

SPEECH.

Eleventh Corps Association Dinner,  
Dec. 15, 1892.

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No. 41, Vol. 10.

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SUBJECT.

Eleventh Army Corps.

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COMRADES:-

A heartfelt greeting to you one and all.

It is most fitting that the men who stood shoulder to shoulder and looked the enemy squarely in the eye and took part in so many of the hotly contested battles of the war, here in the East and in the far South and West, should renew their friendships formed under many trying circumstances, and what more appropriate place in all our broad land, than in this City over which we with other of our comrades, stood guard, and kept watch and ward during four long years of war, and preserved this the Nation's Capital to Our Country. It is also most proper and right that here and at this time our Corps should take its position in the Grand Old Army of the Potomac and fill in the space left for it and open our lips too long sealed and raise our voices in the recital of the part we took and speak of our deeds of valor in the great and bloody drama. It is a duty we must discharge; we owe it to the dead and the brave men who still survive. Fortunately for them and for us, the Corps in its selection of its historian, has chosen one well fitted to discharge the onerous duty, and to him I leave it, feeling doubly sure that it is in good hands and will be faithfully performed.

It is not generally known that portions of the 11th Corps were engaged in the very first battle of the war. I refer to the first battle of Bull Run, where Blenkens Division covered the retreat. At the second Bull Run, the first Army Corps of Virginia, afterwards known as the 11th Corps, made a stubborn fight for two days against overwhelming forces of the enemy.



COMRADES:-

A heartfelt greeting to you, comrades, from the  
it is most fitting that the men who stand shoulder to shoulder  
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many of the heroic and successful battles of the war, the  
East and in the far South and West, should know their friends  
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appropriate place in all our broad land, there in this City  
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enemy.



In October 1862 the Corps was under the command of Genl. Franz Sigel. A large number of new regiments were added to it from all sections of the Union, a majority of whose members were Americans. Some of the older regiments in the Corps were mainly Germans, but the American element predominated. Our first duty was to reinforce the Army under Burnside. After "St. Marys Heights" we took part in the so called "Mud March" in December 1862. Then came the change of Commanders and Genl. Hooker was placed in charge. In May 1863, came the strategic crossing of the Rappahannock, and battle of Chancellorsville, where our Corps numbering less than 8000 were attacked by nearly 24,000 Confederate veterans under their great leader, Genl. Jackson. The new regiments of our Corps, under fire for the first time, acquitted themselves like veterans and held their ground until forced back by overwhelming numbers. It is not my purpose to take up your time with the details of this or other battles in which the Corps participated, I leave that to abler hands.

Our next battle was Gattysburgh, on that memorable first day of July 1863, when we fought a hopeless battle from the beginning, our only object being to delay the progress of the enemy until our other Corps came up. History will show that we did our part well and nobly. We fought overwhelming numbers in our front, well knowing that our right flank was enveloped from the start. We did check the advance of the enemy and caused him to exercise greater caution and await the concentration of his troops. After nightfall on that first day, the 11th Corps repulsed a very strong and persistent attack, showing that there was plenty of grit left in the Old



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Our next battle was Gettysburg, on that memorable  
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Corps, after a very bad afternoon too. It is often remarked that when one wants the facts about himself, to seek his opponents opinion. The speaker well remembers a conversation he heard as he lay wounded on the field of the first day's fight. A Confederate Officer said to Colonel Lamar of the 61st Ga., "Col., the yanks lie thicker here than our boys did at Malvern Hill." Surely if the enemy could thus testify to our stubborn resistance, our friends at least should do as much.

After Gettysburgh came Chickamauga, and occupation and siege of Chattanooga. The 11th and 12th Corps were hurried to reinforce the Army of the Cumberland. The 11th Corps led advance and opened up the Cracker Line and at Wauhatchie, we took our share of the hard knocks, without flinching.

At Missionary Ridge a portion of our Corps fought side by side with the veterans of the Army of the Tennessee, and received just praise and commendation from the great Captain W. T. Sherman.

After the defeat, retreat and pursuit of Genl. Bragg's army, the 4th, 11th and 15th Corps under Genl. Sherman marched at once to the relief of Knoxville, then besieged by a large Confederate force under Genl. Longstreet. We raised the siege and pushed Genl. Longstreet off his line of retreat, causing his troops great distress, suffering and loss, before they could reach a base of supplies. Many of our own men were without shoes, rations were scarce, clothing (in midwinter) scant, but there was no murmuring, and with that ready faculty of the American soldier, flour mills were put in order and run, provisions collected and the army was soon in motion on its return to Chattanooga.



Corps, after a very bad afternoon too. It is often remarked that when one wants the facts about himself, to seek his opponent's opinion. The speaker well remembers a conversation he heard as he lay wounded on the field of the first day's fight. A Confederate Officer said to General James at the time, "Go! the Yankees like chicken better than our boys did at Malvern Hill." Surely if the enemy could thus testify to our stubborn resistance, our friends at least should do as much. After Gettysburg came Chickamauga, and occupation and siege of Chattanooga. The 11th and 18th Corps were hurried to reinforce the Army of the Cumberland. The 11th Corps led advance and opened up the Cassner line and at Nashville, we took our share of the hard knocks, without flinching. At Missionary Ridge a portion of our corps fought side by side with the veterans of the Army of the Tennessee, and received just praise and commendation from the great Captain W. F. Sherman. After the defeat, retreat and pursuit of Genl. Bragg's army, the 4th, 11th and 18th Corps under Genl. Sherman marched at once to the relief of Knoxville, then besieged by a large Confederate force under Genl. Longstreet. We raised the siege and pushed Genl. Longstreet off his line of retreat, causing his troops great distress, suffering and loss, before they could reach a place of supplies. Many of our men were without shoes, rations were scarce, clothing (in midwinter) scant, but there was no murmuring, and with that ready loyalty of the American soldier, their wills were put in order and men, provisions collected and the army was soon in motion on its return to Chattanooga.



In the Spring of 1864 the 11th and 12th Corps were consolidated and formed into the 20th Corps, under Genl. Hooker. A Brigade of 11th Corps men scaled Rocky Faced Ridge and at the charge at Resaca the same Brigade having the left of the column of attack found itself in the front line and was ordered by Genl. Hooker to take a battery posted in an earthwork. The men were put in motion but found the ground in front covered by the men of another division ~~of the 11th Corps~~, lying down. The officer in command of the Brigade sent word to Genl. Hooker of the fact. The General ordered him to pass right over them, and the order was obeyed and the earthwork and guns were taken. At Dallas the same thing occurred; the old 2nd Brigade was on the left of the assaulting column and passed over several lines of men lying down, reached the front and held it for a week. We make no criticisms. The Corps participated in all the battles of the Atlanta Campaign, and never lost a foot of ground, and were among the first to enter Atlanta. Marched to the Sea with Sherman and were among the first to enter Savannah. Made the Campaign of the Carolinas, passed in review here in this City, and were, as part of "Shermans Bummers," objects of great interest. Nor were there any troops, and I assert it without fear of contradiction, oftener under fire or more frequently called upon for arduous and efficient services, than those who formerly composed the 11th Corps. And though the designation was changed the spirit, discipline and effectiveness remained and compared favorably with that of the men of any of the Corps comprising the Armies of the Republic.

In conclusion, Comrades, I trust that this meeting



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In conclusion, Comrades, I trust that this meeting



will bear abundant fruit, that our Association will grow until it embraces every worthy living member of our Corps, and let me urge upon those here, to devote a little time and give some thought and work to the end that the dark clouds which have obscured the fair fame of our Corps may be rolled aside by the pure air of truth, so that we be enabled to hand down its record untarnished and replendent with the glory of its heroic deeds. This duty we owe to the living, and also to the dead who sealed their devotion with their lives; and as has been well said by another of our Corps,

    Their bones are dust

    Their swords are rust.

    Their souls are with

    The saints we trust.



Spencer

11. Corp. Comm.

Spencer

Dec 15, 1911

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The nation we serve.