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HISTORY

OF THE

# ARMY OF THE CUMBERLAND

ITS

ORGANIZATION, CAMPAIGNS, AND BATTLES

WRITTEN AT THE REQUEST OF

MAJOR-GENERAL GEORGE H. THOMAS

CHIEFLY FROM HIS PRIVATE MILITARY JOURNAL AND OFFICIAL AND OTHER  
DOCUMENTS FURNISHED BY HIM

BY

THOMAS B. VAN HORNE, U. S. A.

ILLUSTRATED WITH

CAMPAIGN AND BATTLE MAPS

COMPILED BY

EDWARD RUGER

LATE SUPERINTENDENT TOPOGRAPHICAL ENGINEER OFFICE, HEADQUARTERS  
DEPARTMENT OF THE CUMBERLAND

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TWO VOLUMES AND ATLAS

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VOL. I

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# Dedication.

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THESE VOLUMES ARE DEDICATED

TO THE

SURVIVING MEMBERS OF THE ARMY

WHOSE ACHIEVEMENTS THEY NARRATE—SOLDIERS, WHO,  
IN STRENGTH OF PATRIOTISM AND VALOR  
IN BATTLE, HAVE NEVER  
BEEN SURPASSED.

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## PREFACE.

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DURING a conversation with General George H. Thomas, at Nashville, Tennessee, in the summer of 1865, some remark was made relating to the achievements of his army, when he said to me, "I wish you to write a *narrative* history of the Army of the Cumberland." Taking a moment for reflection, I replied, that if, upon trial, I should meet his expectations, I should be glad to produce such a work. He then said: "Write nothing but the truth. You will contravene received opinions, and you must fortify yourself." These short but comprehensive sentences constituted my instructions, and taken in connection with the fact that the materials for the work were mainly collected and supplied by General Thomas, gave him as close a relation to it as was possible without direct authorship.

It is not known when it first occurred to General Thomas to have the history of his army written, but had it been his purpose from the beginning of his connection with it, in the organization and command of its first brigade, he could not have been more exhaustive in collecting the materials upon which it is based. His "Military Journal," accurate in the mention of the operations of each day, was a safeguard against errors in chronology, gave brief notes of the more important facts and events, and was suggestive of lines of investigation, for which ample resources were provided in the copies of orders, telegrams, official reports, and other papers, unofficial,

but equally authoritative as the muniments of a truthful narrative, which in greatest profusion he placed in my hands. He gave especial attention to the collection of pertinent documents after the work had been projected, and received assistance from General W. D. Whipple and Colonels A. L. Hough, S. C. Kellogg, and J. P. Williard, members of his staff in nearest relation. From the time the composition of the history was begun until his death, I was in constant communication with him, and he knew fully its scope and the pivotal facts which would constitute its framework and determine its purview, and lived to examine and approve several completed chapters relating to campaigns and battles in which he was a prominent actor. The history and the maps which illustrate it, have been prepared through independent research, but from the same sources of knowledge, and under identical relations to General Thomas.

I am also greatly indebted to many of the corps, division, and brigade commanders, and other officers of the army, for suggestions and encouragement during the years spent in preparing this work.

It may not be irrelevant or inappropriate for me to state that, in investigation and description, I have followed the logical order, tracing operations from inception to issue, and interpreting them by their objects as well as their results.

The manuscript was completed in December, 1872. Upon my return to my post in January, 1873, I left it in the East, and did not see it again until I began to read the proof-sheets, in July, 1875.

THOS. B. VAN HORNE.

*September, 1875.*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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THE election, by the Republican party, of Abraham Lincoln, as President of the United States, on the 6th day of November, 1860, was the occasion for an attempt to compass the destruction of the Union. The men who made that attempt had for years meditated the establishment of a confederacy comprising all the slaveholding states. The antagonisms which culminated in the secession of eleven of these states may be traced to the remote past. They were revealed even in the Convention of 1787. John C. Calhoun gave logical consistency to the doctrines of state-rights, and in the effort to give them practical realization, in 1832, very nearly anticipated the struggle that has recently deluged the land with blood. Compromises, often repeated in our history, promising eternal harmony, had failed to give more than temporary quiet to the country. The near approach of each successive presidential election furnished the occasion for some new presentation of the old issues, and invited the renewal of the contest for sectional dominance. And thus every fourth year revealed, with greater plainness, the relentless character of the antagonism, between the free and slave states. Questions of political supremacy and material interests were mingled with the less dangerous discussion of abstract differences in the theory of government; and the sober, thoughtful, patriotic men of the country saw, with growing alarm, that every presidential canvass gave proof that political issues were becoming more positive, in correspondence with the increasing intensity of sectional animosity.

During the political campaign which preceded the presidential election of 1860, the Southern leaders of the school of Calhoun used all possible influences to commit the Southern people to secession, in the event of the success of the Republican party. The specious assumption of inveterate

differences in the type of civilization, North and South; the vaunted assertion of superior manhood and transcendent chivalry; the declared certainty of hostile interference with slavery by the party electing Mr. Lincoln, and the appeal to passion and prejudice, gave these men the power to precipitate eleven of the slaveholding states into secession and rebellion. It may be safe to aver that the majority of the Southern people, if they had been allowed a free and forcible expression of their opinions and feelings, would have decided against secession. But the Union men of the South lacked organization, and, acting without concert, were unable to resist the large and ambitious minority, which, compassing great wealth and talent, with organization compact and firm, was controlled by men of reckless daring and acknowledged power.

On the first Monday in December, 1860, the official announcement of the election of Mr. Lincoln was made in due form in the Senate chamber at Washington. On the 20th of the same month, a convention of the people of South Carolina passed an ordinance of secession. Six states, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas, withdrew in quick succession from the sisterhood of states. Soon the bold announcement of a new nationality—the Confederate States of America—startled the country and the world. The actors in this, the greatest political crime in history, at once prepared for war—the usual consequent of the assumption of independent national existence—and threats of Northern invasion, in the event of war, were proclaimed as boldly as the existence of the new government.

Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas delayed secession for some months. The legislature of Virginia proposed an informal national convention, to devise measures to prevent the dismemberment of the Union, and consequent civil war. Tennessee decided, by a heavy majority, against calling a convention to consider the question of secession. North Carolina was also without a convention. The convention of Arkansas, after a somewhat protracted session, adjourned without taking definite action. These states thus awaited the consequences of the secession of the Gulf States.

Although the majority of the people of the United States did not admit that the right to secede was reserved to the individual states, and regarded the conduct of the Gulf States, if persistently continued, as the actual initiation of civil war, and although these states, beyond their act of secession, had committed open acts of war, some of which were even perpetrated before the passage of ordinances of secession, still the general government took no step looking to the suppression of the rebellion

inaugurated by secession. War was so distasteful to the government and people, that the purpose was patent to avoid it if possible. Forts and arsenals had been seized, and portions of the national army had been surrendered to the insurgents, but still the nation hesitated to draw the sword.

During this period of hesitancy, there were indications of reaction in the seceded states, while the more northern slaveholding states grew more decided in the expression of their purpose to remain in the Union. Thus it became apparent to the leading insurgents that something startling must be done, or these states would be lost to the projected Southern Confederacy.

All the important forts on the coasts of the seceding states, except Pickens and Sumter, had been seized by the insurgents. The bombardment and fall of the latter constituted the second great act in the drama of rebellion. South Carolina had been the first to secede, and her assumed leadership in revolt and traditional disloyalty, alike required that her guns should inaugurate the war with emphasis and call the nation to arms. On the 12th day of April, 1861, in obedience to orders of Jefferson Davis, President of the so-called Confederate States, General Beauregard commenced the bombardment of Fort Sumter. The gallant Anderson and his equally gallant command resisted the tremendous cannonading for nearly two days. But being without food and ammunition, exhausted by constant exertion, and almost stifled by the heat and smoke of the burning outbuildings, the heroic garrison made such terms with the enemy as would best conserve their own honor and that of their country, and retired from the fort under their colors.

On the 14th day of April, the day after the capitulation, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, issued a proclamation, calling forth the militia of the several states of the Union, to the aggregate number of seventy-five thousand, to suppress the combinations in the seceded states, which were too powerful to be suppressed by the ordinary course of judicial proceedings. Then Virginia, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Arkansas, by conventions, or through the less legitimate action of legislatures, promptly seceded, and made common cause with the states already in open rebellion.

The four border slaveholding states—Delaware, Maryland, Kentucky, and Missouri—now filled the chasm between the two sections, which were hurrying their preparations for war on a gigantic scale. The situation of these states was critical, whatever might be their action. Their citizens were divided in political sentiment, and of all the states, North or South,

they were most exposed to the perils of war. Their geographical position, their common interest in slavery with the revolted states, and their identity in other great interests with the Northern States, necessitated delay in action, and produced vacillation in choice of Northern or Southern alliance. Delaware and Maryland, however, soon declared their purpose of remaining in the Union. Kentucky and Missouri having more slaves and more attachment to the institution of slavery, could not so easily determine their status. The governors of these states were in sympathy with the Southern cause, while a large and influential party in each state favored the Northern. It is safe to assert, too, that in other respects the loyalists of Kentucky had more to embarrass them in the positive declaration of their attachment to the Union, than the citizens of the other states that declined secession.

As the first organized loyal regiments of Kentucky troops constituted the nucleus of the Army of the Cumberland, this history is commenced with a retrospect of the situation in that state during the first months of the war.