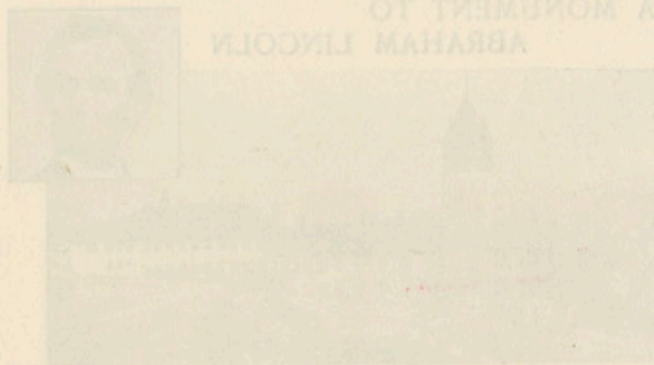


ABRAHAM LINCOLN
A MONUMENT TO



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No.8, Vol.9.

SUBJECT.

Personal Recollections of
General George H. Thomas and Others.

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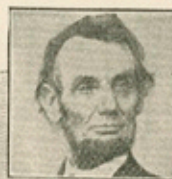
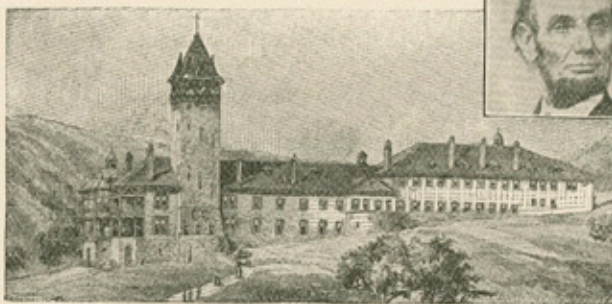
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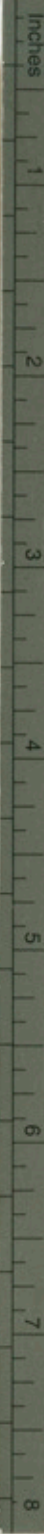
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Personal Recollections of General George H. Thomas and Some Others. by Gen. O. O. Howard.

George H. Thomas is like ^{some} ~~a~~ classic character of ancient history whose deeds and words have wonderfully moved mankind; but concerning whom little is known except ^{his} those deeds and words.

I said of him yesterday at Chautauqua in a public lecture: "Robert E. Lee was a great General; he gave a race to all the commanders in the east from McClellan through Burnside, Hooker, Meade, Pope, on to Grant, and was much ~~beloved~~ ^{esteemed} and trusted by his new Government and more so by the confederates under his command; Stonewall Jackson, too, a strong christian character was much beloved by his soldiers and by his fellow officers, justly so; but the Civil War did not furnish from Virginia a greater man or a better General than George H. Thomas. He was indeed from youth to manhood and from manhood to the end of his remarkable career a ~~soldier~~ man, sans peur et



sans raproche, a veritable chevalier of honor where the motto in his heart was evident to all who had to do with him, namely, noblesse oblige under all circumstances.

Here is an incident of his youth that will interest comrades of the war. "The notion came to me ^{Sawyer} while I was thinking of mechanical constructions to make a saddle. Every day I went to the saddle-shop and watched the operatives. I saw how each part was cut out and prepared, and how the parts were put together. I then went home and experimented, in time succeeding in completing a saddle."

Another time closely observing a cabinet maker and trying his hand he acquired skill in that trade. Without being a professional he soon found that he had ability to make from leather, wood, and the metals various serviceable articles; but he thought himself that the best result from this practical work was what our old Professor Mahan used to call "common sense"; to wit, a habit of close observation.

Everybody knows that Thomas graduated from ^{West Point} ~~the military academy~~ ^{well}. What Ben Butler said of another officer, General Heitzel, an engineer officer, "He was a man whom West Point could not spoil," was eminently true of Thomas ^{no professional school could spoil him}.

- (1) His career before the war was distinguished and he was surely ^{in the south} ~~intended~~ to be no cipher in secession times; ^{He was chosen for promotion} by the southern leaders who of course did not know in the outset all the future. An Act of Congress added four new regiments to the army - two were of cavalry. ^{of those the} The Second Cavalry, ^{one} as created by the law, had in the beginning a remarkable ^{body} of officers. Just think of it! For Colonel Albert Sidney Johnson; for Lieut-Colonel Robert E. Lee; for Senior Major W. G. Hardee, and for Junior Major George H. Thomas! The three first went into the Confederacy so that it came to pass in a brief space of time that Thomas, ^{already} scarred in his chin and in his breast by ugly wounds, became almost at the opening of the Civil War the Colonel of his regiment.

The ^{last of June, 1861} ~~second of July~~ the Hon. John Sherman made a visit to a camp on the upper Potomac.

and ~~gave~~ ^{gave} a graphic description of how he found his brother Wm Tecumseh and George H. Thomas down on their knees studying the maps of the neighborhood on both sides of the Potomac. He studied ~~everything~~ that concerned his profession with thoroughness and acuity, and this made him remarkable for his sound judgment.

Sherman was quick to take in a map or a territory; but Thomas excelled in discerning all there was to know and particularly where his enemy was and what he was intending to do.

Singularly enough the 2^d day of July, the date of the battle of Falling Waters pitted these two Virginians against each other, namely Stonewall Jackson and George H. Thomas. They here received their first baptism of fire. Here Greek met Greek. - Thomas conscientiously fighting for his whole country and Jackson equally sincere doing his best for an anticipated fragment thereof.

Naturally enough Thomas' loyalty to the Union was suspected before that battle and even after that many ^{wagged} tongues said bitter things, - many on both sides.

inches 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

and ~~some~~ as ~~perhaps~~ ~~discussions~~ of law by
found the ~~fact~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~unusually~~ ~~and~~ ~~large~~ ~~number~~
them on their ~~business~~ ~~staying~~ ~~the~~ ~~upper~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~
highly ~~valued~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~higher~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~country~~
the ~~entire~~ ~~country~~ ~~that~~ ~~is~~ ~~now~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~
profession ~~with~~ ~~these~~ ~~years~~ ~~and~~ ~~industry~~
and the ~~work~~ ~~has~~ ~~been~~ ~~unusually~~ ~~for~~ ~~some~~
independent.
the ~~mission~~ ~~was~~ ~~given~~ ~~to~~ ~~take~~ ~~in~~ ~~a~~ ~~very~~
in a ~~short~~ ~~time~~ ~~the~~ ~~mission~~ ~~was~~ ~~filled~~ ~~in~~ ~~discharge~~
all the ~~work~~ ~~that~~ ~~had~~ ~~not~~ ~~yet~~ ~~been~~ ~~done~~ ~~and~~
the ~~mission~~ ~~was~~ ~~and~~ ~~what~~ ~~he~~ ~~was~~ ~~intending~~ ~~to~~
do.
I ~~was~~ ~~highly~~ ~~impressed~~ ~~the~~ ~~idea~~ ~~of~~ ~~helping~~ ~~the~~
lot of the ~~people~~ ~~of~~ ~~rolling~~ ~~water~~ ~~filled~~
these two ~~missions~~ ~~against~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~people~~
Stonewall ~~Jackson~~ ~~and~~ ~~George~~ ~~A~~ ~~Thomas~~ ~~they~~
has ~~received~~ ~~their~~ ~~first~~ ~~offer~~ ~~of~~ ~~aid~~ ~~there~~
back ~~with~~ ~~back~~ ~~Thomas~~ ~~unusually~~
fighting ~~for~~ ~~his~~ ~~whole~~ ~~country~~ ~~and~~ ~~people~~
especially ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~line~~ ~~of~~ ~~aid~~ ~~for~~ ~~our~~
the ~~entire~~ ~~country~~ ~~that~~ ~~is~~ ~~now~~ ~~and~~ ~~the~~
Naturally ~~the~~ ~~people~~ ~~of~~ ~~rolling~~ ~~water~~ ~~filled~~
Union ~~was~~ ~~unaffected~~ ~~before~~ ~~the~~ ~~war~~ ~~and~~
even ~~after~~ ~~that~~ ~~they~~ ~~had~~ ~~been~~ ~~and~~ ~~better~~
things ~~was~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~line~~ ~~of~~ ~~aid~~ ~~for~~ ~~our~~

5.

General Robert Anderson, the hero of Ft Sumter was to have a command on the Ohio. It was the army that finally grew into The Army of the Cumberland. After his name was mentioned he hastened to see Scott and Lincoln. He already had a promise of W. Sherman for a subordinate. "Grant me," he said, "a great favor, I want Thomas." Being asked by somebody in the presence of Lincoln if Thomas could be trusted, Anderson replied, "Yes, I will guarantee his loyalty with my life!"

So he went out to Kentucky in August, 1861, a Brigadier General and took charge of a queer camp called "Dick Robinson". One might denominate it a hatcher of armies. Think of the hundreds of regiments that went in to that camp to come out brigades and divisions, fairly well instructed and supplied.

Thomas did show a little ^{ambitious} spirit in his steady, strong, firm and deliberate work where he was bringing order out of confusion. He declined up and down to be placed under the command of a junior, and Sherman managed generously to

send off all the great men who came from Washington to supersede him, till Thomas had a field division ~~already~~ ready and mobilized.

Think of the good news that came to us the 19th of January, 1862, when things were dark and good tidings infrequent. It was the Battle of Mill Springs. A thing hard to do. Thomas concentrated his forces straight in front of ^{algebraic} ~~his~~ ^{in position} enemy, the famous General Crittenden who had about as many men as Thomas himself. Gollicoffer was the real field commander. The battle was severe, lasting two days. Thomas increasing ^{in force} in spirit and determination all the while. The Confederates were badly beaten, Gollicoffer slain and the entire opposing ^{arms} force fronting Thomas' position was broken up and driven across the Cumberland. The news was refreshing to the country but for some reason our royal Virginian was not even mentioned in the War Department dispatches and received no thanks. It takes time for jealousy, ambition and calumny to ensnare themselves; but time is long and justice never dies! The country knew George H. Thomas after that victory.

and off all the great men into camp from
Washington to supervise them, all manner
had a field dinner already and
indignity.
I think of the great men that came to us
the 19th of January, 1862, when things were
back and good tidings in the air. It was
the Battle of Mill Springs.
to do them. I remember that his father
struggle in front of the enemy, the former
General Crittenden who had been a man
man as there himself. I believe was the
first field commander. The battle was over
before the day. There is something in spirit
and determination all the while. The Captain
who were fully beaten. I believe they and
the entire opposing force. I believe there
position was broken up and taken, and
the Cumberland. The river was refilling
the country but for some reason or other
I believe was not even mentioned in the War
Department's dispatches and indeed no thanks
at that time for his services. I believe and
courage to conquer the world; but there is
long and quiet river life. The country
has changed to them after that victory.

[Special Characteristics]

Thomas' influence over men was a sort of magnetism. It was greater than could be explained. Some word to indicate father was always applied to him. He was a father to his soldiers. He had some hobbies - one was order. I think he had eaten and digested Pope's phrases in his Essay on Man "Order is Heaven's first law." One hobby was that soldiers should ride their horses, except in a charge or when on orderly duty at a fast walk. Sometimes he seemed to have more compassion for the horse and the mule than for many ^{riders} ~~men~~. Another hobby was to have arms and equipments complete and clean. Another ^{still} was a sufficiency of supply, thought out beforehand and ready for work. When his tools, ^{inasmuch} were once in order he was not reluctant nor slow, as some people said, ^{or reluctant} to use them.

Thomas always showed steadiness in habits of life. He weighed some two hundred and thirty pounds and had frame enough to carry the weight. He planted his foot squarely on the ground. His gait, in movement, ~~in moral~~ and in mental operations, ^{was like} his steadiness and firmness were characteristic. He loved deliberation and would have made just the kind of a man for the Supreme Court.

v. e. a solid judge. He would not hasten his decisions unless forced by the enemy to do so. As he belonged to the artillery he enjoyed being near the cannon in action, and seemed to grow clear-headed, and often animated when directing the part that batteries were to play on a disputed field. He adhered to ~~an~~ ^a principle, to an undertaking once begun, to an opinion once formed or a decision once made with wonderful ^{with} unflinching tenacity.

So, we found that the troops he trained partook largely of his characteristics.

They had steadiness of movement, persistency in march, firmness of stand and hence attained great reliability in battle.

It is one of the old stories that during Thomas' sleep after he had worked so nobly and successfully in managing his part of the force at Stone River Rosecrans awakened him and put the imperious question "General Thomas, will you protect the rear during a ~~retreat~~ retreat to Overall's Creek?" Thomas, tho' half awake in a sonorous voice, a little grumpy I have no doubt, with solid emphasis made a prompt answer.

9 "This army ain't retreat." after that he fell asleep and the army did not retreat. but the Confederates did. A few hours before that sleep he had brought his division out of such exceeding peril and so strongly established a new and reliable line that he was determined both for himself and for his commander never to give up their position. This time Rosecrans fortunately took the cue from him.

Thomas' stand at Chickamauga, near the Snodgrass Hill is too well known to bear repetition. He did stand there. He did gather around him those who were sensible enough to remain with him and he really did, by his personal example and influence over his men, save the Army of the Cumberland from destruction or surrender. This is my judgment, therefore I do not wonder that he was called ever after, "The Rock Chickamauga."

Van Horn grows eloquent over his beloved commander when he says: "To take command of half the army with no supporting cavalry; with exposed flanks and uncovered lines; to be supreme on the field by the demands of the situation rather than by the orders

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10 If a superior and under such circumstances to contend successfully against Bragg's army xxx was an achievement that transcends the higher successes of Generals."

The War Department began to wake up and the great War Secretary, Edwin M. Stanton began to recognize Thomas' merit and steadily growing reputation. Notice these words to his assistant secretary at Nashville, pregnant with a ~~appreciation~~ glad recognition. "The merits of General Thomas and the debt of gratitude the Nation owes to his valor and skill are fully appreciated here; and I wish you to tell him so. It is not my fault that he was not in chief command months ago."

The next month after that good dispatch on the 16th of October, 1863, Thomas was put in command of The Army of the Cumberland. Rosecrans was no cipher, as his war history will show; but it was a wise move on the part of the Government for various reasons which we will leave it to the historian to trace out. to change commanders as was done.

11 The situation at that time was by no means delightful, but with Thomas at Chattanooga and Grant set over the three western armies so that the three could co-operate and be made, when necessary to fight together daylight began to appear and strong hope of speedy relief from the threatened disaster became universal. Grant telegraphed Thomas: "Hold Chattanooga." Thomas replied at once "Will hold Chattanooga till we starve." The Army of the Cumberland thin in flesh, feeding on parched corn, and slender in waist, cheered Thomas' decision and strongly backed up his terse ~~resolutions~~ resolve. It was not long before Grant himself with Thomas and their capital engineer, Baldy Smith were riding together from hill to hill about Chattanooga and over Moccasin Point to catch a view of Brown's Ferry. The result of this conference and ride will now appear. It will show how starvation went out and abundance came in.

Grant ordered Hooker to push Howard's corps and Gargi's division from Bridgeport twenty-eight miles forward to Lookout Valley. Thomas

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sent two brigades from Chattanooga to meet Hooker on the south side of Brown's Ferry near the foot of the same valley. The sudden night fight that came on at Manhattee secured and sealed the short head-line and Thomas' hungry soldiers were glad. For the plan of this movement Grant generously gave to Thomas the whole credit. He telegraphed ^{from Chattanooga} to Washington the compliment he paid him; to wit, "Thomas' plan for securing the river and the South & side road, hence to Bridgeport, has proved eminently successful." Grant himself was always strong and fearless to strike the match whoever had made it and he was always too just to take to himself the credit of another.

Our work among the Chattanooga hills was indeed well planned and quickly executed. General Thomas had the satisfaction to see his soldiers pass in double time from dismay to confidence, from weakness to strength, from a rough valley siege to ridge top and mountain victories. This was the fact after Grant and Thomas took in the situation where Bragg's lofty

and the things you should do
to get the most of them
the first of them is to
the fight that comes in at the
and the second is to
and the third is to
to the plan of the movement
the fourth is to
the fifth is to
the sixth is to
the seventh is to
the eighth is to
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the hundredth is to

flags and animating cannon were in plain view. The battle of Missionary Ridge, the 25th of November, followed by the march of Sherman and myself to Knoxville wound up the series of operations in fine shape for the Union cause. The part Thomas played in this business is part of our history. Mark his judgment in council, his help in refitting, his disposition of forces and his choice of re-enforcements; in brief his energetic support of our great commander was thorough and happy.

First, Braxton Bragg was defeated and fled. Next Knoxville was relieved. All the ground was cleared of the enemy as far as Dalton, Ga. so that the troops spent the winter of '63 and '64 ~~with safety and~~ ^{with safety} in comparative ease and contentment in the vicinity of Chattanooga.

Thomas was Sherman's wheel horse when he advanced upon Dalton in May '64. He bore the brunt of the skirmishes, combats and battles till we neared Atlanta and resisted with tremendous energy and success the first onslaught of Hood at Peach Tree Creek the 20th of July. Sturdy, untiring,

uncomplaining, Thomas had pounded Joe Johnston's center so hard every day that he enabled Schofield or ~~me Sherman~~ to play upon the Confederate flanks, first one flank and then the other; and Johnston was obliged to keep his center there in force to be pounded.

The first of September at Jonesboro General Thomas brought up his troops and put them into action to the left of my command. For a time the battle was so exciting that Thomas' stout horse which hated to trot when laden with two hundred and thirty pounds actually roused himself to a gallop; while his master was furious at several stupid officers who had failed to comprehend the situation and secure a larger mead of victory.

Thomas went back to Nashville when Slocum, Kilpatrick and myself under Sherman's immediate eye set out for the sea. It required Schofield's fierce battle near Franklin to check Hood, and give Thomas time to organize the scattered fragments that were coming to him from

the four winds. At last all was ready. Hood and Thomas were fairly well entrenched. The cold and ice caused delays. Impatient authorities belabored Thomas till his sensitive heart was bleeding; he would retire from his command but he would not attack till his army and nature were ready. Then he did attack with a terrible vehemence. Hood's army was scattered. It was in fragments. It was wrecked against the Rock of Chickamunga.

There was no commander that was more acceptable to me than General Thomas. His smile of welcome was always pleasant and cordial. When I went from him into battle his words of confidence remained in my memory and quickened my action. If I succeeded I received his commendation. If my attack was repulsed he quickly discerned the cause. Some commanders would blame a subordinate to shield themselves. This Thomas never did.

Lee was a great ^{a great man,} General, and much and much beloved.

August 20
1900

(2000)

Oliver Otis Howard
Maj.-Gen. &c Retired

