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GENERAL

ALPHEUS S. WILLIAMS



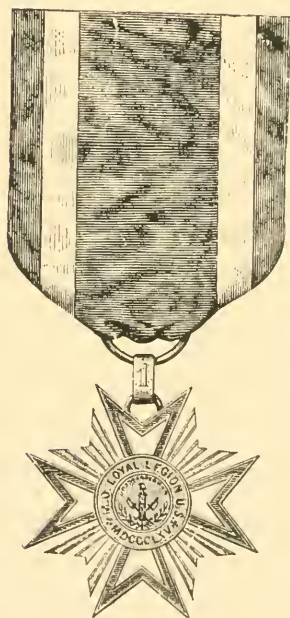


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BY

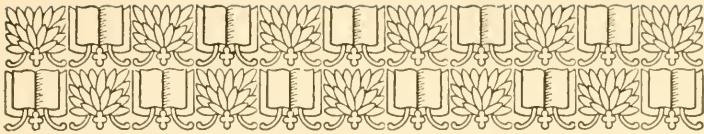
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CHAPTER I.



THIS article sketches the public life of a soldier. This soldier rose to high command during the war of 1861-65, the highest attained by any of the 90,119 courageous, patriotic and capable men who went from Michigan to serve in the armies of the republic.

This soldier had under his direction a larger force than the army George Washington was able to muster and command in the several campaigns of our great struggle for independence. None of our generals in the war of 1812, among whom may be named Macomb at Plattsburg and Jackson at New Orleans—directed in battle so large a number of men as did our Michigan soldier. Scott and Taylor won their victories in Mexico with armies less numerous. These references to American history are intended to make plainer the fact that the ability to command great armies requires genius of a high degree. In any nation during the stress of war few commanders prove by their success the possession of superior qualities. The long roll of history names many warriors, but the list of generals really great is sufficiently meager.

A Notable Soldier.

The great captains, the conquerors of the world, may be listed in a few lines. It would be inconsistent to include our soldier among them. He is, however, entitled to appear among that meritorious class of officers whom the great captains relied on to carry out intelligently and valorously a part of the work. The result of campaigns and the safety of armies largely rests on men of high capacity. Sifted down by trial in war not many soldiers possessing this quality—an insufficient number, at least—has been forthcoming. It is no little glory to the State that Michigan produced one soldier who fulfilled the higher conditions of generalship; and demonstrated his worth on many fields throughout a war whose magnitude is one of the most stupendous in the annals of internecine strife.

It might be said of this Michigan soldier that, like the Roman general, Marius, he was a self-made man; that he joined the army early and attracted notice by his punctual discharge of all duties; that he forced his way steadily upward by his mere

soldier-like qualities to the rank of division and of corps commander. He was neither given himself to talking, nor much talked about, but was sought for whenever work was to be done. He made himself respected and valued accordingly by the great generals under whom he served. This much is an outline, indicating the dimensions of a canvas upon which should be pictured the history of our Michigan soldier. We can employ no such canvas here, but will epitomize his history that it may show something of the man and his work.

Resume of His Work.

Alpheus Starkey Williams, soldier, jurist, congressman and diplomat, was born in Connecticut September 20, 1810; graduated at Yale, 1831; studied and traveled in Europe during the years 1834-36, part of the time in company with N. P. Willis, poet and essayist, and Edwin Forrest, tragedian. He removed to Detroit in 1836 and commenced the practice of the law. In 1838 became the captain of the Brady Guards, organized the year of his arrival here. Judge of probate, Wayne county, 1840 to 1844; in the latter year appointed recorder of the city of Detroit. Purchased a controlling interest in the Detroit Advertiser in 1843, which he retained for five years.

Upon the president's call for volunteers for the Mexican war he helped to organize the first Michigan regiment, of which he was commissioned lieutenant-colonel, serving until peace was resumed, when he again took up the practice of the law in Detroit.

In 1861 he offered his services to the Union cause. Was employed at first in organizing the regiments called into the field and instructing the officers in tactics. President Lincoln commissioned him brigadier-general of volunteers May 17, 1861. He commanded the first division of the army corps of Gen. N. P. Banks. The duty assigned to this corps early in 1861-2 was to cover the line of the Potomac and Washington city. The field of action was the Shenandoah valley, where such generals as Joseph E. Johnston, Stonewall Jackson, A. P. Hill and R. S. Ewell had to be reckoned with, especially Jackson, in whose command the district lay. The principal battles in this campaign were: Kernstown, March 23, 1862; Winchester, May 24, 1862; Cedar Mountain, August 9, 1862.

Gen. Pope's lamentable failure with the main army in Virginia during August of that year brought about changes in its organization. Williams was, early in September, placed in temporary charge of the Twelfth corps. Gen. Mansfield was given this corps September 15, but when he fell at the opening of the battle of Antietam, September 17, 1862, Williams succeeded him in command of the corps, fighting in the great battles of South Mountain and Antietam, September 14th and 17th, 1862.

The next year, 1863, we find him with his corps, Hooker commanding the army of the Potomac, at Chancellorsville in

May. The next month, when Lee invaded Pennsylvania and Meade succeeded Hooker, Williams, with his Twelfth corps, held Culp's Hill, the right of the army at Gettysburg, July 13, 1863. This position was one of importance to the success achieved on that famous field.

From Virginia to Georgia.

Immediately after Lee had withdrawn his shattered forces into Virginia again, the Twelfth corps was ordered west and Williams next appears in Tennessee, time being autumn of 1863. Shortly after Sherman assumed command of the western armies at Chattanooga the Eleventh and Twelfth corps were consolidated as the Twentieth army corps, department of the Cumberland, Gen. Thomas. This in April, 1864. Hooker, the next ranking officer, was made corps commander, Williams being given charge of the First division. He was at the head of his division in the movement toward Atlanta and made a brilliant record in every battle, of which Allatoona—where Williams led the turning movement—Cassville, Resacca, New Hope Church, Kolb's Farm, Kenesaw Mountain and Atlanta, were of first importance. July 24, 1864, when Hooker learned that Howard was made commander of the Tennessee, in succession to Gen. McPherson, killed at Atlanta, July 22, he applied to Thomas to be relieved of the command of the Twentieth army corps. Thomas forwarded the application to Sherman "approved and heartily recommended." Sherman immediately acquiesced and recommended Gen. Slocum to this command. Slocum was appointed, but until his arrival in the last days of August, 1864, Williams, as senior division commander, was given charge of the Twentieth corps.

To the Sea and the Carolinas.

November 15, 1864, when Sherman left with his army on the famous march to the sea, Williams resumed his old place at the head of the Twentieth corps. Gen. Slocum was advanced and given the left wing, consisting of the Fourteenth and Twentieth corps and Howard the right wing, Fifteenth and Seventeenth corps. On reaching Savannah, which city Sherman offered to Lincoln as a "Christmas present" for 1864, Williams was brevetted major general of volunteers, the president's commission being dated January 15, 1865.

So he continued with Sherman all the way through Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina, taking a share in the last severe battle of that army, Bentonville, and being present with his corps at the surrender of Gen. Joe Johnston, April 26, 1865, at Durham Station, N. C. Lee had surrendered his army at Appomattox two weeks before.

Naturally he held a foremost station in the grand review of the army a month later in Washington, for the value of his services was then fresh in the minds of all. The fighting ended

—he at once was transferred to Kentucky and Arkansas, where as the ranking officer he assisted in the reconstruction of those states.

In July, 1866, he was honorably mustered out of the service. President Johnson appointed him United States minister to San Salvador, at which post he remained until the close of 1869. He was elected a member of congress from the first district of Michigan in 1874 and re-elected in 1876. His services in this capacity were notable for the integrity and good sense which always distinguished him. His more particular assignment was as chairman of the committee of the District of Columbia, and Washington owes no little of its beautification to his capable administration. Gen. Williams died at Washington December 21, 1878, before the completion of his last term as congressman.

As the Army Beheld Him.

Gen. Williams, as the army saw him, was an impressive figure, with the traits of manhood that soldiers especially admire. A notable characteristic was kindness of heart and courteous grace of manner. To these add the quality of good humor that no cross or trial could shake. He was of middle stature, strongly built, and of an iron constitution. The men liked him, because of his presence among them, in camp, on the march, in battle, and for the kindly interest he took in their welfare. Because of his devotion and fatherly appearance, accentuated as it was by the full beard which he wore, and because he was always attentive in their wants—they called him "Old Pap."

When soldiers have an affectionate nickname for their general it is an evidence that they recognize his qualities and feel that they can trust him. Williams and Gen. George H. Thomas—these two—the men of their respective armies, designated as "Old Pap!" They were hailed by this name as most expressive of the soldiers' love and confidence, carrying with it a world of sentiment.

One of the men "behind the gun," W. F. Goodhue, of the Third Wisconsin infantry, speaking at Milwaukee in 1896 on an historical occasion, described Gen. Williams in this vivid way:

"As the Hibernian said of his dead friend: 'Peace to his soul and not to his ashes, for he hasn't gone where ashes are made!' Although I have not seen the old general for 31 years, yet with memory's eye I see him today as plainly as ever. I fancy myself back among the Virginia pines, the mountain regions, Chattanooga to Atlanta, the savannahs of Georgia and the Carolinas, through which we followed for many, many a weary mile the devoted leader of the old Red Star division.

"His was a Cromwellian figure, sitting his horse like a centaur, sturdy, strong and imperturbable under all the circumstances of warfare. His strong, kindly face and grizzled beard indicated the rugged nature of the man. Beneath his

black slouched hat gleamed in the southern sun the glasses he constantly wore, scintillating like the jeweled eyes of a war god, giving our soldiers the inspiration of battle; holding firmly in his teeth the never-lighted cigar.

"When the rifles at the front began their crackling the horse he rode quickened its step; the advance of the division found Old Pap at the front, and there he staid until the field was won.

"In all the four long years the brave old general was on hand. Not a drum-beat in the Red Star division that he did not hear, and was quick to answer. No matter what the occasion—a review, a march, a battle—he was there! His boys had to get up very early in the morning to beat him in punctuality and promptness."

Here is an extract from the diary of Gen. Frederick W. Swift, of Detroit, written May 24, 1865, of the "Grand Review:"

"But listen! Why that great outburst of applause? This redoubling of the cheering? The explanation is easy—for there comes the man, the best loved man of all! Gen. Alpheus S. Williams—'Old Pap' as the boys delighted to call him. The Ney—the Philip Sidney, of the war, for in him are embodied the attributes of both. 'Hero of the Shenandoah!' Wreaths of flowers are thrown over his horse and over those of his staff. He is deluged with bouquets, and so are they.

"This is a proud day for the old hero, for he is riding for the last time at the head of the famous 'Red Star Division,' 5,000 well trained veterans, the equals of the 'Old Guard' in Napoleon's palmiest days. Their fronts extending from curb to curb, closed in mass, these men of an hundred battles march majestically along, their cadence perfect, steady, their bearing soldierly, for 'Old Pap' in the midst of all their campaigns never omitted battalion drills or camp discipline, nor failed of the strictest military schooling whenever it was possible to observe them.

"They easily bear the palm as the best appearing division in Sherman's entire army."

Gen. Williams' interest in public affairs at home was strongly manifested. In school and college days he evinced a taste toward military pursuits. He read many books upon the subject and later added such information as he could by visiting battlefields of our Revolutionary war and others in Europe, the scene of several of Napoleon's victories.

It is not surprising then to find him at the age of 25 joining the Brady Guards of 1836, its first captain, and later organizing the Detroit Light Guard. In 1843 all the militia companies of the city were formed into a battalion, called the Frontier Guards. Williams was selected by the officers of all the companies for commander of the battalion. The young men of the community trained in this way were qualified for commissions when the war of 1861 broke out. The nation needed them at that crisis. The army received many officers thus instructed and not a few of them attained high rank.

Mexico, Guerrillas and Yellow Fever.

When, during the Mexican war of 1846-48, the president called for a regiment of volunteers from Michigan, it was quickly formed and Williams was made lieutenant colonel. The regiment marched from Detroit in the fall of 1847, to an interior point in Ohio on the line of the then only railroad which reached Cincinnati. Here a transfer to the cars and, at Cincinnati, another transfer to steamer, brought it to New Orleans. By ship from the last named city to Vera Cruz and thence to the active field of operations.

Gen. Winfield Scott in a report made just prior to the arrival of the Michigan volunteers informs the government: "Our danger and difficulties are all in the rear. First, The season of the year, and, below Cerro Gordo, sand and disease. Second, An impossibility (almost) of establishing any intermediate point on account of disease and the want of sufficient supplies within easy reach. Third, The danger of having our trains cut and destroyed by the exasperated rancheros. And fourth, The consequent necessity of escorting trains.

"The yellow fever at Vera Cruz, and on the road fifty miles this way, may soon cut us off from our depot. Deep sand, disease and bands of guerrillas constitute the difficulty. Within the distance of fifty miles from Vera Cruz I doubt whether I can hazard a depot or garrison. The difficulty of protecting the flag (of truce to send forward to the rear) by a large escort against rancheros and banditti who infest the roads all the way to the capital, and who rob and murder even wounded Mexican officers returning on parole to their friends."

An idea of the desperate temper of these guerrillas is obtained from the proclamation of Mariana Salas, posted about the country, declaring "War without pity unto death! will be the motto of the guerrilla warfare of vengeance." Other leaders of this vindictive force, famous for daring and cruelty—were Chico Mendoza, Zenobio and Padre Jerauta. Very bloody is the catalogue of their operations.

Into a territory thus infested and with the danger line of yellow fever near, the Michigan volunteers took up the important work of keeping open communications and of clearing out the guerrillas. Scott's fears as to his communications departed.

The Post at Orizaba.

The regiment had its headquarters at Cordova, a city of 6,000 people on the road through the Cerro Gordo pass, and near the foot of the magnificent and unparalleled mountain peak of Orizaba. The name in the Aztec tongue means "mountain of the star." It is an extinct volcano, 17,907 feet high. Orizaba was then thought to be the highest point in North America.

The mountain is covered with perpetual snow. Although one hundred miles inland it is visible fifty miles out at sea—a landmark for mariners. If scenery could compensate the Michigan volunteers for hardships and dangers, the grandest in the

world was visible which every way they looked. They were too busy with guerrillas, rancheros, banditti and the safety of the single line of road available for the needs of the army, to moon about scenery. Instead Williams had them unceasingly on the lookout for raiders. They accepted this duty with cheerfulness and courage, just as did the Red Star Division, the Twelfth and the Twentieth army corps—who learned to know and to love Gen. Williams fifteen years after we finished with Mexico. The soldiers of the later generation we still meet in our walks abroad—the men who wear the bronze button. For the soldiers of Mexico the last tattoo has sounded.





CHAPTER II.



NE reason why the men wearing the hot, uncomfortable uniform of the United States army in Mexico in 1847, loved Williams, was because of his humanity. At that period punishments of a barbarous character were common in the army, being specified in the regulations. We read of "fifty lashes on the bare back with a raw-hide;" "the head shaved;" "standing on a barrel in the open street (city of Mexico), exposed to the heat of the sun all day, the derision of the street passengers and a sentry to shoot or run him through with a bayonet if he attempts to escape;" "placing a man on a high wooden horse; sometimes compelled to sit for a series of days and nights in position;" and the buck and gag. What the army thought of the most common form of punishment is told in a song the soldiers were accustomed to sing, at places where their indignation could find vocal expression.

It was called "Corporal Bell's Song," and here is a bit of it:

Come all you Yankee soldiers give ear to my song,
It is a short ditty, 'twill not keep you long.
It's of no use to fret on account of our luck
We can laugh, drink and sing yet in spite of the buck.
Derry down, derry down, etc.

"Sergeant buck him and gag him," our officers cry,
For each trifling offense which they happen to spy;
Till with bucking and gagging of Dick, Tom and Bill,
Faith the Mexican ranks they have helped to fill.

The treatment they give us, as all of us know,
It's bucking and gagging for whipping the foe;
They buck us and gag us for malice or spite,
But they're glad to release us when going to fight.

Despondent culprit in the guard house at Ft. Wayne, if any such is despondent, in warm quarters, with good food and opportunity to read and reflect—your misdeed may be worse in the category of army discipline, than those of the cheerful men in blue who sang Corporal Bell's song in Mexico—still rejoice

that the army punishments of 1817 were long ago abolished. One of the men who helped to abolish them was "Pap Williams." No Michigan volunteer suffered degradation in the ways described.

The adjutant general's report of 1848 after speaking of losses in the field, and by climate and the fatal course of disease there—declares: "It is a matter of pride to Michigan and of congratulation to know the commanding generals are unanimous in bestowing praise upon the volunteers of Michigan, exceeded by none in soldierlike bearing and discipline." * * *

"The governor's general order was issued on the 17th of July, 1848, welcoming the returning troops and thanking them on behalf of the state for the spirit and patriotism evinced and the strict discipline observed. The same was read by the captains of companies at the time of the muster out."

The men of the three Detroit companies, hearing this order read at their muster out, gave cheers for Col. A. S. Williams. Are there any of them on earth now? Not one; but there must be many descendants in Michigan, grandsons, great-grandsons, granddaughters and great grand-daughters. Do they cherish the memories that these lines so meagerly touch upon?

Secession and the Long War.

The work of Gen. Williams—as an officer of the Union army—1861-65, cannot be enlarged upon here. He participated in all the great battles within the limits of his command and all other movements there. Few, if any of the officers of rank, had commands that covered so vast an extent of the field of operations as Gen. Williams. The Potomac, the Shenandoah, the Cumberland, the Tennessee, the rivers of Georgia and the Atlantic coast states—the Alleghanies and the Blue Ridge mountains, were all crossed by his troops and were illuminated by the watch-fires of his corps.

When the armed strife began by actual bombardment of Ft. Sumpter, April 12, 1861, Gen. Williams was at the head of the state militia. Events previous to the firing on Sumpter had satisfied him that the country was to be plunged into a war, certain to last for a long time and to be contested to a finish by powerful armies. Many people, even Secretary of State Seward, thought nothing very serious would happen. It was their belief that "ninety days" would settle the trouble. Williams' mind was made up when South Carolina seceded, December 20, 1860.

His belief was strengthened when the United States troops under Major Anderson evacuated their station on the main land near Charleston; while the jubilation over the secession ordinance of South Carolina was at its height, quickly followed, as it was, by like action by most of the southern states, and the confederacy formed under Jeff Davis, who was inaugurated president February 18, 1861. It was plain to Williams that preparations for a long and bloody war needed to be made without delay.

While these events were happening, meaning much or little according to one's capacity for judgment, Williams' energies were employed in making efficient, for actual service, all the military companies in the state. From January until June he was busy in this work, so far as appears without compensation. When the first volunteers were called out and organized into regiments at Ft. Wayne he was placed there in command. The work that fell to his hands was to instruct the officers of these eager and enthusiastic men. They were the finest material that ever carried arms.

There was a woeful deficiency of trained officers. The most valiant hosts in the world dissipate their lives and ruin their cause if they are led by incapable officers. It is sad to note during the course of the war how many men, how much of treasure, were sacrificed by incompetency of officers.

Gen. Williams performed a great work when he gave attention to the officers of the first regiments who took the field from Michigan, and fitted them, so far as instruction would do so, for the work that lay ahead. His work was appreciated at Washington, when our soldiers arriving for the defense of the capital were found to be not only equipped to take the field, but with officers who understood their duties; unseasoned, to be sure, but with a degree of professional knowledge that fitted them to cope with the ordinary conditions of campaigning in the face of the enemy.

Lincoln Makes Him a Brigadier.

May 14, 1861, a month after Ft. Sumpter, Gen. Williams was commissioned by President Lincoln brigadier general of volunteers. The others appointed up to that time—few in number—were graduates of West Point. There were two from civil life—Williams of Michigan and Shields of Iowa. Lieutenant General Scott was then at the head of the army. His experience in war exceeded that of any American soldier of his period. President Lincoln naturally looked to Scott for advice upon military matters. The selection of brigadier generals was then of great moment. At the first call for troops there were but three or four officers ranking as brigadier generals, all employed at Washington in administering the business of the regular army. The army in its peace establishment had no brigades—nothing but companies scattered about the land at the posts and forts. There were few officers who held regimental command; fewer still who ever had seen an entire regiment assembled in a body. Gen. Scott, it is believed, considering all that he had personal knowledge of who were fitted for so high a command, remembered the work of Williams and Shields in Mexico and recommended them to the president. Shields Lincoln knew personally as a former resident of Springfield, Ills. A duel the fiery Shields was once bent upon fighting there, but Lincoln humorously stopped it.

When Gen. Williams reported at Washington for duty the

great volunteer host was being assembled and organized, preliminary to taking the field. He was employed in that duty, made more imperative a little later by the defeat at Bull Run. Bull Run, not a vital affair nor serious—as was afterwards discovered—but staggering the nation, which viewed it as a great disaster. When Gen. McClellan came to take charge of the army at Washington he would not move at all until he had it drilled, disciplined and organized in a way entirely satisfactory to himself.

The official reports of the war, union and confederate, published by the government contain many pages relating to Williams and his various commands. His services and his successes can not be fully related here. In all the operations engaged in—whether planned by himself or following the plans of his superiors, some of them operations of highest importance rapidly decided upon in the crisis of battle—he invariably showed a complete grasp of the situation and followed up to success his undertakings. He was a fighting general ever to be depended upon. The reports of his superior commanding generals make it plain that Williams never failed them, whether in charge of a division or an army corps.

Williams throughout the war had under his command the "Red Star division," so called when insignia to designate the different army corps were first adopted. When not in direct command of this division it always formed a portion of the army corps of which he had charge.

Fighting on the Shenandoah.

In the spring of 1862 he was of the Fifth corps army of the Potomac, under Banks up to the time that Pope took command of that army early in August, 1862. The field of operations of Banks was the upper Potomac and the Shenandoah valley. Embraced in that campaign were the sanguinary battles of Winchester, March 2, 1862, and Cedar Mountain, August 9, 1862. The confederates were led in both battles by one of their greatest generals—Stonewall Jackson. The army of Banks, as a final result of the Shenandoah campaign that year, was saved by Williams, whose division composed the rear guard in the withdrawal to the Potomac.

He was of the Second army corps under Pope, holding the upper district of the Potomac. Pope was superseded early in September, 1862, and McClellan resumed command. McClellan temporarily placed Williams in charge of the Twelfth corps, but on September 15th, Gen. Mansfield fell at the opening of the battle of Antietam, September 17th, 1862, Williams was again placed at its head. He commanded the corps until Gen. Slocum, who had been recommended by Gen. McClellan to succeed Gen. Mansfield, assumed command. Prior to the transfer of the Twelfth corps to Chattanooga and vicinity Gen. Williams led the corps on several occasions, notably upon the movement by which was gained Hooker's advantageous position at Chancellorsville, and the battle of Gettysburg.

Antietam, high in the list of great and fiercely contested battles, was one of the bloodiest of the civil war. Out of a union force totaling 87,174, of whom some 75,000 were in the actual combat, 12,469 was the total loss, 2,010 of them killed. Pollard, the Confederate historian, gives Lee's total as 70,000, McClellan, possibly overestimating the opposing forces, says it was 97,000. McClellan says, "Nearly 200,000 men and 500 pieces of artillery were for fourteen hours engaged in this memorable battle." The Confederate loss was 25,899. Some writers say it was a Union victory, but others make it out indecisive—which in fact it was. Lee, checked and stunned by it, slowly retreated back to the Virginia side of the Potomac.

But South Mountain, fought Sept. 14, three days before Antietam, and Antietam itself, could have been resolved into a destructive defeat for Lee. That this did not come about is because McClellan failed to take complete advantage of the knowledge of Lee's plans exactly revealed by an original copy of Lee's own order, discovered by the advance of the army led by Gen. Williams.

The Lost Order and Its Story.

It is the story of "the lost order," Lee's order No. 191 of 1862, better known to Col. Samuel E. Pittman, assistant adjutant general to Gen. Williams, than to any other person. Pittman first received the paper; of all the men in the army Pittman was best qualified to confidently avouch that it was genuine. That such an order should fall into the hands of McClellan not quite three days after Lee's corps commanders had received it, and began to act upon it, is a singularly remarkable incident in war.

On Lee's invasion of Maryland, his army on Sept. 10, 1862, began, in consequence of this order, to separate itself into four parts: First, Stonewall Jackson by a march passing Middleton—not far from the spot where South Mountain was fought on the 14th, was to re-cross the Potomac near Sharpsburg, take possession of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, if possible by the 14th, capture such of the Union forces as might be at Martinsburg and intercept such as might try to escape from Harper's Ferry; second, Longstreet's command to take the same road as far as Boonsboro, there to halt with the reserve supply and baggage trains of the army. It was mentioned that after the different separated army corps had done the work assigned them each was to join the main body at Boonsboro or Hagerstown.

Going on with the plan to clear up things for this final junction of all the forces at the place where Longstreet stood, it was ordered; third, that McLaws with two divisions was to get to Maryland Heights by the 14th, take it and endeavor, as soon as possible, to capture the Union force at Harper's Ferry. Force at Harper's Ferry was 12,000 men under Col. Miles. Fourth, Gen. Walker after completing certain work then in hand was

to cross the Potomac below Harper's Ferry, ascend the river, take Loudon Heights, on the morning of the 14th, if practicable, and then co-operate with McLaws and Jackson.

Gen. D. H. Hill's division was to form the rear guard of the army, pursuing the road taken by the main body, that is the road taken by Longstreet, and secure Turner's Gap. The reserve artillery, ordnance and supply trains, etc., were to precede D. H. Hill. The work laid out for Stuart's cavalry was also specified.

About the same time as the date of Lee's order, McClellan learned something from his cavalry scouts—though it was incomplete—of what the enemy was doing. The information he had suggested to McClellan that a conflict was shaping itself and that the South Mountain region would be the scene of it. He was sufficiently alert to the situation and Sept. 12, first of all, started Gen. Williams with the Twelfth corps toward Frederick City. It was a wise beginning and had important results.

It happened that D. H. Hill had stopped near Frederick on the night of the 12th. He intended to secure the mountain pass at Turner's Gap. The "Red Star division" of Williams' corps reached Hill's camp on the forenoon of the 13th and halted on the same bit of ground. Here was found the celebrated order. By some unusual procedure Hill had received a copy from Stonewall Jackson, in whose corps he served. This, however, was not discovered until after the war closed, and it is a mystery to this day how the original order was lost in Hill's halt on the way to Turner's Gap.

It was found by Private Mitchell, 27th Indiana—a bit of paper wrapped about three cigars, accidentally dropped, no doubt, from some one's pocket. The paper was carried to Col. S. E. Pittman, assistant adjutant general on the staff of Gen. Williams. The order was signed "by command of Gen. Lee, R. H. Chilton, assistant adjutant general."

Before the war Chilton, a paymaster in the United States army, had been stationed at Detroit. His bank account was at the Michigan State bank of which Pittman was the teller. Pittman was familiar with Chilton's signature, and, due to his training as a bank teller, recognized it positively. The handwriting was Chilton's.

Delay, and the Consequences.

The logistics of the order, when calculated upon the maps of the region, showed that the four parts of Lee's army would be separated from each other by two marches. The order was taken to Gen. Williams early in the forenoon of Sept. 13th. He sent it without delay to Gen. McClellan, accompanied by a statement from Pittman, authenticating positively the signatures, and noting the circumstances of the finding of the order. McClellan received it before noon of the day Lee's army was in four parts, that is on Sept. 13, 1862.

Gen. McClellan says that after there had fallen into his hands

"the order issued by Gen. Lee, which fully disclosed his plans, I immediately gave orders for a rapid and vigorous forward movement." As executed it was not rapid.

On the night of the 13th Reno's corps was at Middletown—six miles from Crampton's Gap, and about the same to Turner's Gap—these passes being the objectives. The larger portion—the main body of the Union army—was in the vicinity of Frederick, which place is eighteen miles from Boonsboro. The roads from there to Boonsboro lead through the "Gaps." The country is mountainous. The roads were good.

McClellan's orders to the different corps commanders were issued at 11:30 of the night of the 13th and called upon all to march toward Middletown, Hooker to start at daylight next morning, Sept. 14th, other corps to follow at six, seven and nine a. m. The objective was Boonsboro and carry that position. Longstreet was in the vicinity of that place and Lee, with his headquarters was near Hagerstown, eleven miles north. The starting was generally delayed, by some of the corps very much delayed.

At 6:30 p. m. of the 13th, McClellan dispatched an order to Franklin whose corps was at Buckeystown, nearest the Potomac and ten miles from Crampton's Gap. Buckeystown is 17 miles from Harper's Ferry. Franklin was in consequence nearest by several miles and on the road to Harper's Ferry.

McClellan begins the order to Franklin by saying: "I now have full information as to the movements and intentions of the enemy." He outlines the points of Lee's order, and adds, "we have cleared out all the cavalry this side of the mountains and north of us." He then informs Franklin that Miles holds on at Harper's Ferry with his 12,000, and that Franklin must march at daylight on the 14th for Rohrer'sville (near Harper's Ferry) "cut off, destroy or capture McLaws and relieve Col. Miles."

Harper's Ferry Falls, Franklin Not Getting Up to the Rescue.

On the morning of the 14th, Gen. McClellan says he had a message from Col. Miles, saying the heights had been occupied by the enemy and that he (Miles) had withdrawn his whole force into Harper's Ferry. The messenger informed Gen. McClellan "that Col. Miles instructed him to say that he could hold out with certainty for two days longer." The messenger starting on the 13th, worked through that night—and so "two days longer" meant until Sept. 15th.

Franklin marching via Crampton's Gap, having delayed his start until late morning, found the enemy strongly in front of him at Burkittsville to defend the pass. After three hours of hard fighting and considerable loss he cleared his way through. But it was late in the afternoon. Continuing to advance, by evening of the 14th he was three and one-half miles distant from Maryland Heights, from which place Miles had the day before withdrawn those posted there. At 8:30 the next day Franklin

reported to McClellan the enemy too strong—"two to one"—in his front and therefore gave up the pursuit. Col. Miles surrendered all his force and immense stores at Harper's Ferry at 8 a. m. Sept. 15th, half an hour before Franklin began his dispatch to McClellan. On the other hand the Confederates had opened on Miles and Harper's Ferry at the peep of dawn.

This episode, in view of the information in McClellan's possession of the "lost dispatch," has occasioned unfavorable comment from historians. Most of them enlarge on the delay in starting Franklin, who could have advanced a long distance and passed through the Gap, had his march began on the afternoon of the 13th. Celerity was demanded, not alone of Franklin, but of each portion of the army.

McClellan fought his battles well, after the battles were on, handling his army with fine judgment—in great contrast to some of his successors, tried later, whose failures in generalship was deplorable. Knowing the situation perfectly, in this encounter with Lee, how could he neglect the advantages that were open to him?





CHAPTER III.



THE Confederate general, E. P. Alexander, chief of artillery in Longstreet's corps, a capable officer and of much renown, relates that a citizen of Frederick, a Confederate sympathizer, was accidentally present at McClellan's headquarters on Sept. 13th, and heard expressions of gratification at the finding of Lee's "lost order." This sympathizer, otherwise—as we might say—spy, quickly set about conveying the news. Making his way through the Federal lines after dark he brought the information to Stuart of the Confederate cavalry, who took it to Lee himself.

Lee, then in camp at Hagerstown, at once ordered up four brigades of D. H. Hill, who were two to five miles west of Turner's Gap. Lee saw necessity for speed; he also saw that there was instant and speedy movement. D. H. Hill's four brigades started at once, marching at night; Franklin and the others not until next day, somewhat late, too. Hill arrived in time to seize Turner's Gap. Then Generals Hooker and Williams, Sumner, Sykes, and the rest, had to make the terrible battle of the 14th, being thereby held back and were never able afterwards to get up in time to catch Lee until his army was fully reunited, which was on the 17th, at Antietam—and then a second sanguinary struggle, with forces nearly equal but with the Confederates in position. A fine defensive position, selected by Lee before the Union forces appeared.

Let us look at South Mountain and Antietam, aided by the eyes of historians, competent to see and to judge, and who also fought there.

Gen. Jacob D. Cox, early in 1861, drilled in the state camp all the new Ohio regiments, was with McClellan during their first weeks in camp, afterwards with McClellan in his West Virginia campaign, and like Williams, served with the Army of the Potomac, and also in the west—and gained laurels at South Mountain and Antietam. In his "Reminiscences," Scribners, N. Y., 1900, gives a full account of the Antietam campaign. His relations with McClellan were close. After the war he was governor of Ohio, and Grant's secretary of the interior.

Says Gen. Cox: 'The information (Lee's order) was in McClellan's before noon of Saturday, Sept. 13. If his men had been ordered to be at the top of South Mountain before dark



GEN. JAMES L. SELFRIDGE

GEN. ALPHEUS S. WILLIAMS

GEN. JAMES S. ROBINSON

GEN. WILLIAM HAWLEY

they could have been there; but less than one full corps passed Catadin mountain that day or night, and when the leisurely movement of the 14th began he himself, instead of being with the advance, was in Frederick after 2 p. m., at which hour he sent a dispatch to Washington and then rode to the front, ten or twelve miles away. * * *

"It is very plain that if McClellan had hastened his advance on the 13th of September the passes of South Mountain at Turner's and Fox's gaps would not have been occupied in force by the enemy, and the condition of things would have been what he believed it to be, on the morning of the 14th, when a single brigade had been thought enough to support Pleasanton's reconnoissance. Twenty-four hours had changed all that. * * *

"The value of time was one of the things McClellan never understood. He should have been among the first in the saddle at every step of the campaign after he was in possession of Lee's order of Sept. 10th, and should have infused energy into every unit of his army. Instead of making his reconnoissance at three in the afternoon of Monday, it could have been made at ten in the morning and the battle would have been fought before night; if, indeed, Lee had not promptly retreated when support from Stonewall Jackson would this have become impossible. (Battle of South Mountain. Sunday, 14th Sept., evening of same day Franklin, marching for relief of Miles, and to foil Stonewall Jackson—halts three and one-half miles from Maryland Heights. Miles surrenders morning of Monday, 15th Sept., and the whole field of operations is clear for Stonewall Jackson to join Lee—which he does in a hurry. Antietam, "bloodiest battle of the war," is fought Wednesday, 17th September.)

"Nothing but reconnoitering was done on Monday afternoon or on Tuesday, while Lee was straining every nerve to concentrate his forces and correct what would have proven a fatal blunder, in scattering them, had McClellan acted with vigor."

It may be in place to cite here Gen. E. P. Alexander, as showing what Confederate officers think of their narrow escape from destruction, consequent of the finding of Lee's "lost order" by Gen. William's advance.

Says Gen. Alexander: "By all the maxims of strategy Lee had put it in the power of McClellan to destroy his army. He had not only divided his force into four parts with rivers and mountains between, but he had scattered more than was necessary.

"McClellan's opportunity was obvious. It was to take general advantage of the separation and move in between the parts. This could be done by forcing the bulk of his army through Crampton's Gap. * * * But McClellan lost his campaign by moving directly after Lee upon Turner's Gap. McClellan should have gone in person to Crampton's Gap, as that position was the key-note of the whole situation. Only Franklin's corps of nine brigades was sent there. They might have marched on the 13th, * * * but did not leave their position until the 14th.

"Franklin, 12,000 strong, could have run over McLaws, and

was under orders to do so, too. Franklin was preparing to begin it on the 14th, but when the heavy firing at Harper's Ferry ceased, he correctly interpreted it to mean that Miles had surrendered Harper's Ferry, so he abandoned his proposed attack. This was a gross blunder. It lost an easy opportunity to defeat six of Lee's brigades.

"But McClellan moved upon Turner's Gap with deliberation strangely out of place for the occasion. By night marches, with good roads, with a good moon, he might have attacked and carried both Turner's and Crampton's Gaps by a surprise on the 14th of September, for each was then held by only cavalry and a single brigade of infantry."

Briefly that is the story of the "lost order." It will be observed that Williams recognized the importance and dispatched it instantly to the commanding general. More than that, his corps was in readiness to move at the word "quick march" and he had potent reason to think that he would be so ordered. It is not known, however, that he ever discussed the case.

Chancellorsville—Williams Holds Stonewall Jackson.

After Antietam the Twelfth corps occupied the Heights about Harper's Ferry while the main army, partly protected against flank attacks by the position of this corps, as well as by the mountains between, crossed the Potomac—moving by a new line toward Warrenton with Richmond as its objective. The Twelfth corps continued to watch with vigilance the Confederates in the Shenandoah region. The purpose was to keep them from co-operating with Lee. This was helpful to Burnside, who had succeeded McClellan. But, alas, Burnside made a sad mess of it at Fredericksburg and could show only reverses for the slaughter there.

Next year came Hooker as commander of the army of the Potomac. He did well at the start, made a masterly crossing of the Rappahannock—an admirable military performance. Hooker's repulse came at Chancellorsville. Self-satisfied and dreaming of easy victory warning messages from his right wing were disregarded; in one or two instances bearers of such intelligence were scoffed at by individuals at staff headquarters.

The staggering blow came from Stonewall Jackson, and from a quarter where Hooker had not feared danger. The 11th corps, badly posted on the right to receive Stonewall's attack, was broken and most of it presently in flight,—a wild, dangerous panic ominous of destruction.

It happened directly after sunset, May 2nd, 1863. Slocum being then in command of the Twelfth corps, Williams resumed his place at the head of the "Red Star division." He saw directly that something serious had happened on Howard's right and made his preparations accordingly. The fleeing mass of men, nearly the entire Eleventh corps, artillery, mules, beef cattle, ammunition wagons—were plunging madly for the rear. Williams'

command stopped some 2,000 of the fugitives, but being demoralized nothing could be made of them. So they were allowed to leave—the better to make fighting space to confront and hold back Stonewall's advance, elated with success and fighting like demons for complete and sweeping victory.

The Twelfth corps held them—Stonewall Jackson's heroes could not make them yield. Asked once what was the most critical hour in his experience, Gen. Williams said it was this hour at dusk of May 2nd, 1863. Telling then of the yelling, the fring and the frantic advance of Stonewall's men, and of his hurried endeavors to place and encourage his own disciplined veterans, he said: "If Pleasanton had not posted his batteries on the ridge, along the little valley, the rebel charging column would have gone straight through us. But the excellent work of those batteries saved the day."

How like the modest, brave and skillful soldier! Never vaunting himself, always glad to commend others, content to let his actions as man and soldier speak for themselves. That was Pap Williams, the noble, the sincere, the loving general. What he did next day at Chancellorsville, and the part his division played in retrieving the dangerous situation, is admirably told in the reports of the commanders. It may be summed up as great work. Simple words but meaning here that in an army of the bravest, with many individual members conspicuous for merit—none surpassed him. Chancellorsville and Pap Williams—let us not forget them!

Gettysburg—Three Fearful Days.

We hasten on to find him two months later at Gettysburg. That imperishable three days' struggle which sheds its halo of glory on American soldiers without distinctions as to the colors they fought for—alike valiant, skilled in the arts of warfare, imperturbable in the face of destruction, enduring all the shocks of battle—American soldiers!

The late William C. Maybury once mentioned a visit to a military academy in Russia. A class was studying by the aid of maps and plans the battle of Gettysburg. The professors told him the lessons of this battle was one of the most instructive in the whole course their students were required to learn.

We find Williams commanding the Twelfth corps at Gettysburg, in position at Culp's Hill, holding the right wing of the army for three days against superhuman efforts to penetrate from front and rear, made by day and night, by the Confederates under Ewell. He shares therefore in the laurels won by the army of the Potomac on that famous battle field.

Tennessee and Georgia.

Still rapidly hastening to epitomize the story, the Twelfth corps with Williams seeks new scenes for its triumphs west of the Blue Ridge and along their slopes, ever moving against

futile resistance into the lowlands of Georgia. September 12th, 1863, the Twelfth corps, and the Eleventh corps came to reinforce the army of the Cumberland. April 4th, 1864, they were consolidated as the Twentieth corps, under command of Gen. Hooper of Sherman's army about to Atlanta.

Little more can be said here than that Williams, at the head of his division and sometimes in command of the corps, was prominently engaged at Kenesaw Mountain, Resaca, New Hope Church, Kolb's Farm, Peach Tree Creek and before Atlanta. When Hooker, much put out at the promotion of Howard to the command of the army of the Tennessee, on July 24th, 1864, offered his resignation as commander of the Twentieth corps, Williams was placed in charge of it, retaining the command until Slocum arrived toward the last day of August. On the night of Sept. 1st, Hardee, of Hood's rear guard, escaped from Atlanta. At daylight the following morning, the Twentieth corps entered the city.

The March to the Sea.

As it had been the fortune of Williams and his division, to occupy Atlanta, so it was his fortune to start first of all the army on the "march to the sea." Also, as it was ordained, Geary's division of Williams' Twentieth Corps was first to enter Savannah, that city by the sea.

Sherman divided his army into two wings. Howard, with the Fifteenth and Seventeenth corps commanded the right wing. Slocum, having the Fourteenth and Twentieth corps, commanded the left wing. Slocum being advanced to this rank, Williams came forward again as commander of the Twentieth army corps. This he held until late in March, 1865, when Sherman, having reached Goldsborough, North Carolina, reconstituted a part of his army, the better to follow up Joe Johnston.

There was no fighting to speak of after this—battle of Bentonville being finished—it was merely pursuit. Joe Johnston, as we all remember, surrendered to Sherman, April 26th, 1865, and the war was over. Williams, though then in service, did not exactly smell the first powder that was burned. Nor did he hear the last shot fired though present at Johnston's surrender.

But he came as near to actually beholding these opening and closing scenes as any man whose term in the army was of equal length. For Williams's service covered the whole period of preparation, of war, and of reconstruction. Not many of the generals have as much to their credit in this particular. You might count those that have on your fingers.

The march to the sea need not be dwelt upon. It was a tremendous military event, though on the march but little blood was spilled. The political importance of it was of a surpassing character. When the march was accomplished all men—north and south—saw that the end was near.

Sherman, speaking of the preliminaries of the start, says it was a strange event—"two hostile armies marching in opposite directions," (Hood and Beauregard taking their army west, Sherman headed for the sea), "each in the full belief that it was achieving a final and conclusive result in a great war." (Hood expecting to do up Thomas at Nashville, and to march victorious!y across the Ohio).

The force in this march to the sea totaled 62 204, of which 5,063 was cavalry, 1,812 artillery, and the rest infantry. The most extraordinary efforts were taken to purge the army of non-combatants and sick men. Wagons loaded with provisions and forage could ill afford to haul sick men in the ambulances. So, as Sherman says, it was an army of able bodied, experienced men, well armed, well equipped and provided.

Williams, with his Twentieth corps, led off the march, Nov. 15th, 1864. Sherman saw them depart and describes the scene: "It was a bright, beautiful day, clear sunlight, bracing air. An unusual feeling of exhilaration seemed to pervade all minds. A feeling of something to come—vague and undefined, still full of venture and intense interest: * * * A band struck up 'John Brown's Soul Is Marching On.' The men caught the strains and far and wide the chorus rang."

Just a Glimpse of Marching Through Georgia.

It might be worth while to recall the method of this famous march; how its details were carried out. The army, by divisions, advanced as much as possible by parallel roads and through the open country. The wagons and artillery kept, of course, to the highways.

On the road, marching by the flank Sherman thought it good order to have 5,000 men to the mile. A full corpse of 30,000 men would extend six miles, but with the trains and batteries of artillery it was usually extended to ten miles. We can illustrate this by noting that when the front rank had reached, say Dearborn, the rear would be just swinging into Michigan avenue at the Detroit city hall.

Sherman mentions some details in this way: "To be strong, healthy and capable of the largest measure of physical effort, the soldier needs about three pounds of food a day; and the horse or mule about twenty pounds. * * * An ordinary army wagon drawn by six mules may be counted upon to carry three thousand pounds net, equal to the food of a full regiment for one day; but by driving along beef cattle one may safely count the contents of a wagon as containing food for a thousand men for two days.

"A corps should have on hand food for twenty days, ready for detachment. It should have 300 such wagons as a provision train, and for forage, ammunition, clothing and other needful stores, it was found necessary to have 300 more, or 600 wagons in all."

Consequently there were 3,600 mules harnessed to these 600

wagons, with extra mules and horses for contingencies. Something of a cavalcade for an army corps.

"We had in all about 2,500 wagons with teams of six mules each—(15,000 mules.) Also 600 ambulances with two horses each, (1,200 horses drawing ambulances.) The number of guns had been reduced to 65, or about one gun to each thousand men. They were generally in batteries of four guns each. A single gun, its caisson and forge was drawn by four teams of horses, (eight horses).

"Each soldier carried on his person forty rounds of ammunition; and in the wagons were enough cartridges to make up two hundred rounds per man. In like manner 200 rounds of assembled ammunition were carried for each gun. Each corps had about 800 ammunition wagons (he had four corps as stated) and these usually on the march occupied five miles or more of road."

Grim business, this of war, and most expensive. Yet while the march had its incidents, and an organized method of collecting provisions as it passed through the country, all being of interest, we pass them by. Individual seizures were forbidden; the commissary detachments made collections and gave receipts for what they collected. These were duly settled by Uncle Sam.

Thus, in meager outline, something of the service of Gen. Williams has been recited. In a few pages has been condensed material that might be made into a volume, not less interesting than similar volumes of personal reminiscences of generals on the two opposing sides. Let us conclude with the testimony by most competent and acknowledged authorities concerning the soldiery merits of Gen. Williams.

Hooker's Letter to Stanton.

This is a copy of a letter written by Gen. Hooker to Secretary Stanton a month before the army set out on its march to the sea. It is dated from the headquarters of the Northern Department at Cincinnati, Oct. 13th, 1865:

Hon. E. M. Stanton, Secretary of War:

Sir:—I am informed that Major General Sherman and Thomas have recommended Bri. Gen'l A. S. Williams to the rank of Major General of Volunteers. I desire to add my testimony to that of these officers in his behalf.

Gen. Williams is one of the oldest brigadier generals in the army, and with one exception has fought on more fields and fought better than any officer of my acquaintance. I can only refer to the most important of his services as space will not allow me to speak of all. He commanded a corps under me at Antietam, was distinguished at the head of his division at Gettysburg; and on the campaign just ended in Georgia commanded a division of the Twentieth corps, and to him belongs no small share of the glory of its achievements. At Resaca, New

Hope Church and in front of Atlanta on the 20th of July he won imperishable honors.

Irrespective of his services in battle, the manner in which he has discharged the ordinary duties of his profession from the incipency of the rebellion to the present time, reflects the highest credit upon his intelligence, fidelity and patriotism.

With these opinions of General Williams, I may safely say that I know of no one in the army more deserving of preferment. Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

Joseph Hooker, Major Gen'l Commanding.

Official copy, Samuel W. Taylor, Capt. and A. D. C.

Sherman's Tribute.

General W. T. Sherman, writing in 1878 to Major Farquhar, adds his recollections of Williams in these words:

"General Williams commanded a division of the Twelfth corps which was sent so rapidly from the east to Tennessee under Gen. Hooker to reinforce the army of the Cumberland after the battle of Chickamauga. I myself at that time was hurrying for the same object from Memphis, with the army of the Tennessee. The great battle was fought at Chattanooga, and then was made the combinations for the final critical campaign of the war. The Eleventh and Twelfth corps were consolidated into the Twentieth corps, commanded by Gen. Hooker, with Gen. A. S. Williams commanding the first division of that corps, and the senior division commander in that corps.

"In May, 1864, I succeeded Gen. U. S. Grant in command of the grand army designed to advance into the enemy's country from that quarter, and was most fortunate in my command of the fighting divisions. Up to that date we were absolute strangers, but my personal acquaintance then began and ripened into friendship, which was close and mutual, to the day of his death.

"To recount his services during the eventful years of 1864 and 1865 would require a minute history of all the operations of that army; for Gen. Williams participated in every movement and every battle from Chattanooga till the close of the war, always in command of a division, and of his whole corps on the capture of Atlanta and up to Goldsborough, North Carolina, a period of upwards of eight months; always most active, and eminently qualified by nature and experience. He had the love and respect of his command in an eminent degree; like his prototype, Gen. Thomas, the soldiers styled him "Pap Williams."

"Though eminently an officer of action, he had the patience and affability of manners which won the love and veneration of his men. Frequently in our long dreary marches I rode by his side, and was often delighted with his cheerful disposition and his wit. On one occasion he told me that in a certain Wis-

consin regiment of his were some Winnebago Indians. In passing this regiment he inquired of one of the Indian soldiers what he thought of our march below Atlanta into Georgia. 'Ugh! A big hunt!' was the reply."

Written in History.

From the "History of the Twelfth-Twentieth Corps," by Col. Wm. F. Fox, this extract is taken. With it let us close the many expressions of leading officers of his several commands, though others mention him in the same kindly strain and with equal sincerity.

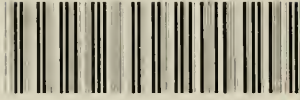
"Gen. Williams," says Fox in his history, "commanded the Twelfth corps with signal ability at Antietam and Gettysburg; commanded the Twentieth corps during a portion of the Atlanta campaign and from Atlanta to Goldsborough, North Carolina. He commanded the famous Red Star Division in the Shenandoah Valley in the spring of 1862, and was at its head during the entire war, except when in command of the corps. He never missed a battle. He was never absent from the army on any campaign. On every battlefield where his troops were engaged he displayed marked ability and achieved marked success. Through all his long and brilliant service not an error or mistake has ever been laid to his charge."

The story here—inadequate and all too fragmentary as it proves—reveals at least the proof that in Williams Michigan had a soldier of the first rank, conspicuous among a brilliant array of comrades. The neglect of Stanton to reward him in a manner most gratifying to the heart of a soldier—that is by promotion well earned, and strongly recommended by his superior officers—should cause our own people to think of some proper monument to preserve the glorious memory of Williams. None of the great men Michigan has produced better deserves such recognition than General Alphens S. Williams. In no more fitting way can the good people of his home city demonstrate to posterity their opinion of the worth of the man. To do that will be to honor ourselves, and to teach the youth of our land a stirring lesson of patriotism.





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