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GOUVERNEUR KEMBLE WARREN.

No. 1451. Class of 1850.

Died August 8, 1882, at Newport, R. I., aged 52 years.

Warren Kemble Warren

It would be useless to attempt within our narrow limits to review the life work of a man so distinguished in many fields of honorable ambition as was General WARREN. His scientific record will find a place in the memoirs of the National Academy of Sciences, of which he was long a member. It is peculiarly for us, sons of a common *alma mater*, to cherish the memory of his soldierly achievements, which have reflected honor upon ourselves and upon our profession.

GOUVERNEUR KEMBLE WARREN was born on January 8, 1830, at the village of Cold Spring, within hearing of the morning and evening gun at West Point. He was the fourth in a family of twelve children—eight sons and four daughters. As a boy he was educated at the schools of his native place, and for one year at Kinsley's Classical and Mathematical School near West Point, where he was a student when his Cadet appointment was received.

He entered the Military Academy on July 1, 1846, at the early age of sixteen, and was graduated on July 1, 1850, standing second in a class of forty-four members. He was at once assigned to the Corps of Topographical Engineers, in the grade of Brevet Second Lieutenant.

The first duty which devolves upon a young officer often exerts an enduring influence upon his professional character; and Lieutenant WARREN was fortunate in the experience which he gained as assistant to Captain (now General) Humphreys upon the investigations and surveys of the Mississippi delta. The work was onerous, and peculiar circumstances threw him into more than usually intimate relations with his chief, for whom he formed a strong personal attachment which lasted through life.

Lieutenant WARREN's first opportunity for original research occurred in 1854, when he was assigned to the duty of compiling a general map of the region west of the Mississippi. The country was then a wilderness intersected by a few lines of reconnoissance, and the work demanded laborious and judicious analysis. The resulting map and memoir, dated in 1858, exhausts all valuable material from the earliest discoveries to its date, and will remain a standard historical authority. This work was performed under the pressure of other duties and largely at night. During its progress he devoted much labor to the joint report (1854) of Captain Humphreys and himself upon Pacific Railroad explorations, and also conducted three separate explorations in Dakota and Nebraska.

The first of these explorations was made as the Engineer officer of General Harney's staff, in his campaign against the hostile Sioux, memorable for the victory of Blue Water Creek on September 3, 1855. One little incident connected with this expedition illustrates

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WARREN'S character. He had been sent up the Missouri to Fort Pierre on duty, while the column was forming at Fort Kearny. Time was lacking to rejoin General Harney by water before the march began. The direct overland route (300 miles) led through the heart of the enemy's country and was wholly untravelled and unknown. Against the earnest advice of his brother officers at Fort Pierre, including the commanding officer who regarded his destruction as certain, WARREN organized a little band of seven half breeds and prairie men, successfully made the march in two weeks, and mapped his route. This exploit, apparently so rash, was in truth the result of an intelligent study of the chances. The weather was yet too warm for the probable formation of roaming war parties, especially as it was the season for making "sweet corn." By using no tents or fires at night, and by marching under cover of darkness when near an enemy, WARREN reasoned that the well armed and alert little band could run the gauntlet—and he was right. Throughout his life he never lacked sagacity to plan or courage to execute.

Lieutenant WARREN'S explorations of 1856 and 1857, covering many hundred miles, were made with small parties among powerful and semi-hostile tribes, for the purpose of obtaining the information necessary for subduing them and for opening the country to civilization. He was the first explorer of the now celebrated Black Hills, passing through their eastern, southern, and western outskirts. His well digested report and military map of Nebraska and Dakota have been of great value, both in the development of the country and for the scientific information that they contain.

After nine years of this varied and active service, Lieutenant WARREN was ordered in 1859 to West Point, in the department of

mathematics, and he remained there until the outbreak of the civil war.

He brought to the strife an intellect fitted for high command, a courage which knew no fear and shrunk from no responsibility, a judgment ripened by responsible duties, an earnest patriotism free from fanatical bias, and an energy so indomitable that it carried his delicate frame through labors and exposures which broke down many men of stronger physique. Like most soldiers of conscious ability, he despised the vulgar arts and clap-trap which form the stock in trade of coarser natures; and his magnanimity to the vanquished equalled his stubborn persistence during the contest.

The position of Lieutenant-Colonel of the Fifth New York Volunteers was very early tendered to Lieutenant WARREN; and having received a leave of absence with permission to accept a volunteer command, he was mustered into the service in that grade on May 14, 1861. The regiment, as soon as organized at Fort Schuyler, was ordered to report to General Butler at Fortress Monroe, and at once proceeded south by sea. It came under fire for the first time in the affair at Big Bethel, fought on June 10, 1861, where Lieutenant-Colonel WARREN was conspicuous for coolness and good judgment. He was the very last to leave the field, having remained to rescue at the risk of his life the body of his friend, Lieutenant John T. Greble, Second Artillery—the first in our little band of regular officers to die for the cause of National unity. WARREN went back with about ten men, on learning of his death, and leaving them under cover advanced alone and carried the body in his arms to an abandoned limber, which was then drawn off by the party.

On August 31, 1861, he was promoted to be Colonel of the

Fifth New York. During the remainder of the year the regiment was stationed in Baltimore, where it was engaged in constructing the large earth-work on Federal Hill, and in receiving the thorough drilling which made it confessedly one of the very best regiments in the service.*

When the Army of the Potomac moved to the Peninsula in the spring of 1862, the Fifth New York accompanied it. Before Yorktown it formed part of the siege train under the command of General Barry, Chief of Artillery, Colonel WARREN in addition doing much personal reconnoitering of the enemy's lines as an Engineer. The regiment was in camp near General McClellan's headquarters; and no officer who witnessed the daily dress parades of his 800 soldiers in brilliant zouave uniform and splendidly drilled, could fail to recognize the skill of the young Colonel as a disciplinarian and regimental commander.

After the advance began (on May 24), Colonel WARREN was assigned to the command of the Third Brigade in Sykes' Division of the Fifth Army Corps, consisting of his own and two other Infantry Regiments, a Cavalry Regiment, and a Light Battery. With this Brigade he covered the extreme right of the army; and took part in the capture of Hanover Court House; the pursuit of Stuart's cavalry after the brilliant raid round our rear (marching his Infantry 43 miles in 37 hours); the battle of Gaines' Mill, where he was slightly wounded, and his horse was twice shot under him;

* The Prince de Joinville in 1862, in writing of our volunteer army, said:

"Sometimes an officer of the regular army, desirous of distinguishing himself, and having enough of influence in his State, raised a regiment and obtained from it an admirable result. Thus, a young Engineer Lieutenant named WARREN was marvellously successful with the Fifth New York Regiment, of which he was the Colonel. That regiment served as Engineers and Artillery in the siege of Yorktown; and having again become Infantry conducted itself as the most veteran troops at the battles of the Chickahominy, where it lost half its force."

the affair at Malvern Hill on June 30, and the great battle there of the following day. The Brigade lost 60 or 70 men killed and 150 wounded in these operations, chiefly in the battle of Gaines' Mill, and Colonel WARREN was highly commended for gallantry and good conduct.

After leaving the Peninsula, Colonel WARREN's brigade was landed at Aquia Creek and took part in the movements of the Fifth Corps to reinforce General Pope. In the desperate battle fought near Manassas, on August 30, 249 out of the 490 soldiers of his own regiment were killed and wounded, and his bull-dog tenacity did much to cover the withdrawal of the remnants of the Corps.

Recommended by his superior officers, and urgently pressed by General McClellan, he was appointed on September 26, 1862, Brigadier-General of Volunteers for distinguished conduct at the battle of Gaines' Mill. He had in the meantime been engaged with his brigade in the Maryland campaign and the battle of Antietam. His command passed through Harper's Ferry on November 1, marched to Falmouth, and took part in the Rappahannock campaign and the battle of Fredericksburg.

While the army lay in the winter cantonments General WARREN did much individual work in reconnoitering and correcting the maps; and finally, on February 2, 1863, he was ordered as Chief Topographical Engineer to the staff of General Hooker, who had just assumed command of the Army of the Potomac. The two Corps of Engineers were consolidated by Act of Congress approved March 3, 1863; and on June 8, General WARREN was appointed Chief Engineer of the Army of the Potomac, acting in that capacity until August 12. During the six months in which he thus served on the staff, his papers prove that he discharged highly responsible

duties. In the Chancellorsville campaign he took a gallant part in the action of Orange Pike, the storming of Marye's Heights, and the battle of Salem.

Few better illustrations of the intensity of life at this time can be given than the circumstances attending General WARREN's marriage with Miss Emily F. Chase of Baltimore, then residing with her father in that city. Hastening from the front, he arrived at 9 A. M. on June 17; was married at noon; and on the 20th was back at his post actively engaged in the movement toward Gettysburg. The life-long sympathy and love of his noble wife lightened many hours of despondency under the burden of wrongs which otherwise might have proved unendurable to a man of his proud and sensitive nature.

At Gettysburg, where he was slightly wounded, General WARREN brilliantly distinguished himself as an engineer staff officer. On the second day of the battle (July 2d), after a personal examination of the right of the line near Culp's Hill, where an offensive movement on our part was in contemplation, he was drawn to the left by Longstreet's furious attack. At the moment when Hood, having outflanked Sickles' Corps, was thrusting forward his right, WARREN had fortunately reached the bold and rocky spur called Little Round Top—the key to the whole Union position. It was entirely undefended, although occupied as a signal station. Appreciating the vital importance of the Confederate movement, WARREN ordered the signal men, who were preparing to avoid capture by flight, to continue waving their flags and thus preserve a semblance of occupation while he hurried for troops. He soon encountered the head of Sykes' column hastening to support Sickles, and assumed the responsibility of diverting Vincent's

brigade to seize and occupy the hill, using General Meade's name as his staff officer. How gallantly this movement was executed in a desperate hand to hand conflict, in which Vincent and Weed, O'Rourke and Hazlitt, and hundreds of other soldiers in blue laid down their lives, is a matter of history. It was one of the many turning points of this, the supreme battle of the war, and but for WARREN's military *coup d'œil* and prompt acceptance of responsibility, Gettysburg might now be known as the grave of the Union.

The passage of the Potomac after the battle of Gettysburg, afforded an illustration of the curious expedients upon which the success of engineer operations often depends. The pontoons had been scuttled, and, as was supposed at the time, destroyed, in the preliminary operations of the campaign. It now became necessary to patch and repair the shattered boats at once; and at General WARREN's personal suggestion, this was done successfully with cracker-boxes obtained from the Subsistence Department.

On August 8 General WARREN was appointed Major-General of Volunteers, to date from May 3, when he had distinguished himself with General Sedgwick's column at the storming of Marye's Heights and the battle of Salem. On August 11 he was assigned to the temporary command of the Second Corps. He had thus in two years, without influence other than the recommendations of his commanding officers, fairly fought his way from the command of a regiment to that of an army corps.

His first important service in this grade occurred in Lee's flank march upon Centreville, in October, 1863. On the night of the 13th, when the Confederate army reached Warrenton, the Second Corps, forming the rear guard of the Army of the Potomac, bivouacked at Auburn, distant only about 5 miles. Neither army

commander knew accurately the position or line of march of the other, but both were manœuvring to bring on a decisive battle. The march ordered by General Meade for the Third, Fifth, and Second Corps on October 14 lay along the Alexandria Railroad toward Centreville, Lee's supposed objective. During the night of October 13 General Stuart, with a brigade of cavalry, found himself entangled among the Second Corps, and just before daylight opened suddenly with artillery upon the camp fires of Caldwell's division. An infantry attack by General Ewell followed promptly from the opposite direction. Although repelled, these attacks delayed the Second Corps; so that when it reached Bristoe Station a small gap existed between its leading division (Webb's) and the rear of the Fifth Corps, next in advance. The head of General A. P. Hill's Corps struck this gap and immediately attacked. The moment was critical, but General WARREN, who was on the spot, was equal to the emergency. With the utmost promptitude his two leading divisions were faced to the left and hurried forward under fire to seize the railroad embankment and cut, thus securing a strong line. A sharp attack by General Hill in line of battle was vigorously repulsed, and 450 prisoners, 2 stands of colors, and 5 pieces of artillery, were captured. WARREN held this position for some hours with a force of less than 8,000 men, confronting the whole of Hill's Corps (numbering about 17,000 men), gradually increased by the whole of Ewell's Corps during the afternoon. At dark he was reinforced by part of the Fifth Corps; and during the night was ordered to continue his march toward Centreville. He crossed Bull Run about 4 A. M. with his wounded and captures, having in 24 hours twice repulsed the enemy in superior force and marched over 25 miles. The total loss of the Second Corps in

killed and wounded was 433 officers and enlisted men; and of the Confederates, in killed and wounded, 782 officers and enlisted men. General Humphreys, then Chief of Staff of the Army of the Potomac, writes: "The handling of the Second Corps in this operation, and the promptitude, skill, and spirit with which the enemy was met were admirable, and might form an excellent model for the conduct of the rear guard."

General Meade, in an order published to the Army, said: "The skill and promptitude of Major-General WARREN and the gallantry and bearing of the officers and soldiers of the Second Corps, are entitled to high commendation."

General WARREN'S next conspicuous service was in the Mine Run movement of November, 1863. On the 29th, with his own Corps and a division of the Sixth, he reached a position on the extreme right of the enemy, which, after careful examination, he reported favorable for assault. General Meade ordered a combined attack, to begin by an assault by WARREN'S command (reinforced during the night by two divisions of the Third Corps) at 8 o'clock on the following morning. At daylight General WARREN discerned that the opportunity had passed; for during the night reinforcements had arrived and had so strongly entrenched the position as in his belief to render its capture hopeless. He had the moral courage to assume the responsibility of suspending the movement; and general Meade after an immediate personal inspection confirming his judgment, the useless effusion of blood was spared. This action of a young General in temporary command of a Corps, displaying a willingness to sacrifice his own future prospects rather than squander the lives of his soldiers, illustrates the character of the man.

At the reorganization of the Army of the Potomac into three Corps for the Richmond campaign, General WARREN was assigned by the President (March 24, 1864) to the permanent command of the Fifth Corps. Space is lacking to trace his personal career during the year in which he held this high command. It will find a place in every true history of the war. Suffice it to say that he played a conspicuous and honorable part in the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna, Bethesda Church, Cold Harbor, and especially in the numerous battles around Petersburg. Everything that ability and skill, and personal gallantry and devotion to the cause could do, WARREN did; and he received the highest reward of a successful General—the confidence, the love, and the support of his soldiers. This latter is no vague statement; but is based upon the personal knowledge of the writer at the time, confirmed by many letters from officers of distinction now on file. Indeed the wildly enthusiastic greeting of the whole Fifth Corps on its return through Petersburg, establishes its truth beyond cavil.

We come now to the battle of Five Forks. The operations which culminated in this decisive action are fully established by sworn testimony before the Court of inquiry which General WARREN, after nearly fifteen years of persistent effort, succeeded in obtaining from the President. Space permits a brief summary only of the more salient points; but history cannot now fail to do him ample justice.

At sunset of March 31 the Fifth Corps occupied the extreme left of the Union position; and General Sheridan's cavalry was at Dinwiddie Court House—distant about five miles to the left and rear. Both had been severely attacked during the day, and the latter was still confronted by infantry and cavalry. At 8.40 P. M.

General WARREN himself suggested that he be allowed to move in force against the rear of the enemy operating against General Sheridan. On his own responsibility, as early as 5 P. M., he had dispatched a strong brigade with orders to attack that force; and in consequence of this movement the Confederates withdrew during the night from General Sheridan's front.

About 7 A. M. of April 1, the Fifth Corps and the cavalry effected a junction, and under command of General Sheridan prepared for a combined attack upon the enemy—then at Five Forks, a detached position about four miles to the westward of the Confederate main intrenched line before Petersburg. The country was much wooded. The cavalry was early disposed along the enemy's front, the Fifth Corps (12,000 men) being left massed at J. Boissseau's until ordered forward about 1 P. M. About 4 P. M. it had advanced about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, and formed near Gravelly Run Church ready to assault.

General Sheridan's purpose was to crush and turn the Confederate left flank with the Fifth Corps, at the same time assaulting their line of battle in front with his cavalry.

The Fifth Corps advanced as directed by General Sheridan, Ayres' division on the left, Crawford's on the right, and Griffin's in reserve. The indicated point of attack lay too far to the right. Ayres soon received a sharp fire on his left flank from the return which formed the extreme left of the Confederate position. He promptly changed front, assaulted and finally handsomely carried this angle, taking many prisoners. This movement left the other divisions advancing in air with only a cavalry force to oppose them, and WARREN hastened in person to change Crawford's direction to the left, having previously sent orders to Griffin to move

to his left and come in on the right of Ayres. The country was rough and wooded, and the position of the enemy had been supposed by General Sheridan to extend much more to the eastward than was actually the case. Hence the primary importance of these movements, in order to bring the whole Fifth Corps into action.

In this difficult task WARREN was everywhere—first with Crawford's division, establishing the new line of advance; then with Griffin, directing him upon the enemy lying along the west side of the Sydnor field—whose exact position he had just discovered by drawing their fire upon himself; then to Ayres, finding him in possession of the angle with many prisoners; then back to Crawford, and conducting the advance through the woods so as continually to outflank the enemy in his attempt to form new lines to cover his natural retreat (the Ford Road) and to hold the position at the forks. Finally Crawford's division, still accompanied by WARREN, and having swept everything before it, found itself on the east side of the Gilliam field, but somewhat disorganized by the fighting through difficult woods. Confronting it on the west side was a new and last line of the enemy slightly intrenched.

Here a pause occurred, and personal magnetism seemed called for to lead on the troops who for the moment had lost their organizations in the confusion. WARREN having discharged the more pressing duty of directing the whole force of his Corps upon the enemy, now found time to yield to his natural impulse. He seized his headquarters flag, rode into the opening, and calling on the color-bearers to advance, led the charge. His horse fell dead under him close to the enemy's lines; an orderly by his side was killed; and his own life was probably saved by the gallant act of Colonel Richardson, Seventh Wisconsin, who sprang between him

and the enemy, receiving a severe wound. This charge put an end to all resistance. Surrounded by his captures and flushed with victory, WARREN sent back a staff officer to report to General Sheridan and ask for further orders.

These orders came in writing. They relieved him from the command of his Corps and ordered him to report to General Grant.

If the bullet which killed his horse had pierced the heart of the rider, WARREN, like Wolfe dying upon the Heights of Abraham, would have gone down in history the hero of the battle. This order, more cruel than the bullet, doubtless caused his death after seventeen years of suffering which intimate friends who understood his sensitive organization can alone appreciate. It is pitiful that one of his last requests was to be laid in the grave without the usual military ceremonial, without soldierly emblems on his coffin, or uniform upon his body. The iron had entered his soul.

General Grant, on April 3, assigned him to the command of the defenses of Petersburg and the South Side Railroad, and on May 14 he was transferred to the important command of the Department of Mississippi; but on May 27, as soon as he felt assured that the fighting was over, he resigned his volunteer commission of Major-General, and returned to duty as Major in the Corps of Engineers. He received several brevets in the regular army for gallant and distinguished services in battle, but with such a record as his they need not be named.

Of his services in the civil branches of his profession since the war, I shall here say nothing. They covered a wide range of subjects, and would give him prominence among eminent engineers in any country. The Corps order of General Wright, announcing

his death, contains the following fitting tribute to these labors: "In scientific investigations General WARREN had few superiors; and his elaborate reports on some of the most important works which have been confided to the Corps of Engineers are among the most valuable contributions to its literature."

The lives of few graduates more perfectly illustrate the fruits of what we are proud to call West Point culture than that of General WARREN. Everything with him was subordinated to duty, and he put forth his whole strength in whatever he had to do. His tastes were cultivated and refined, and his reading in both literature and science was extensive. A man of warm affections and sympathetic nature, he was ever ready to listen to the cry of distress. Even after his long experience in war, the misery of the wounded and the severe hardships of all his soldiers in some of the winter movements south of Petersburg, so touched his heart that he wrote to his brother: "I do not feel it much in my own person, but I sympathize so much with the suffering around me that it seems at times I can hardly endure it." He is now peacefully at rest beyond the reach of praise or censure; but his memory is a sacred legacy to West Point and to the Army of the Potomac. There is no nobler name upon either roll.

(Henry L. Abbot.)

John K. Warren



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