remembering, for it exhibits his theory of success: "Keep everything in order, for the fate of a battle

may turn on a buckle or a linch-pin." He understood so thoroughly the condition of his army, and its equipment, that when the hour of trial came, he knew how great a pressure it could stand, and how hard a blow it could strike.

His character was as grand and as simple as a colossal pillar of chiseled granite. Every step of his career as a soldier, was marked by the most loyal and unhesitating obedience to law—to the laws of his Government, and to the commands of his superiors. The obedience which he rendered to those above him he rigidly required of those under his command.

His influence over his troops grew steadily and constantly. He won his ascendancy over them, neither by artifice, nor by any one act of special daring, but he gradually filled them with his own spirit, until their confidence in him knew no bounds.

His power as a commander was developed slowly and silently; not like volcanic land lifted from the sea by sudden and violent upheaval, but rather like a coral island, where each increment is a growth—an act of life and work.

Power exhibits itself under two distinct forms—strength and force—each possessing peculiar qualities, and each perfect in its own sphere. Strength is typified by the oak, the rock, the mountain. Force embodies itself in the cataract, the tempest, the thunderbolt.

The great tragic poet of Greece, in describing the punishment of Prometheus for rebellion against Jupiter, represented Vulcan descending from heaven, attended by two mighty spirits, Strength and Force, by whose aid he held and bound Prometheus to the rock.

In subduing our great rebellion, the Republic called to its aid men who represented many forms of great excellence and power. A very few of our commanders possessed more force

than THOMAS—more genius for planning and executing bold and daring enterprises; but, in my judgment, no other was so complete an embodiment and incarnation of strength—the strength that resists, maintains, and endures. His power was not that of the cataract, which leaps in fury down the chasm, but rather that of the river, broad and deep, whose current is steady, silent, irresistible.

It was most natural that such a man should be placed in the center of movements. The work to be accomplished on the great line of the center, was admirably adapted to the military character of THOMAS. To advance steadily, and to stay—to occupy, and to hold—was the business of the *Army of the Cumberland* from first to last. It is a significant fact that, from the autumn of 1862, till the autumn of 1864—from Bowling Green to Atlanta—whether commanding a division, a corps, or an army, his position on the march, and his post in battle was the center. And he was placed there because it was found that when his command occupied the center, that center could not be broken. It never was broken.

At Stone River he was the unmoved and immovable pivot, around which swung our routed right wing. As the eye of ROSECRANS, our daring and brilliant commander, swept over that bloody field, it always rested on THOMAS, as the center of his hope. For five days THOMAS' command stood fighting in its bloody tracks, until twenty per cent. of its members were killed or wounded, and the enemy had retreated.

But it was reserved for the last day at Chickamauga to exhibit, in one supreme example, the vast resources of his prodigious strength. After a day of heavy fighting and a night of anxious preparation, GENERAL ROSECRANS had established his lines for the purpose of holding the road to Chattanooga. This road was to be the prize of that day's battle. If our army

failed to hold it, not only was our campaign a failure, but inevitable destruction awaited the army itself.

ROSECRANS had crossed the Tennessee, and had successfully maneuvered the enemy out of Chattanooga. The greater work remained to march his own army into that place, in the face of BRAGG's army, heavily reinforced, and greatly outnumbering his own.

The Rossville road—the road to Chattanooga—was the great prize to be won or lost at Chickamauga. If the enemy failed to gain it, their campaign would be an unmitigated disaster; for the gateway of the mountains would be irretrievably lost. If our army failed to hold it, not only would our campaign be a failure, but almost inevitable destruction awaited the army itself. The first day's battle (September 19), which lasted far into the night, left us in possession of the road; but all knew that next day would bring the final decision. Late at night, surrounded by his commanders assembled in the rude cabin known as the Widow Glen House, ROSECRANS gave his orders for the coming morning. The substance of his order to THOMAS was this: "Your line lies across the road to Chattanooga. That is the pivot of the battle. Hold it at all hazards; and I will reinforce you, if necessary, with the whole army."

During the whole night, the reinforcements of the enemy were coming in. Early next morning, we were attacked along the whole line. THOMAS commanded the left and center of our army. From early morning, he withstood the furious and repeated attacks of the enemy who constantly reinforced his assaults on our left. About noon, our whole right wing was broken, and driven in hopeless confusion from the field. ROSECRANS was himself swept away in the tide of retreat. The forces of LONGSTREET, which had broken our right, desisted from the pursuit, and forming in heavy columns assaulted the

right flank of THOMAS with unexampled fury. Seeing the approaching danger, he threw back his exposed flank toward the base of the mountain and met the new peril.

While men shall read the history of battles, they will never fail to study and admire the work of THOMAS during that afternoon. With but twenty-five thousand men, formed in a semi-circle of which he himself was the center and soul, he successfully resisted, for more than five hours, the repeated assaults of an army of sixty-five thousand men, flushed with victory, and bent on his annihilation.

Toward the close of the day, his ammunition began to fail. One by one his division commanders reported but ten rounds, five rounds, or two rounds left. The calm, quiet answer was returned: "Save your fire for close quarters, and when your last shot is fired, give them the bayonet." On a portion of his line, the last assault was repelled by the bayonet, and several hundred rebels were captured. When night had closed over the combatants, the last sound of battle was the booming of THOMAS' shells bursting among his baffled and retreating assailants.

He was, indeed, the "Rock of Chickamauga," against which the wild waves of battle dashed in vain. It will stand written forever in the annals of his country, that there he saved from destruction the *Army of the Cumberland*. He held the road to Chattanooga. The campaign was successful. The gate of the mountains was ours.

Time would fail me to notice other illustrations of his qualities, as exhibited at the storming of Mission Ridge, and during the "hundred days under fire" in the great march from Chattanooga to Atlanta. Later in the war, there awaited him a test, in some respects more searching than any that tried him.

On the 27th of September, 1864, he was ordered by GEN-

ERAL SHERMAN, to return with a portion of his army into Tennessee and defend the department against HOOD's invasion. By the end of October, SHERMAN had determined to cut loose from his base and march to the sea. For this service he selected the flower of his grand army, including two of the best corps of THOMAS' army.

By the 5th of November, HOOD was encamped on the banks of the Tennessee with forty thousand infantry and not less than twelve thousand of the best cavalry in the rebel service. Thus THOMAS was confronted by that veteran army which had so ably resisted SHERMAN's army on its march to Atlanta. At the same date, THOMAS had an effective force of but twenty-three thousand infantry and seven thousand cavalry. Convalescents and dismounted cavalry were coming back to him from Atlanta; raw recruits were arriving from the North, and two divisions were *en route* from Missouri. The problem before him was how to delay the advance of the enemy, until he could organize a force strong enough to win a battle.

The history of this campaign is too well known to need repetition here. I allude to it only to exhibit his characteristics as a soldier. After the skillful resistance at Duck river and Spring Hill, and the remarkably brilliant and bloody battle at Franklin, he found HOOD's army in front of Nashville on the 1st of December. With his accustomed care, he had measured the force of the opposing armies and determined that by one plan only could he achieve certain success. That plan required him to delay the battle until he could get his new and improvised army fully in hand, and could organize a cavalry force to secure the fruits of victory. The authorities at Washington, fearing the breaking up of our communications with Chattanooga, and, perhaps, another invasion of Kentucky, were dissatisfied with his delay, and urged him to

give battle immediately. He knew, better than any other could know, the law of his own mind and the methods by which he had a right to expect success. The 9th of December came, and with it the intelligence that an order was prepared to suspend him from command and to require another to make the attack.

It may well be questioned whether his response to this intelligence will not confer more glory on his name than the winning of a battle. In his dispatch of December 9th to GENERAL HALLECK, he said :

“Your dispatch of 10:30 A. M. this date is received. I regret that GENERAL GRANT should feel dissatisfaction at my delay in attacking the enemy. I feel conscious that I have done everything in my power to prepare, and that the troops could not have been got ready before this ; and if he should order me to be relieved I will submit without a murmur. A terrible storm of freezing rain has come on since daylight, which will render an attack impossible until it breaks.”

On receiving this dispatch, GENERAL GRANT answered him that he had telegraphed to suspend the order relieving him, and in conclusion said : “I hope most sincerely that the facts will show that you have been right all the time.”

On the 11th, however, he received from GENERAL GRANT a peremptory order to “delay no longer for weather or reinforcements.” Still the storm raged, and Nashville was locked in ice. On the 12th he attempted to form his lines for battle ; but the ground was so thickly incrustated with ice, that his troops could neither ascend the slopes nor move in good order on level ground. That night, he stated the situation to GENERAL HALLECK, in a telegram which concluded with these words : “Under these circumstances, I believe that an attack at this time would only result in a useless sacrifice of life.” Not until the morning of the 15th did he deem it possible to win a battle. That morning, the Lieutenant General had

started from City Point, Virginia, on his way to Nashville to assume the command himself; but at Washington, the news reached him of the first day's fight. On the evening of the 16th THOMAS had substantially destroyed the army of HOOD.

In reviewing these transactions there would be no justice in crimination or recrimination; in blaming the living in order to praise the dead. It was the spectacle of two able commanders, each true to himself, each honoring the other while following his highest convictions of duty—the one, impelled by the wishes of his superiors, the President and Secretary of War, and by his own judgment of the situation to deliver immediate battle—the other, preferring to lose his command rather than to sacrifice his army, to *be* right rather than *seem* so. Of THOMAS' conduct on this trying occasion, our comrade, GENERAL COX, who bore so noble a part in the Nashville campaign, has well said:

“He waited with immovable firmness for the right hour to come. It came, and with it a justification of both his military skill and his own self-forgetful patriotism, so complete and glorious that it would be a mere waste of words to talk about it.”

GENERAL GRANT himself has officially put it on record, that the defeat of HOOD was the vindication of THOMAS' judgment.

Nashville was the only battle of our war which annihilated an army. HOOD crossed the Tennessee late in November, and moved northward with an army of fifty-seven thousand veterans. Before the end of December twenty-five thousand of that number were killed, wounded, or captured; thousands more had deserted, and the rabble that followed him back to the South was no longer an army.

In summing up the qualities of GENERAL THOMAS, it is difficult to find his exact parallel in history. His character as a man and a soldier was unique. In some respects he resembled ZACHARY TAYLOR; and many of his solid qualities, as a

soldier, were developed by his long service under that honest and sturdy commander.

In patient attention to all the details of duty, in the thoroughness of organization, equipment, and discipline of his troops and in the powerful grasp by which he held and wielded his army, he was not unlike and fully equaled WELLINGTON.

The language applied to the Iron Duke, by the historian of the Peninsular War, might almost be mistaken for a description of THOMAS. NAPIER says :

“ He held his army in hand, keeping it, with unmitigated labor, always in a fit state to march or to fight. . . . Sometimes he was indebted to fortune, sometimes to his natural genius, always to his untiring industry ; for he was emphatically a painstaking man.”

The language of LORD BROUGHAM, addressed to WELLINGTON, is a fitting description of THOMAS :

“ Mighty Captain ! who never advanced except to cover his arms with glory ; Mightier Captain ! who never retreated except to eclipse the glory of his advance.”

If I remember correctly, no enemy was ever able to fight THOMAS out of any position he undertook to hold.

On the whole, I can not doubt that the most fitting parallel to GENERAL THOMAS is found in our greatest American, the man who was, “ first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen.” The personal resemblance of GENERAL THOMAS to WASHINGTON was often the subject of remark. Even at West Point, ROSECRANS was accustomed to call him GENERAL WASHINGTON.

He resembled WASHINGTON in the gravity and dignity of his character ; in the solidity of his judgment ; in the careful accuracy of all his transactions ; in his incorruptible integrity, and in his extreme, but unaffected, modesty.

Though his death was most sudden and unexpected, all his official papers, and his accounts with the Government, were in perfect order, and ready for instant settlement. His reports and official correspondence were models of pure style, and full of valuable details. Even during the exciting and rapid campaign from Chattanooga to Atlanta, he recorded, each month, the number of rounds his men had fired, and other similar facts concerning the equipment and condition of his army. He has left behind him a great mass of most valuable papers, classified and arranged in perfect order, the publication of which will make an almost complete history of the *Army of the Cumberland*.

His modesty was as real as his courage. When he was in Washington in 1866, his friends with great difficulty persuaded him to allow himself to be introduced to the House of Representatives. He was escorted to the Speaker's stand, while the great assembly of representatives and citizens arose and greeted him with the most enthusiastic marks of affection and reverence. Mr. Speaker COLFAX, in speaking of it afterward, said:

“I noticed, as he stood beside me, that his hand trembled like an aspen leaf. He could bear the shock of battle, but he shrank before the storm of applause.”

He was not insensible to praise; and he was quick to feel any wrong or injustice. While grateful to his country for the honor it conferred upon him, and while cherishing all expressions of affection on the part of his friends—he would not accept the smallest token of regard, in the form of a gift.

So frank and guileless was his life, so free from anything that approached intrigue, that when after his death his private letters and papers were examined, there was not a scrap among them that his most confidential friends thought best to destroy.

When PHIDIAS was asked, why he took so much pains to

finish up the parts of his statue that would not be in sight, he said: "These I am finishing for the gods to look at." In the life and character of GENERAL THOMAS, there were no secret places of which his friends will ever be ashamed.

But his career is ended. Struck dead at his post of duty, a bereaved nation bore his honored dust across the continent and laid it to rest on the banks of the Hudson, amidst the tears and grief of millions. The nation stood at his grave as a mourner. No one knew until he was dead, how strong was his hold on the hearts of the American people. Every citizen felt that a pillar of State had fallen; that a great, and true, and pure man had passed from earth.

There are no fitting words in which I may speak of the loss which every member of this Society has sustained in his death.

The GENERAL of the army has beautifully said, in his order announcing the death of THOMAS:

"Though he leaves no child to bear his name, the *Old Army of the Cumberland*, numbered by tens of thousands, called him Father, and will weep for him in tears of manly grief."

To us, his comrades, he has left the rich legacy of his friendship. To his country and to mankind, he has left his character and his fame as a priceless and everlasting possession.

"O iron nerve to true occasion true!
 O fallen at length that tower of strength
 Which stood four-square to all the winds that blew!"
 "His work is done;
 But while the races of mankind endure,
 Let his great example stand
 Colossal seen of every land,
 And keep the soldier firm, the statesman pure,
 Till in all lands and thro' all human story,
 The path of Duty be the way to Glory."

APPENDIX TO GEN. GARFIELD'S ORATION.

A.

The *Army Register* shows the following as the Roster of the Second U. S. Cavalry in 1860, with the date of the resignation of those who went into the rebel service.

Colonel ALBERT S. JOHNSTON,* resigned May 3, 1861.

Lieutenant Colonel ROBERT E. LEE,* resigned April 25, 1861.

Major WM. J. HARDEE,* resigned January 31, 1861.

Major GEORGE H. THOMAS.

Captain EARL VAN DORN,* resigned January 31, 1861.

Captain EDMUND K. SMITH,* resigned April 6, 1861.

Captain JAMES OAKES.

Captain INNIS N. PALMER.

Captain GEORGE STONEMAN.

Captain WILLIAM R. BRADFUTE, resigned March 21, 1861.

Captain ALBERT G. BRACKETT.*

Captain CHARLES J. WHITING.

Captain NATHAN G. EVANS, resigned February 27, 1861.

Captain RICHARD W. JOHNSON.

First Lieutenant JOSEPH H. McARTHUR.

First Lieutenant CHAS. W. FIELD,* resigned May 30, 1861.

First Lieutenant KENNER GARRARD.

First Lieutenant WALTER H. JENIFER,* resigned April 30, 1861.

*Became Generals in the Rebel Army.

First Lieutenant WILLIAM B. ROYALL.

First Lieutenant WILLIAM P. CHAMBLISS.

First Lieutenant ROBERT NELSON EAGLE.

First Lieutenant JOHN T. SHOAFF, resigned February 22, 1861.

First Lieutenant GEORGE B. COSBY,* resigned May 10, 1861.

First Lieutenant WILLIAM W. LOWE.

First Lieutenant JOHN B. HOOD,* resigned April 16, 1861.

Second Lieutenant JAMES B. WITHERELL.

Second Lieutenant JOSEPH F. MINTER, resigned March 31, 1861.

Second Lieutenant CHAS. W. PLEIFER,* resigned April 1, 1861.

Second Lieutenant JAMES E. HARRISON.

Second Lieutenant A. PARKER PORTER.

Second Lieutenant WESLEY OWENS.

Second Lieutenant JAS. P. MAJOR,* resigned March 21, 1861.

Second Lieutenant FITZHUGH LEE,* resigned May 21, 1861.

Second Lieutenant MANNING M. KIMMELL, resigned Aug. 14, '61.

Second Lieutenant GEO. A. CUNNINGHAM, resigned Feb. 27, '61.

Brevet Second Lieutenant ABRAHAM K. ARNOLD.

* Became Generals in the Rebel Army.

B.

November 19, 1870.

DEAR GENERAL:

I give you the following from memory, having never made any written note of it before.

It must have been about, if not upon, the 19th April, 1861, that COLONEL R. E. LEE, First U. S. Cavalry, then staying at Arlington, came to GENERAL SCOTT'S office, opposite the War Department, in Washington, in obedience to a message from the General that he desired to see him. I was the only person present during the interview. GENERAL SCOTT spoke for about fifteen minutes, the substance of his remarks being that it was time Lee should clearly define his position upon the question which was causing many Southern officers to resign from the United States Army; that he had probably already made up his mind, but that he should weigh well the consequence; that the cause of the Southern people against the North could not possibly terminate in favor of the former, and should it fail the result must be disastrous to those officers who left the army to join the South.

LEE listened in silence, and at last replied briefly: "General, I must go with my native State in what she decides to be best. My children all own property in Virginia; all that we have is there. I can not raise my hand against my children."

The interview then terminated, and LEE sent in his resignation the next day, April 20, 1861.

Yours truly,

E. D. TOWNSEND.

GENERAL GARFIELD, M. C.

C.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *November 21, 1870.*

DEAR GENERAL:

I send you the following information, drawn from the records in the Adjutant General's office.

R. E. LEE recorded his name in the Adjutant General's office, March 5, 1861, as Brevet Colonel and Lieutenant Colonel Second Cavalry. Address, Arlington; with the remark, "under orders from Department of Texas."

R. E. LEE was confirmed by the Senate as Colonel First Cavalry, March 23, 1861. Date of Commission, March 25, 1861, to rank from March 10, 1861. Commission forwarded to him at Arlington, Va., March 28, 1861, and its receipt acknowledged and accepted by him March 30, 1861. April 20, 1861, by letter from Arlington, R. E. LEE tenders his resignation as Colonel First Cavalry. Received by GENERAL SCOTT the same day, and sent to the Adjutant General. Submitted to GENERAL CAMERON, Secretary of War, April 24, 1861, and accepted by him the next day, April 27, 1861. He was informed at Richmond of the acceptance, by the President, of his resignation, to take effect April 25, 1861.

In the letter of tender of resignation, no reason given.

FITZHUGH LEE records his name at the Adjutant General's office as Second Lieutenant First Cavalry, May 1, 1861, with the remark, "on seven days' leave from West Point," at Washington, May 16, 1861, tenders his resignation. Address Richmond. Resignation submitted to GENERAL CAMERON, Secretary of War, May 21, 1861, and accepted by him.

I have the honor to be, General, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

L. THOMAS,

Brigadier General U. S. Army.

GENERAL J. A. GARFIELD, Washington, D. C.

D.

ARLINGTON, VA., *April 20, 1861.*

GENERAL:

Since my interview with you, on the 18th inst., I have felt that I ought not longer to retain my commission in the army. I therefore tender my resignation, which I request you will recommend for acceptance. It would have been presented at once but for the struggle it has cost me to separate myself from the service to which I have devoted all the best years of my life and all the ability I possessed.

During the whole of that time—more than a quarter of a century—I have experienced nothing but kindness from my superiors and the most cordial friendship from my comrades. To no one, General, have I been so much indebted as to yourself for uniform kindness and consideration, and it has always been my ardent desire to merit your approbation. I shall carry to the grave the most grateful recollections of your kind consideration, and your name and fame will always be dear to me.

Save in defense of my State, I never desire to draw my sword. Be pleased to accept my most earnest wishes for the continuance of your happiness and prosperity, and believe me, most truly yours,

R. E. LEE.

LIEUTENANT GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT,

Commanding United States Army.

E.

HEADQUARTERS RICHMOND, *April 23, 1861.*

General Orders No. 1:

In obedience to orders from His Excellency, JOHN LETCHER Governor of the State, MAJOR GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE assumes command of the Military and Naval Forces of Virginia.

[Signed]

R. E. LEE,

Major General.

F.

ARLINGTON, VA., *April 20, 1861.*

MY DEAR SISTER:

I am grieved at my inability to see you. I have been waiting for a "more convenient season," which has brought to many before me deep and lasting regret. Now we are in a state of war which will yield to nothing. The whole South is in a state of revolution, into which Virginia, after a long struggle, has been drawn; and though I recognize no necessity for this state of things, and would have forborne and pleaded to the end for redress of grievances, real or supposed, yet in my own person I had to meet the question whether I would take part against my native State. With all my devotion to the Union, and the feeling of loyalty and duty of an American citizen, I have not been able to make up my mind to raise my hand against my relatives, my children, my home. I have, therefore, resigned my commission in the army, and, *save in defense of my native State*, with the hope that my poor services will never be needed, I hope I may never be called on to draw my sword.

I know you will blame me, but you must think as kindly of me as you can, and believe that I have endeavored to do what I thought right. To show you the feeling and struggle it cost me, I send a copy of my letter to GENERAL SCOTT, which accompanied my letter of resignation. I have no time for more.

R. E. LEE.

L. of C.

G.

WASHINGTON, *April 7, 1870.*

HON. J. A. GARFIELD,
House of Representatives.

SIR :

In compliance with your request, I am directed by the Secretary of War to send you the inclosed sketch of GENERAL THOMAS' services, and the General Orders announcing his decease.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. TOWNSEND,

Adjutant General.

(BORN VIRGINIA.) GEORGE H. THOMAS. (APPOINTED VIRGINIA.)

MILITARY HISTORY.

Cadet at the United States Military Academy from July 1, 1836, to July 1, 1840, when he was graduated, and promoted in the Army to

Second Lieutenant, Third Artillery, July 1, 1840.

Served in garrison at Fort Columbus, N. Y., 1840; in the Florida War, 1840-42, being engaged in MAJOR WADE'S capture of seventy Seminole Indians, November 6, 1841; in garrison at New Orleans

(Brevet First Lieutenant, November 6, 1841, for gallantry and good conduct in the war against the Florida Indians)

Barracks, La., 1842; Fort Moultrie, S. C., 1842-43; and Fort McHenry, Md., 1843-45; on recruiting service, 1845; in garrison

(First Lieutenant, Third Artillery, April 30, 1844)

at Fort Moultrie, S. C., 1845; in military occupation of Texas, 1845-46; in the war with Mexico, 1846-48, being engaged in the

defense of Fort Brown, Texas, May 3-9, 1846; battle of Monterey, September 21-23, 1846; and battle of Buena Vista,

(Brevet Captain, September 23, 1846, for gallant conduct in the several conflicts at Monterey, Mexico)

February 22, 23, 1847; in garrison at the mouth of the Rio Grande,

(Brevet Major, February 23, 1847, for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battle of Buena Vista, Mexico)

Texas, 1848-49; in Florida hostilities against the Seminole Indians, 1849-50; in garrison at Fort Independence, Mass., 1850; at the Military Academy, as Instructor of Artillery and Cavalry, April 2, 1851, to May 1, 1854; on frontier duty, on

(Captain, Third Artillery, December 24, 1853)

march to Benicia, Cal., in command of a battalion of the Third Artillery, 1854; Fort Yuma, Cal., 1854-55; in garrison at

(Major, Second Cavalry, May 12, 1855)

Jefferson Barracks, Mo., 1855; on recruiting service, 1856; on frontier duty at Fort Mason, Texas, 1857-58; Fort Belknap, Texas, 1858-59; Camp Cooper, Texas, and expedition to Red River country, 1859-60; Kiowa expedition, 1860, being engaged in a skirmish near the head of Clear Fork of the Brazos river, August 26, 1860, where he was wounded; on leave of absence, 1860-61.

Served during the rebellion of seceding States, 1861-66,

(Lieutenant Colonel, Second Cavalry, April 25, 1861)

in reorganizing and equipping his regiment at Carlisle Barracks, Pa., April 14 to May 27, 1861; in operations in Shenandoah Valley, June 1 to August 26, 1861, being engaged in command

(Colonel Second Cavalry, May 3, 1861; Fifth Cavalry, August 3, 1861)

of a brigade in the action of Falling Waters, July 2, 1861; skirmish at Martinsburg, July 3, 1861, and skirmish at Bunker Hill, July 15, 1861; in the Department of the

(Brigadier General, U. S. Volunteers, August 17, 1861)

Cumberland, September 6 to November 30, 1861; in organizing Kentucky and Tennessee volunteers, at Camp Dick Robinson,

Ky., September 18 to October 28, 1861; in the advance on Crab Orchard and Lebanon, Ky., October 28 to November 30, 1861; in command of division (*Army of the Ohio*), November 30, 1861, to March 19, 1862, being in command and engaged at the combat of Mill Spring, Ky., January 19, 20, 1862, and movement on Nashville, *via* Somerset, Lebanon, and Louisville, February 15 to March 4, 1862; in the Tennessee and Mississippi campaign, March 19 to June 26, 1862, being engaged in the march on Pittsburg Landing, Tenn., with his division as the reserve of the *Army of the Ohio*, March 19 to April 9, 1862; in command of the right wing of the *Army of the Tennessee*, in the advance upon and siege of Corinth, April 9 to May 30,

(*Major General U. S. Volunteers, April 25, 1862, to December 15, 1864*)

1862, and in command of Corinth, Miss., June 5-22, 1862; in MAJOR GENERAL BUELL'S operations (*Army of the Ohio*) in North Alabama, Tennessee, and Kentucky, June 26 to November 7, 1863; at Tusculum, Ala., guarding the Memphis and Charleston railroad, June 26 to July 25, 1862; in command of Dechard, August 5-15, of McMinnville, August 19 to September 3, and of Nashville, Tenn., September 7-14, 1862; in pursuit of enemy from Prewitt's Knob to Louisville, Ky., September 20-26, 1862; and as second in command of the *Army of the Ohio*, on the advance into Kentucky, September 30 to November 7, 1862, being engaged in command of the right wing of the army during the battle of Perryville, October 8, 1862, and pursuit of the enemy to Barbourville; in MAJOR GENERAL ROSECRANS' Tennessee campaign, in command of the Fourteenth Army Corps (*Army of the Cumberland*), November 7, 1862, to October 19, 1863, being engaged in the battle of Stone river, December 31, 1862, to January 3, 1863; advance of Tallahoma, June 24 to July 4, 1863; action at Hoover's Gap, June 26, 1863; passage of Elk river, July 3, and of the Tennessee, September 2, 1863; battle of Chickamauga, September 19, 20, 1863, and checking the enemy's advance September 21, 1863, upon Chattanooga, to which he retired and commenced fortifying;

in command of the *Department and Army of the Cumberland*, October 19, 1863, being engaged in opening his communications

(*Brigadier General U. S. Army, October 27, 1863*)

by the Tennessee river and Lookout valley, October 24-27, 1863; battle of Mission Ridge, November 23-25, 1863; pursuit of the enemy and combat at Ringgold, Ga., November 26, 1863; and reorganizing his army, December 1, 1863, to May 2, 1864; in the invasion of Georgia, May 2 to September 7, 1864; in command of the *Army of the Cumberland*, composed of the Fourth, Fourteenth, and Twentieth Army Corps, and three cavalry divisions, being engaged in operations around Dalton, May 7-13, 1864; demonstrations against Resaca, May 13, till occupied, May 16, 1864; pursuit of the enemy, with constant skirmishing, to Cassville, May 17-19, 1864; occupation of Rome by DAVIS' division of the Fourteenth Army Corps, May 18, 1864; action of Cassville, May 19, 1864; battle of Dallas, May 25-28, 1864; movement against Pine Mountain, with almost daily severe engagements, May 28 to June 20, 1864; battles of Kenesaw Mountain, June 20 to July 2, 1864; assault on Ruff's Station, July 4, 1864; passage of the Chattahoochee river, July 12-17, 1864; combat of Peach Tree creek, July 19-21, 1864; siege of Atlanta, July 22 to September 2, 1864; assault of the enemy's intrenchments at Jonesboro, September 1, 1864; surrender of Atlanta, September 2, 1864, and occupation of the place, September 8-27, 1864; in organizing, October to December, 1864, at Nashville, Tenn., in obedience to MAJOR GENERAL SHERMAN's instructions of September 27, 1864, the defense of Tennessee against the rebel invasion under GENERAL HOOD, by concentrating his scattered forces behind Duck river, which, being turned, November 29, 1864, after five days' constant skirmishing, fell back to Harpeth river, where they were desperately engaged at the battle of Franklin, November 30, 1864, and finally took position, with other reinforcements, before Nashville, where the rebel army was utterly routed

(*Major General U. S. Army, December 15, 1864*)

in the battle of December 15, 16, 1864, and driven beyond the

Tennessee river, with immense loss of men and material; in organizing various raiding expeditions, and sending troops to other departments, December, 1864, to May, 1865, which materially contributed to the overthrow of the rebellion;* and in command, June 27, 1865, to August 13, 1866, headquarters at Nashville, Tenn., of the Military Division of the Tennessee, embracing the Departments of Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi; of the Department of the Tennessee, August 13, 1866, to March 11, 1867, headquarters at Nashville, Tenn., till November 1, 1866, and at Louisville, Ky., till March 11, 1867, when he was assigned to the command of the Third Military District (Georgia, Florida, and Alabama), from which he was relieved, at his own request, March 15, 1867; and of the Department of the Cumberland, March 16, 1867, to May 15, 1869; and as member of the board for recommendations for brevets to general officers, March 14-24, 1866; President of a Court of Inquiry, at Washing-

*The Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, resolved, March 3, 1865:

“That the thanks of Congress are due, and are hereby tendered, to MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS, and the officers and soldiers under his command, for their skill and dauntless courage, by which the rebel army under GENERAL HOOD was signally defeated and driven from the State of Tennessee.”

The General Assembly of the State of Tennessee resolved, November 2, 1865:

“That the thanks of the General Assembly, in their own name and in the name of the people of the State of Tennessee, be presented to MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS, and the officers and soldiers under his command, for his wise and spirited, and their brave and patriotic conduct, in the battle of Nashville, in defense of the capital of the State, in December, 1864, and that a gold medal be struck in commemoration of the great and decisive event, and be presented to him.”

This magnificent gold medal, having GENERAL THOMAS' bust on the obverse, and on the reverse the State Capitol, with the motto, “I will hold the town till we starve,” was presented to him, with imposing ceremonies, on the second anniversary of the battle, at Nashville, Tenn.

ton, D. C., in the case of BRIGADIER and BREVET MAJOR GENERAL A. B. DYER, Chief of Ordnance, from November 9, 1868, to May 15, 1869; en route and in command of the Military Division of the Pacific, from May 15, 1869, to March 28, 1870, the date of his death.

The above is taken from the records of this office.

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Adjutant General.

A. G. OFFICE, *April 7, 1870.*

H.

GENERAL ORDERS } No. 34. }	HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY, ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON, <i>March, 29, 1879.</i> }
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It has become the painful duty of the General to announce to the Army the death of one of our most exalted generals, GEORGE H. THOMAS, who expired last evening, at half-past seven, in San Francisco, California.

There is no need to turn to the archives to search for his history, for it is recorded in almost every page during the past ten years; but his classmate and comrade owes him a personal tribute, in which he knows every member of the Army shares. GENERAL THOMAS entered the Military Academy in the class of 1836; graduated in 1840, and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant, Third Artillery, and sent to Florida. He served with his regiment continuously until December 24, 1853, when he became a Captain, having been particularly distinguished at Monterey and Buena Vista, Mexico. On the 12th of May, 1855, he was appointed to the Second Cavalry as Major, and served with that regiment continuously until he became its Colonel on the 3d of May, 1861. The great civil war found him at his post, true and firm, amidst the terrible pressure he had encountered by reason of his birthplace—Virginia; and PRESIDENT LINCOLN commissioned him as a Brigadier

General of Volunteers, and sent him to Kentucky. There, too, his services were constant and eminent in the highest degree. He won the first battle in the West, at Mill Spring, Kentucky, and, from first to last, without a day's or an hour's intermission, he was at his post of duty, rising steadily and irresistibly through all the grades to the one he held as Major General of the Regular Army at the time of his death. At Shiloh, Corinth, Perryville, Stone River, Chickamauga, Chattanooga, Atlanta, and Nashville, he fulfilled the proudest hopes of his ardent friends, and, at the close of the war, GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS stood in the very front rank of our war generals.

The General has known GENERAL THOMAS intimately since they sat as boys on the same bench, and the quality in him, which he holds up for the admiration and example of the young, is his complete and entire devotion to duty. Though sent to Florida, to Mexico, to Texas, to Arizona, when duty there was absolute banishment, he went cheerfully, and never asked a personal favor, exemption, or leave of absence. In battle he never wavered. Firm, and of full faith in his cause, he knew it would prevail, and he never sought advancement of rank or honor at the expense of any one. Whatever he earned of these were his own, and no one disputes his fame. The very impersonation of honesty, integrity, and honor, he will stand to us as the beau ideal of the soldier and gentleman.

Though he leaves no child to bear his name, the *Old Army of the Cumberland*, numbered by tens of thousands, called him father, and will weep for him in tears of manly grief.

His wife, who cheered him with her messages of love in the darkest hours of war, will mourn him now in sadness, chastened by the sympathy of a whole country.

The last sad rites due him as a man and soldier will be paid at Troy, New York, on the arrival of his remains, and of his family, and all his old comrades who can be present are invited there to share in the obsequies.

At all military posts and stations the flag will be placed at

half staff, and fifteen minute-guns fired on the day after the receipt of this order; and the usual badges of mourning will be worn for thirty days.

BY COMMAND OF GENERAL SHERMAN:

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Adjutant General.

I.

JOINT RESOLUTION expressing the sympathy of Congress at the death of MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS.

Be it resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the Senate and House of Representatives have heard with deep regret of the sudden decease of MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS, endeared to the country by a series of unbroken, patriotic services during a period of thirty years.

SEC. 2. *And be it further resolved, That his distinguished career in the defense of his country against foreign and domestic enemies, his never faltering faith and zeal in the maintenance of the Union and the integrity of the Government, and his stern execution of every trust confided to him, constitute a record in life made memorable in death.*

SEC. 3. *And be it further resolved, That the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House are hereby authorized to make such arrangements in connection with his obsequies as will attest the sympathy of Congress at this national bereavement.*

Approved, April 5, 1870.

