

## Slocum and His Men.

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### Prologue.

ON the morning of September 17, 1862, the Twelfth Corps of the Army of the Potomac held the right of the line on the battlefield of Antietam. Its commander, Gen. Joseph K. F. Mansfield, fell mortally wounded while gallantly directing the deployment of his troops as they went into action.

After the battle the important duty of filling the vacancy caused by Mansfield's death devolved upon the War Department at Washington, a task that demanded no small exercise of care and consideration. The Twelfth Corps at that time was composed of veterans who had seen honorable service in the Valley, on the Rappahannock, and in the Maryland campaign; who had fought well at Winchester, Cedar Mountain, Manassas, and at Antietam; it included several crack regiments famous on account of the exceptionally fine material in their ranks, while each division was noted for its high standard of efficiency, discipline and morale. To fill the vacant position a man had to be chosen whose fighting record, military ability and personal character would measure up to the high standard of the troops committed to his charge.

In the Army of the Potomac at that time there was a major-general of volunteers who had recently achieved distinction in the brilliant affair at Crampton's Gap, where the division which he commanded and led in person carried by storm a strong position of the enemy, one of the few successful assaults of the war. His previous record was an exceptionally meritorious one. A graduate of the Military Academy at West Point, he had been given at the outbreak of hostilities, the colonelcy of a fine volunteer regiment which he commanded at First Bull Run, where he attracted favorable attention by his soldierly bearing and military skill in handling his men under fire until he fell severely wounded and was borne from

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the field. As a brigade general he won further honors in the Peninsular campaign, and at Gaines's Mill the division which he then commanded helped materially to save the fortunes of the day by its timely arrival and good fighting.

This officer, so well and favorably known throughout the army, was Major-General Henry W. Slocum, a division commander in the Sixth Corps, and on him the War Department conferred the high honor of an appointment to fill the vacancy in the command of the Twelfth Corps. The admirable manner in which he discharged the trust thus confided to him, together with the history of the gallant troops assigned to his command, forms the theme and purpose of the following pages.

## The Twelfth Corps.

The history of the Twelfth Corps does not begin properly with the date when it received that designation, but with the prior record of the troops that composed it at that time. Without any material difference in its organization it had previously been known officially as the Fifth Corps of the Army of the Potomac, and then as the Second Corps of the Army of Virginia, before it was designated as the Twelfth.

The regiments from which the corps was originally organized, having enlisted promptly at the first call to arms, were the ones assigned to duty at Harpers Ferry to save that strategic point, and stationed also along the Upper Potomac to guard the line of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal. During the summer of 1861 these same troops occupied the Shenandoah Valley and participated in the operations around Winchester. Though no general engagement occurred, these troops carried on an active campaign in which they made long fatiguing marches and encountered the enemy in frequent skirmishes, an experience that furnished the necessary training for the more arduous and heroic work in which they were destined to take a prominent part.

On July 25, 1861, shortly after the battle of First Bull Run, Gen. N. P. Banks assumed command of the Department of the Shenandoah, with headquarters at Harpers Ferry, relieving General Patterson who returned to Pennsylvania with the three-months troops of his command. The remaining regiments, which had

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enlisted for three years or during the war, were organized into three brigades which constituted what was known as Banks's Division.

On March 8, 1862, President Lincoln directed that the various divisions forming the Army of the Potomac should be organized into five army corps, of which the Fifth should be composed of Williams's and Shields's divisions and placed under command of General Banks. These two divisions were composed of regiments, for a large part, that served in these same commands throughout the war — noticeably the Second Massachusetts, Third Wisconsin, Fifth Connecticut, Twenty-seventh Indiana, Twenty-eighth New York and Forty-sixth Pennsylvania of Williams's Division; and the Fifth, Seventh, Twenty-ninth, and Sixty-sixth Ohio, and the Twenty-eighth and Twenty-ninth Pennsylvania of Shields's (afterwards Geary's) Division, together with Best's, Hampton's, Cothran's and Knap's batteries of the artillery. General Williams, an officer of exceptional ability, remained in command of this division throughout the war, and at times he was placed temporarily in command of the Twelfth and Twentieth Corps.\*

### Kernstown.

The first general engagement in which the troops of Banks's Corps participated was the battle of Kernstown, or Winchester, March 23, 1862, where Shields's Division achieved a signal victory over the Confederate forces under Gen. Thomas J. Jackson, better known perhaps as "Stonewall Jackson."

Kernstown is a little hamlet in the Shenandoah Valley, about three miles south of Winchester. Jackson hearing that Union troops were being withdrawn from the Valley to reinforce McClellan attempted a threatening demonstration for the purpose of preventing any further movement of that kind, and proceeded to occupy a strong position on a ridge at Kernstown. Shields who was holding Winchester with his division moved out promptly and attacked the

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\* General Alpheus S. Williams was born Sept. 20, 1810, in Saybrook, Ct. Graduated from Yale College, 1831; and from Yale Law School, 1834. After spending three years abroad in travel he returned and settled in Detroit, Mich., where he commenced the practice of law. He served in the Mexican War as lieutenant-colonel of the First Michigan Volunteers. In April, 1861, he was appointed, by the governor of Michigan, brigadier-general of the troops of that State then enlisting for the war, and was placed in command of the camp of instruction at Fort Wayne, Michigan. Commissioned brigadier-general U. S. Volunteers, August 9, 1861, with rank from May 17, 1861; and brevet major-general, Jan. 12, 1865. Mustered out in January, 1866. Minister Resident to the Republic of Salvador, 1866-69. Member of Congress, 1874-1878. Died Dec. 21, 1878.

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enemy, driving him from the field, whence the Confederates retreated up the Valley. General Shields was severely wounded in the preliminary skirmishing on the evening of the twenty-second, and was obliged to turn the command over to Col. Nathan Kimball, who directed the fighting during the entire battle of the twenty-third.

Soon after the engagement was over General Banks, with one brigade of Williams's Division, reinforced Kimball, and joining in the pursuit followed Jackson up the Valley as far as Cedar Creek where he halted for the night. The Confederates continued their retreat southward, but fell back slowly, making an occasional stand at favorable points and burning bridges wherever it was necessary to retard pursuit. Banks followed cautiously as far as New Market, where he arrived April seventeenth, and, establishing his headquarters there, pushed his advance on to Harrisonburg, while Jackson took position at Swift Run Gap, one of the nearest passes in the Blue Ridge.

In the battle of Kernstown Shields's Division had three brigades, containing, in all, thirteen regiments of infantry, five batteries of light artillery, and some detachments of cavalry. The casualties on the Union side were, 118 killed, 450 wounded, and 22 missing; total 590. Of this loss, 157 occurred in the Fifth, Seventh, and Twenty-ninth Ohio regiments.

Jackson carried into action three brigades, containing nine regiments and one battalion of infantry; also, twenty-seven pieces of artillery, of which eighteen were engaged. He reported his loss officially at 80 killed, 375 wounded, and 263 missing; total, 718. The Confederates lost two pieces of artillery, and three caissons. Jackson was largely outnumbered, as he had not so many regiments as Shields, and, furthermore, as shown by the official reports, his regiments were much smaller than those opposed to him. He states that his infantry numbered 3,087, all told, of which 2,742 were engaged.

As this was the first success that had fallen to the Union Army in the Shenandoah Valley there was great rejoicing in the North, and Shields, together with his troops, were the recipients of enthusiastic congratulations.

### Winchester.

Banks's Corps had advanced southward up the Shenandoah Valley as far as Harrisonburg, where it encamped for three weeks in close proximity to the enemy. The two divisions, together with the cavalry brigade attached, numbered 12,600 effectives. At this