OBITUARY OF GENERAL FRENCH

by

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General Wm H. French whose death has been recently announced to the Army and the country was appointed from the District of Columbia a cadet in the United States Military Academy and entered that institution July 1st ~~1833~~ 1833. He graduated July 1st 1837 and received the commission of Second Lieutenant in the First regiment of U.S. artillery.

This Class of 1837 bears a number of names which are very familiar to the Army, several of whom enjoy a national reputation, as those of Gens. H. W. Belknap, Braxton Bragg, A.B. Dyer, Israel Vogdes, Thomas Williams (Killed in the defense of Baton Rouge Aug. 5. 1862), J. D. Townsend, Jubal A. Early, John Sedgwick (Killed in a reconnaissance near Spotsylvania, May 9. 1864) J. C. Pemberton & Joseph Hooker. We notice also the name of Colonel Edward J. Steptoe in the same class, whose record is familiar in Indian Warfare, With the above Generals or against them General French has had a long & well known service. In the Florida ~~& Seminole~~ or Seminole war, in the Cherokee removal of Indians, in the various battles of the Mexican war, we find

him prominent among his companions
in arms. He served there in different capacities
sometimes as adjutant General, sometimes
as ~~a Staff~~ an aide de Camp and for the
greater part of the time as an Artillery officer
in ~~charge~~ command of Troops. He was
brevetted twice for gallant & meritorious
service in Mexico; the highest grade being
~~that~~ of major. Just at the close of the
Mexican campaign he was promoted to
a Captaincy in his regiment.
His drawing ~~in~~ work was accomplished
during the rebellion of the seceding States.
He found him, a major of Artillery, on the frontier at Fort
Duncan Texas. He saved his command from
the enemy by abandoning that Post & marching
his force to the mouth of the Rio Grande as early
as February 1861 where he succeeded in
embarking it & in distributing it to the
Forts on the Florida coast. He was kept
at Key West, ~~in~~ of that State, till November
1861. He appears then Major Sumner's ability
& gallantry had been noticed, for he received in
at Washington
September 1861 a promotion to the rank
of Brigadier General of Volunteers and was
ordered North to the Defenses of Washington.
During the fall & winter of 1861 & 1862 he had
a brigade in General Sumner's Division in
front of Alexandria. This he diligently reorganized &

prepared by discipline & drill for the
ensuing eventful year. General
Sumner had great confidence in
General French's excellent military
judgment. His wide experience & thorough
military knowledge especially fitted
him to ~~drill~~ organize & discipline
the new regiments committed to his
care. Early in March 1862 Sumner's
command began its advance. The
retirement of the enemy from his front
at Centerville caused this advance
which had for its object to determine
certainly the fact of the retreat & to
pursue Stuart's Cavalry beyond the
Rappahannock. All this was preparatory
to following the remainder of McClellan's
army as a rear guard by means of steamer
transportation to the peninsula of Virginia.

Gen. French bore an active &
distinguished part in these preliminary
operations. Then followed that series of
battles, after the siege of Yorktown, Williamsburg
Fair Oaks in each of which he took a prominent part.
Seven Pines &c &c on to Malvern Hill.
Gen. French kept on the advanced lines ~~of~~ on
~~the~~ the 2nd day of Fair Oaks (or Seven Pines
as the confederates call the battle) He was
so marked ~~that~~ day that he received the
brevet of Lieutenant Colonel in the Regular Army

for gallant and meritorious conduct in the action. The conflict was for a part of that day as ~~closely as~~ severe and the battle as closely contested as any ~~that~~ took place during the war. The timely operations of Sumner's corps. ~~[illegible]~~ a brigade ~~division~~ of which Gen. French commanded certainly saved the left of McClellan's army from a terrible defeat. French's brigade occupied a most important position in Sumner's advance and did there cheerful gallant & persistent service.

It would require more space that is given to this paper to follow General French through the various campaigns & the dozen battles of the armies ~~army~~ of the East in which he was actively engaged during the Rebellion. At Chancellorsville his Division, the second day, was deployed & put into action not far from the Chancellorsville house. It was formed in an opening & marched into a wood where the firing was ~~very~~ constant & severe. The bullets hissing ~~coming~~ ~~thro~~ between the trees with fearful effect. It was noticed & remarked that not one man of French's gallant Division straggled, or fell out from the ranks, till the

the wounding or the death stroke made vacant places. The Division pressed forward into the brisk action ~~to~~ with its brave commander to do most effective work in checking the progress of the hitherto successful assailants. For this action General French was Brevetted a Brig Gen. in the regular Army. This brevet was soon followed by that of Major General for gallant & meritorious service during the Rebellion.

The subject of this sketch ~~was~~ became colonel of the 4th artillery before his retirement from the Active Service.

~~Gen~~ French was a large sized man about six feet in ~~high~~ height. ~~In~~ this later life he was quite fleshy. He was of marked presence, evidently a man of ~~strong~~ decided individuality, very ~~decided~~ positive in his convictions & faithful to his ideas of duty. He was one of our strong, patriotic souls. ~~To whom~~ such as he the country owes its very existence. Gen. French's companions & friends remember him with esteem & affection and he justly holds a high place on the roll of Honor.