

**“STAY AND FIGHT IT OUT”:
HENRY W. SLOCUM AND AMERICA’S CIVIL WAR**

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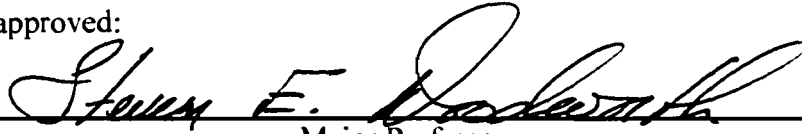
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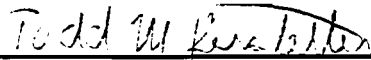
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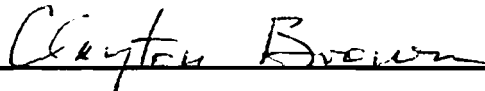
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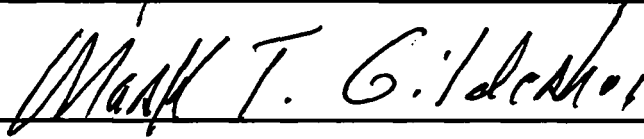
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ABBREVIATIONS

The location of archival material is noted in the first citation. The following abbreviations are used in the footnotes:

BHS—Brooklyn Historical Society, Brooklyn, New York

GNMP—Gettysburg National Military Park, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

HL—Huntington Library Collection, San Marino, California

MCA—Morgan County Archives, Madison, Georgia

NYL—New York State Archives and Library, Albany, New York

NYHS—New-York Historical Society Collections, New York, New York

OHA—Onondaga Historical Association, Syracuse, New York: Biographical Clippings File

TPHS—Town of Pompey Historical Society, Pompey Town, New York

USMHI—United States Military History Institute, Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Civil War Miscellaneous Collection, Brake Collection

Introduction

Henry Warner Slocum and History

This study resulted from some very practical considerations. It began while I prepared an article on Sherman's March to the Sea, particularly the Army of Georgia's tramp through the small town of Madison. When I searched for information on their commander, a thin, prickly New Yorker, by the name of Henry W. Slocum, I discovered that little had been written on him. *Unlike most other Civil War army commanders, he had no in print biographies, and even though he commanded one-half of the army under Sherman, most of the books about the March itself did not devote much space to him. In fact, Lee Kennett's otherwise exemplary work, Marching Through Georgia, does not even have an index listing for him, even though some of his subordinates appear. I pieced together a brief synopsis of Slocum's life for the purposes of the article, though I remained wholly displeased with the scant information I found.*

What I learned of Slocum was minimal. Born in New York to a small goods merchant, Slocum paid for his own early education, eventually attending West Point. He served in the artillery for a few years, but resigned and returned to civilian life. Elected colonel of the Twenty-seventh New York in Lincoln's first call for troops, Slocum rose through the ranks rapidly, becoming a Major General by mid 1862. He saw action in every major battle with the Army of the Potomac from Bull Run to Gettysburg, with the notable exceptions of Antietam and Fredericksburg. Transferred west, he served for a time in Tennessee and Mississippi before joining Sherman's Atlanta campaign. He commanded the left wing of Sherman's army for the subsequent March to the Sea and Through the Carolinas, and was present at Johnston's final surrender. He thus led men at

the regimental, brigade, division, corps, and even army level, though he never found his way into independent command. Slocum was the subject of only two biographies, both quite laudatory and the most recent published in 1913. Only a smattering of articles appeared concerning him, most connected to his controversial performance at Gettysburg.

One of the earliest accounts of Slocum's life appeared on 29 April 1894, just after his death. Oliver O. Howard delivered a eulogy to Slocum's memory at the Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, New York. Every biography of Slocum, including the present, makes use of this document. Having met there to sing the praises of his friend, Howard portrayed Slocum's wartime career in a dazzling light, making him shine as brightly as either Grant or Sherman. It is difficult to read it in its entirety and not think that Howard's grasp on history and Slocum's place in it is somewhat tenuous.

Rather than cast such aspersions on the general's personality, it is only necessary to point out what Howard attempted that day. He did not address an assembly of historians or a gathering of Civil War enthusiasts. He wrote and delivered a eulogy, not serious history. Howard wanted to have his audience focus exclusively on the good aspects of Slocum's role in the war and pass over any negative ones. For instance, he offered no criticism of Slocum's performance on the first day at Gettysburg, though he speaks of it elsewhere. Instead, he stated that, "[b]ut for Slocum the waters of Rebellion would have passed around the heights and the 'high-water mark' would not have been found on that Cemetery crest."¹ Given Howard's purpose, lauding Slocum was not out of place. But the reader must remember why he wrote his speech and not expect to see any of the low points of Slocum's career.

Since the war, only two authors aside from the present took up their pens to write an extended, researched account of the life of Henry Slocum. The first, William F. Fox, did so as a part of the dedication of Slocum's statue at Gettysburg in 1902. Of all the authors thus far attempting to undertake this project, Fox had the best access to the man himself. Fox knew Slocum, had access to his papers, and also knew many of Slocum's fellow officers. Unfortunately, his work would not meet the standards of modern history for the simple reason that, like Howard, Fox did not aim for them.

In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum is just that: a memorial. Fox was not terribly concerned with supplying his readers with a critical look at the general's life. Indeed, he was just as likely as Howard to ignore Slocum's foibles. Memorials overlook these things to focus on the good an individual accomplished. Also, it was relatively short. Fox's narrative of Slocum's life takes up only 54 pages of a 325-page book. For the sake of time, Fox often skims over important events. Again, for his purposes, such an approach was perfectly understandable, but the fact remains that it did not translate into good history.

Still, even with these difficulties, Fox's memorial is a great source of information. He seems to have been an honest author and felt no need to exaggerate Slocum's role in the war. He also reproduced primary source documents no longer available elsewhere. For instance, he reprints letters to and from Sherman that reveal some of Slocum's personality.

Slocum's more recent biography demonstrates ancestor worship at its best, or worst, as the case may be. In 1913, Charles Elihu Slocum of Toledo, Ohio, published The Life and Services of Major-General Henry Warner Slocum. He was not content with

simply focusing on highlights; in some cases he almost manufactured them. Taking up nearly 400 pages, he stuffed the book full of verbatim reports from the Official Records, letters taken from the pages of Fox's memorial, and the like, all available elsewhere. Not only accenting whole every favorable word ever written about the general, Charles Slocum sweetened his narrative to the point that readers may find it noxious. He made a few unique claims and provided a few new leads, but his book was so poorly documented that it is next to impossible to follow up on any of them. For instance, he gave less than 130 references in the entire book, the vast majority of which were simple quotations from the ORs. Yet, unfortunately, Charles Elihu's book is the best known of Slocum's biographies.

Many historians who have written on Slocum since then have carried their depictions to the other extreme. The first virulently negative accounts of Slocum appeared during his own lifetime. After the war, he committed what much of the north thought to be an unforgivable sin: he became a Democrat. So, some Republican leaning historians and newspaper editors after the war tried to do to Slocum's memory what he, Sherman, and Howard are alleged to have done to Georgia: burn it to ash. Samuel P. Bates wrote one of the first critical accounts of Slocum's performance at Gettysburg around 1875. This account originated many of the criticisms of Slocum still echoed today. Former comrades also attacked him. After the war, Joseph J. Bartlett completely reversed his depiction of Slocum at Crampton's Gap, for instance.²

A. Wilson Greene provided a more recent example of the attacks Slocum has had to endure. In "A Step to All Important Victory," Greene misused Howard's eulogy, treating it as though it contained claims like that of professional history. In doing so, he

set an abnormally high standard for Slocum that no one, even Howard, realistically expected him to reach. On that flawed foundation, Greene makes Slocum out to be a vacillating scoundrel. Other authors have chimed in on this depiction, such as Chester Hearn in his book on Harper's Ferry.³

Civil War scholars have done a thorough job of studying great leaders. Many books exist on virtually every aspect of the careers of men like Lee, Grant, Jackson, and Sherman.⁴ A more recent emphasis on the common soldier has helped to round out the other extreme. Well-written works abound on both Johnny Reb and Billy Yank.⁵ The volumes emerging more recently represent solid history.

In order to obtain a better understanding of a Civil War army's performance, it is not enough to study only the far ends of the spectrum. The great leaders gave the orders, the common soldier followed them, but the transition of commands from one to the other is equally important. As I discovered while researching the March to the Sea, the lack of readily available material on one of the major figures in a campaign leaves a gaping hole in the story. Currently, the chasm can only be briefly and shallowly plastered over in Slocum's case.

Why just one man? Is any individual important enough to warrant such an investigation or must historians resign themselves to groups alone? Some believe that a single man or woman cannot be important enough to warrant this level of academic attention. This is a fallacy. The argument that a particular individual is unimportant in huge events may hold true in the case of the average soldier, but only in the sense of degree. For instance, it is doubtful that anyone would seriously argue that the presence or absence of Private James Gilbreath of the 149th New York at Chancellorsville would

really have made a difference in the battle. Yet, the only reason Gilbreath could be overlooked is that his realm of influence was so limited that, in the grand scheme of things, his part affected only a few. A major general in command of an entire corps is another case entirely. Such a man's actions at any battle had the potential to radically alter the course of the fight, and therefore possibly the war. A solid, even if unremarkable, performance by each member of the army becomes what Oliver O. Howard refers to as "a step to all-important victory."⁶ In any given battle, it took many men taking many such steps in order to succeed in the field. But if even a single, well-placed individual faltered, he could easily throw off the whole. Howard demonstrated this by failing to secure his flank at Chancellorsville. It was a small decision made by one man, but it greatly affected the flow of events. It follows that each step, and therefore the person who makes it, is important and worthy of attention if historians are to understand the past more fully. It is true that historians could emphasize biography to the point of absurdity; to study individuals alone is not enough. Still, though not the totality of history, biography should have its place in the whole.

Slocum is also important in the study of Union hard war policies. He pioneered a few himself in Tullahoma, Tennessee, later becoming one of Sherman's most trusted men. They spent a substantial amount of time together, forming a friendship that lasted for the rest of their lives. For one-half of the ground Sherman covered in his marches, he gave Slocum the responsibility of seeing his policies enforced. Such a connection cannot be overlooked.

In reality, Slocum was simply human. He made mistakes, some of which he transcended, while others haunted him until his death in 1894 (even after, as evidenced in

Greene and Hearn). In light of this, I submit my effort for the reader's consideration. I aim to answer all the questions mentioned here as well as others. Most importantly, I endeavor to provide my readers with a solid, honest, and concise examination of Slocum's life. He may not have changed the course of the war, but he certainly played a conspicuous role in its prosecution.

¹ Oliver O. Howard, "To the Memory of Henry Slocum: A Eulogy by Oliver O. Howard," Civil War Times Illustrated, Thomas E. Hilton, ed., (21 March 1982), 40.

² See Report of Col. Joseph J. Bartlett, QRs, Series I, Volume XIX, Part I, 388-390; John Priest, Before Antietam: The Battle for South Mountain, (Shippensburg, PA: Whitmane, 1992), 272-283.

³ A. Wilson Greene, "A Step to All Important Victory," The Second Day at Gettysburg, Gary Gallagher, ed. (Kent: Kent State University, 1993), 87-135; Chester G. Hearn, Six Years of Hell: Harper's Ferry During the Civil War, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996) 198.

⁴ For but a small sampling, see Douglas Southall Freeman, R. E. Lee: A Biography, 4 vols. (New York: Scribners 1934-35), Freeman, Lee's Lieutenants: A Study in Command, 3 vols. (New York: Scribners, 1942-44), Steven E. Woodworth, Davis and Lee at War, (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1995), Emory M. Thomas, Robert E. Lee: A Biography (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995); Brooks, Simpson, Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph Over Adversity, 1822-1865, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), William S. McFeeley, Grant: A Biography, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1981), Geoffrey Perret, Ulysses S. Grant: Soldier and President, (New York: Random House, 1997); James I. Robertson, Stonewall Jackson: The Man, the Soldier, the Legend, (New York: Macmillan, 1997), Lenoir Chambers, Stonewall Jackson, 2 vols. (New York: William and Morrow, 1959), G. F. R. Henderson, Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War, (New York: Da Capo Press, 1988), Frank Vandiver, Mighty Stonewall, (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1988); John F. Marszalek, Sherman: A Soldier's Passion for Order, (New York: Free Press, 1993), Lee Kennett, Sherman: A Soldier's Life, (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), John B. Walters, Merchant of Terror: General Sherman and Total War, (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill 1973), Charles Edmund Vetter, Sherman: Merchant of Terror, Advocate of Peace, (Gretna, La. : Pelican Pub. Co., 1992).

⁵ Again, a very short sampling: James I. Roberston, Jr. Soldiers Blue and Gray, (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989), W. H. Andrews, Footprints of a Regiment, (Atlanta: Longstreet Press, 1992), Steven E. Woodworth, The Human Tradition in the Civil War and Reconstruction, (Wilmington, Del.: SR Books, 2000), Warren Wilkenson and Steven E. Woodworth, A Scythe of Fire, (New York : W. Morrow, 2002), James McPherson, For Cause and Comrades: Why Men Fought in the Civil War, (New York : Oxford University Press, 1997), Noah A. Trudeau, Like Men of War: Black Troops in the Civil War, 1862-1865, (Boston : Little, Brown, 1998).

⁶ Howard, "To the Memory of Henry Slocum," 40.

Chapter I

Early Years: Education, Military Service, and Civilian Life

On 24 September 1826, Henry Warner Slocum was born in the quiet hamlet of Delphi Falls, near Syracuse, in Onondaga County, New York.¹ The son of Matthew Banard Slocum and Mary Ostrander Slocum, he would be the sixth of eleven children.² His siblings included a brother named Barnard, and sisters Kate and Sarah. His father, born in Ohio, grew up in New Port, Rhode Island, but removed to Albany, New York while still quite young. There he began his career as a small goods merchant and met Miss Mary Ostrander, daughter of John Ostrander, whom he married on 9 April 1814. His business failed in 1817, and he moved his family, at that point including their first two children, to Delphi Falls, and opened another shop.³

Henry Slocum, named after a favorite uncle by marriage, grew up in the small family dwelling attached to the rear of his father's business. The shop, located on "four corners" (so named for the pair of country lanes crossing there), was called "Slocum & Marble." The family called their home, attached to the rear of the store, "Cheapside."⁴ As time passed, Slocum's father expanded their holdings to include the twenty-five acres immediately surrounding the family's rooms, where he kept a horse, cow, and other useful animals to supply his family and business.⁵

Like other children in the surrounding countryside, Slocum attended the Delphi Public School. His teachers kept the sessions short so their students could help with the work at home, and he did his part working at Slocum & Marble. At an early age, he displayed a talent for business. He bought and sold sheep, feeding them with a portion of the proceeds from their wool, and slowly expanded his flock. This proved to be boon to

his family, and because of this and other successful investments, he soon earned the nickname “Speculator,” or simply “Spec” for short.⁶

Slocum was an avid reader and his list included a biography of Napoleon. What he might have learned of strategy and tactics from it is not known, but he soon had the opportunity to try his hand at both in a rivalry with youth from the town of Woodstock. A group of boys from Delphi had all pitched in for the purchase of an old two-pounder cannon. They used it in their Fourth of July celebration and entrusted it to one of their number for safe keeping until next called for. During the intervening year, the boy moved with his parents to Woodstock, taking the gun with him.

The Delphi boys met and called for an immediate attack on the thieves. Slocum pointed out that a frontal assault would surely bring out not only their opponents in droves, but also their older brothers and cousins. Such odds would of course spoil any hope of success. Having convinced them that subtlety should prevail over force, Slocum appealed for time to formulate a plan. The Delphi boys agreed and appointed him their leader. The morning of 3 July of that year saw Spec strolling quietly through Woodstock, listening more than talking. He learned that the people of Woodstock intended to fire the gun at sunrise the next day to open the Independence Day festivities. His mission accomplished, he returned to Delphi and put his plans in motion.

The next morning, before dawn, two groups of boys from Delphi made the five-mile trek to Woodstock, taking with them a large farm wagon with a team of horses. When they arrived, one cadre secreted the wagon behind a barn near the cannon, while the others milled about on the opposite side of the clearing. The people of Woodstock fired the gun on schedule, but immediately afterwards, a fracas broke out among the

Delphi boys, drawing the crowd's attention. When the brawl settled down, the Woodstock youths found their prized weapon missing, already on its way back to Delphi Falls. The fighters, whose disturbance provided the necessary distraction for the wagon team, melted away quietly, backtracking to meet with the others. Slocum's first operation had ended in success.⁷

As a teenager, Slocum paid his own way through Cazenovia Seminary, where he met and became engaged to his future wife, Clara Rice.⁸ At age sixteen, while continuing his studies at the seminary, he received his teacher's certificate from the County Superintendent of Schools and took a position in the local schools.⁹ After graduation, he went on to the State Normal School in Albany, where he finished prior to the winter of 1847-48. Afterward, Slocum taught in a one-room school in the same town he and his friends had earlier raided, Woodstock, near Cazenovia.¹⁰

The outbreak of the Mexican War in 1846 probably stirred dreams of martial glory that had lain dormant in Slocum since childhood. Charles Slocum dwells on the fact that Slocum's humble beginnings would have made it difficult for him to gain entrance to West Point, maintaining that it took quite some time.¹¹ In reality, it took approximately a year, given that he thought about his decision for some little time after the war began in 1846 and he was attending classes by 1848. That year, Daniel F. Gott, a congressman from Onondaga County named him the cadet from the Syracuse district.¹² Slocum, older than the average cadet and educated at his own expense, likely looked forward to this new challenge with some nervousness.¹³ Still, he passed the dreaded entrance examination and entered West Point on 1 July 1848.¹⁴

While at the Academy, Slocum made the acquaintance of other future Civil War notables. Phillip Sheridan shared a room with Slocum for a time and described him as “a cadet whose education was more advanced than mine, and whose studious habits and willingness to aid others benefited me immensely.”¹⁵ Sheridan depicted Slocum as dedicated to his studies and friends:

After taps...Slocum and I would hang a blanket over the one window of our room and continue our studies—he guiding me around scores of stumbling-blocks in Algebra and elucidating many knotty points in other branches of the course with which I was unfamiliar. On account of this association, I went before the board in January with less uneasiness than otherwise would have been the case, and I passed the examination fairly well.¹⁶

Oliver O. Howard, another man who would play a significant role in the coming war agreed with this assessment: “It was my good fortune, my second year, during Cadet Slocum’s first-class (senior) year, to room on the floor just below him. Of course there was class separation, and I was three years his junior; but he treated me with kindness and attention.”¹⁷ Howard said:

His individuality especially impressed itself upon me. He expressed himself openly, when it cost so much to do so, as an opponent of human slavery. The pro-slavery sentiment at West Point was so great at the time, that it derogated from one’s popularity to express, or even to be suspected of, abolition sentiments. Cadet Slocum was, nevertheless, highly esteemed by all thoughtful fellow cadets, resulting in a lasting respect, which was only deepened by his subsequent life.¹⁸

Howard’s use of “thoughtful” is telling. There were probably quite a few cadets that who were put off by Slocum’s unashamed abolitionism. Whatever grief or joy his morals or politics may have brought him during his time there, Slocum managed to graduate seventh in a class of forty-three in June of 1852.¹⁹

Any explicit statements Slocum may have made about slavery before the Civil War are now lost. Other evidence from after the war has survived. Slocum apparently did not mince words when discussing the “curse of slavery.” He made it very clear that the north fought the war to end slavery. In a speech to the Brooklyn Historical Society, Slocum quoted liberally from Senator James Henry Hammond of South Carolina to show the South’s love for slavery, noting that just before the war, “the Institution of Slavery was at its zenith.” Hammond had argued that within only a few short years, the South had stopped trying to excuse itself on the issue. Instead, their slaves had doubled in value. Slocum then responded:

But could the Senator have extended his vision but eight brief years, he would have witnessed a far more wonderful contrast. The prime laborer, who had advanced in value from four hundred dollars in 1828, to eight hundred in 1858, had made a still more surprising advance. The slave of 1858 was the law maker of 1868!

The war, he said, had brought about many “wonderful changes,” not the least of which was that it “conferr[ed] on the South free institutions in reality as well as name.” He thought that in itself enough to recompense the country for its trouble.²⁰

There is no evidence to suggest that Slocum came to the conclusions only during the course of the conflict. Still, he must be placed firmly in the context of his times. As many others during his day, he thought of blacks as equal and of slavery as evil, but still referred to those he met as “darkies.” Sometimes he displayed a paternal attitude towards them that many would find patronizing.²¹

Immediately upon graduation in 1852, Slocum received a commission as a second lieutenant in the First United States Artillery and served in Florida in the Third Seminole War.²² During his time in Florida, he served between Tampa Bay and the Indian River.²³

Oddly enough, though several sources mention him as present during the war, none explicitly claim that he saw action. They may have meant to imply it, but some, such as Howard, explicitly state that “Bull Run was his first battle.”²⁴ It is very possible that actual combat experience eluded him until 1861. After just over a year of service, in the latter part of 1853, he was ordered to garrison duty at Fort Moultrie in Charleston, South Carolina.²⁵

Shortly after arriving in the future cradle of secession, Slocum obtained a furlough and returned to New York to wed his fiancé, Clara. They married on 9 February 1854 and afterward returned to Fort Moultrie.²⁶ Slocum received a commission as first lieutenant on 3 March 1855. Before news of his promotion arrived, he had tired of the long hours of garrison duty and slow advancement associated with the peacetime army. So, he had been considering resigning from the army. The promotion, and the raise in pay that came with it, delayed his decision.²⁷

Though the Slocums probably took part in the many and varied social attractions for which Charleston was famous, he began other, less pleasurable pursuits. He took up the study of law under the tutelage of future South Carolina Supreme Court Justice B. C. Preston.²⁸ By 1856, he was ready to be admitted to the bar.²⁹

His readiness proved to be well timed. Not long after Slocum’s initial decision to stay, a string of unfortunate events pushed him back into civilian life. The past summer had been a hard one on his family, with both his wife and newborn daughter, Carrie, faring poorly due to the South Carolina heat. This certainly made the move back to cooler climes tempting.³⁰ The U. S. Government made it all the more so when it threatened to send the First Artillery back to Florida.³¹ The final blow seems to have

come with the death of his daughter in Charleston on 20 October 1856.³² On the last day of that same month, Slocum resigned from the army and returned with his family to their old home of Onondaga County.³³

Slocum opened a law practice in Syracuse.³⁴ With his modest savings from his military pay, he acquired a pleasant, story and a half house on wooded lot at the corner of West Onondaga and Russell Streets. His family would reside there throughout the Civil War.³⁵ He also purchased a tract of vacant lots along Russell Street.³⁶

A number of Slocum's siblings had remained in the area and fared well. One of his brothers, Barnard, served as Onondaga County clerk from 1853 to 1857, when he also became part of a law firm. He and his partner, first William H. Gifford and later a Mr. Bruyn, established their practice at 10 S. Salina Street.³⁷ One of Slocum's sisters, possibly Kate or Sarah, married Judge LeRoy Morgan.³⁸ Both ladies worked as teachers.³⁹

Though Charles Elihu would later claim that Slocum's practice "soon had a good clientele," Slocum himself painted a bleaker picture of his career as a lawyer.⁴⁰ He later confessed to Major W. G. Tracey, also of Syracuse, that the other lawyers of the town "used to hoe around him without much difficulty." Slocum had also expressed some dismay that Tracey intended to study law, implying that his own experience had been bad enough that he would not suggest it to others.⁴¹

Whatever lack of success Slocum may have met with as a lawyer, "Spec" more than made up for in other areas. He developed the tract of land he had invested in by building small houses on the lots. Russell street was later renamed in honor of their developer, "Slocum Ave."⁴² In order to clear his land for improvement, he sold the

younger trees for transplanting, charging less than one-fifth the price of local nurseries.⁴³ He also invested extensively in salt manufacturing.⁴⁴ The Slocums' days of getting by on a military salary had ended.

By 1858, Slocum had done well for himself and his family financially. His entrance into politics, at least according to an account given in the *Syracuse Journal* in June of 1865, came about more as a result of state and local maneuvering than his own drive. The local Democrats had a vested interest in seeing Thomas Alvord elected to the state assembly, expecting him to look after salt and canal interests. Republicans, on the other hand, desperately wanted to take the governorship with their candidate E. D. Morgan. The Syracuse Democrats approached John L. Schoolcraft, of the Republican State Central Committee with a proposal: if he would arrange for an easy victory for Alvord in Syracuse, they would guarantee a 1000 vote majority for Morgan in Onondaga county. They asked for a relatively unknown Republican, Henry Warner Slocum, to be nominated, thereby giving Alvord, a well-known politician, a straw man to oppose him. Schoolcraft agreed and they struck the bargain.⁴⁵

Though the tone of the article plays up Slocum's role as the underdog, it is likely that to some extent the author embellished the tale. At least some Republican Party organs at the time claimed to be well pleased with the choice and thought his election sure, though they could have been simply trying to make the best of what they thought a bad situation. One news paper reported:

The action of the Second Assembly District Convention in nominating Henry W. Slocum, Esq., for the Assembly is particularly gratifying to his friends and neighbors in the ward where he resides. They feel it to be a well-deserved compliment to one of our most enterprising and talented young men.⁴⁶

Another announced:

It will be seen by the proceedings of the Convention held on Saturday, at the City Hall, that the Republicans of the District have placed Henry W. Slocum, Esq., in nomination for the Assembly. This is a good selection—Mr. Slocum is a young man of high character and superior abilities, and will make a capable and faithful Representative.... He will be elected by a large margin.⁴⁷

In the days leading up to the election, the Democrats hit on two points regarding Slocum's candidacy: his age and his popularity. In an article on Slocum at the time, the Syracuse Standard notes, "It is urged by the...Democrats that Mr. Slocum is a young man (terrible crime!) and that he is comparatively unknown in our county."⁴⁸ Slocum was only thirty years old, and the tone of the article seems to suggest that the Standard sought to play up Slocum's activities within the community. He likely was not very well known as a local politician. Yet, one snag emerged in the plan from the Democratic perspective. When the time for the election came, Slocum beat Alvord. The Fifth Ward, where he resided, gave him a forty-six vote majority, while district wide he won by a margin of three-hundred-twenty-six.⁴⁹

Slocum served in the Assembly for the duration of 1859. While there, the media characterized him as "industrious, keen, [and] spunky."⁵⁰ Another Syracuse newspaper remembered in 1868 that he "was regarded as one of the most upright and conscientious men in the assembly."⁵¹ Not much is known about Slocum's time as an assemblyman. He must have performed satisfactorily, at least well enough to not provoke the ire of the local press. In fact, he seems to have established a worthwhile reputation. By 1868 Slocum had become anathema to the Republican-leaning Syracuse papers. That they were still willing to admit his solid performance in that capacity, while attacking everything else, is a powerful statement indeed.

At least as late as the fall of 1860, Slocum planned to stay in Onondaga County. In November of that year, voters elected him to a three-year term as county treasurer.⁵² He accepted the position and went to work in the Treasurer's Office located in the Onondaga County Savings Bank, on the corner of Salina and Genessee streets in Syracuse.⁵³

In 1859, Slocum made his way back into military service, if only on a part time basis. For two years, until his entrance into the war, he served as an instructor in artillery with the state militia, holding the rank of colonel.⁵⁴ Exactly what Slocum thought of secession during those turbulent days is not known. It is safe to assume that his staunch opposition to slavery brought him down solidly into the Republican camp.

Shortly after Confederate General P. G. T. Beauregard's guns opened on Fort Sumter, Slocum approached Governor Morgan in Albany for permission to raise a battery of light artillery. Morgan politely assured him that the rebellion could be crushed without the use of artillery and sent him on his way. Having served in the South before the war, Slocum knew the shortsightedness of that opinion and returned to Syracuse disgusted.⁵⁵ Fox described Slocum, like many others, as being "sadly discouraged" by the North's lack of foresight, due to his familiarity "with the warlike attitude and terrible earnestness of the South," after his sojourn in Florida and South Carolina.⁵⁶

Next, someone raised a regiment of soldiers in Slocum's home county and friends proposed his name for colonel. Yet, he fell to the side again when the men voted in favor of a popular militia officer.⁵⁷ With the comforts and obligations of home beckoning, Slocum nearly remained in Syracuse. At the same time, several officers who had raised a regiment in Elmira decided they wanted a West Point graduate for commander. Though

they knew Slocum only through his militia reputation, they offered Slocum the colonelcy of the unit.⁵⁸ He accepted their offer immediately and received his commission on 21 May 1861.⁵⁹

Before leaving Syracuse, Slocum temporarily ended his political career. A foremost concern was his newly elected three-year position of county treasurer. Rushing to join his regiment, he contacted his predecessor, P. H. Agan, who took over Slocum's duties until he could return and arrange a permanent replacement. He did so after the battle of Bull Run.⁶⁰

After bidding farewell to his friends and family, Colonel Slocum left Syracuse that summer and took command of the Twenty-seventh New York Volunteer Infantry regiment in Elmira, New York.

¹ There seems to be some disagreement over whether Slocum was born in '26 or '27. In general, the figure of '26 appears in most "official" publications (Official meaning those sponsored by the state of New York: New York at Gettysburg, In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, "Monument to the New York Brigade at Lookout Mountain"—OHA) and those "unofficial" ones claiming '27 (Any source excluded by the definition of "official": various newspaper articles on the general around the time of his death). Most authors since the early part of this century pull heavily from Charles E. Slocum, who in turn relied heavily on William Fox's history In Memoriam. As such, most assume 1826 as his birth year. At the time of his death in 1894, he was 67, which would fix the year at 1827.

² William F. Fox, "Life of General Slocum," In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1904), 65.

³ Charles E. Slocum, The Life and Services of Major General Henry Warner Slocum, (Toledo, Ohio: Slocum Publishing, 1913), 5. —Information on Slocum's early life is scarce, and so the author is forced, in the early parts of this dissertation, to refer to this book. In general, it is not a practice to be encouraged, and would not be indulged here if other sources existed.

⁴ "The Life of Henry Warner Slocum: Program for General Slocum Day," (Delphi Falls, NY: Town of Pompey Historical Society, 1996).—TPHS

⁵ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 5.

⁶ Ibid., 6-7.

⁷ Ibid., 7-8.—This information, contained in a letter C. Slocum received from H. Slocum's brother, unfortunately says nothing more about the explosion.

⁸ "Maj. Gen. Henry Warner Slocum, New York at Gettysburg, (n.p., n.d.), 1333-1334; "The Loyal Legion." Journal (Syracuse), 11 May 1894.—OHA

⁹ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 8.

¹⁰ "General Slocum Day."

¹¹ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 8.

¹² Fox, In Memoriam, 66.

¹³ In his eulogy to Slocum, O. O. Howard remarks that though Slocum was one year his junior in class ranking, in age he was three years Howard's senior. See notes 18 and 19 for references.

- ¹⁴ Charles Slocum, 8-9.
- ¹⁵ Phillip Sheridan, Personal Memoirs of P. H. Sheridan, vol. 1, (New York: C. L. Webster & Company, 1888), 10.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11.
- ¹⁷ Fox, In Memoriam, 66-67. Here, Fox is quoting from a eulogy given by Oliver O. Howard in honor of Slocum on 29 April 1894. A version of this speech appeared in the March 1982 issue of Civil War Times Illustrated, edited by Thomas E. Hilton, but it does not contain the words “my second year, during Cadet Slocum’s first class-year.” As the author was unable to obtain the original of this speech, he assumes that Hilton removed the phrase as unnecessary detail in order to meet the magazine’s word limit.
- ¹⁸ Oliver O. Howard, “To the Memory of Henry Slocum: A Eulogy by Oliver O. Howard,” Civil War Times Illustrated, Thomas E. Hilton, ed., 21 March 1982, 38-41.
- ¹⁹ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 10.
- ²⁰ Henry Slocum, Military Lessons Taught by the War, (New York: George F. Nesbitt & Company, 1869), 4-6.—HL
- ²¹ For an example, see Slocum’s description of the men and women following the Army of Georgia in the wake of Sherman’s Marches, described in “Sherman’s March From Savannah to Bentonville,” Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. 4, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956). And it should also be noted that Slocum had a great deal to gain by his war efforts aside from purely altruistic ends.
- ²² Fox, In Memoriam, 67.
- ²³ No title, Syracuse Journal, 19 February 1878.—OHA
- ²⁴ Howard, “To the Memory of Henry Slocum,” 40.
- ²⁵ New York at Gettysburg, 1333.
- ²⁶ Fox, In Memoriam, 67.
- ²⁷ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 11; Fox, In Memoriam, 67.
- ²⁸ New York at Gettysburg, 1334.
- ²⁹ Fox, In Memoriam, 67.
- ³⁰ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 11.
- ³¹ Howard, “To the Memory of Henry Slocum,” 40.
- ³² “Died,” Syracuse Standard, 30 October 1856.—OHA
- ³³ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 11.
- ³⁴ Howard, “To the Memory of Henry Slocum,” 40.
- ³⁵ “The Slocum House, A Landmark, is Being Torn Down,” Syracuse Herald, 27 August, 1899. —OHA The article lists the adjoining street as “Slocum Ave.,” but an advertisement concerning the house’s later auction in the Syracuse Journal, March 1866, lists the address as “Russell.”
- ³⁶ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 12.
- ³⁷ Ledger, n.d.—OHA
- ³⁸ “Major-General Henry Warner Slocum,” Syracuse Herald, 14 September 1902.—OHA
- ³⁹ Ledger.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.
- ⁴¹ “Loyal Legion,” 1.
- ⁴² See Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 12, “The Slocum House”, and “Auction Sales,” Syracuse Journal, 20 March 1866.—OHA
- ⁴³ “Shade Trees,” Syracuse Journal, 4 April 1860.—OHA
- ⁴⁴ “Second Assembly District,” 8 October 1858—OHA
- ⁴⁵ “A Story about Slocum,” Syracuse Journal, 15 June 1865.—OHA
- ⁴⁶ “Our Candidate for the Assembly,” Syracuse Standard, 19 October 1958.
- ⁴⁷ “Second Assembly District.”
- ⁴⁸ “Our Candidate for the Assembly.”
- ⁴⁹ “Slocum’s Votes Compared,” Syracuse Journal, 8 November 1865.—OHA Unfortunately, the paper that supplied these numbers does not offer a count of total voter turnout.
- ⁵⁰ No Title, Syracuse Journal, 25 April 1859.—OHA
- ⁵¹ “Slocum’s Political Pedigree,” Syracuse Journal, 12 November 1868.—OHA
- ⁵² S. Gurney Lapham, “Officer who Reached Highest Rank of Any Syracusan in the Civil War,” Syracuse Herald, 11 June 1911.—OHA
- ⁵³ “County Treasurer,” n.d.—OHA

⁵⁴ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 12.

⁵⁵ "Loyal Legion," 1.

⁵⁶ Fox, In Memoriam, 68.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵⁸ "Loyal Legion," 2.

⁵⁹ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 13.

⁶⁰ "General Slocum's Accounts," New York Tribune, 26 October 1865.—OHA

Chapter II

Advancement: Bull Run, the Peninsula Campaign, and Antietam

After arriving in Elmira, Slocum and his officers, Lieutenant Colonel Joseph J. Chambers and Major Joseph J. Bartlett, began the task of turning the Twenty-seventh New York into a respectable regiment. Most of the men under his command hailed from Binghamton, rather than his home in Syracuse. One company was made up almost exclusively of students from a seminary at Lima, in Livingston County near Rochester. Both of Slocum's previous biographers refer to the exceptional quality of the men and officers of the regiment and point to Slocum's love of discipline and drill as making it "one of the crack regiments in the war." While this might be hyperbolic, the Twenty-seventh proved its mettle on more than one occasion.¹

Performing such a transformation was no small task given the conditions he faced. Chaos infected the fledgling volunteers. Men often looked on their service as wholly conditional on their comfort and convenience, while many of the newly elected officers had no military experience what-so-ever.² After the war, Slocum remarked "that few, if any, of these volunteers realized, or were in any manner prepared for, the great work which Providence had developed upon them."³ Though speaking in general terms, he no doubt referred to personal experience when discussing the prevailing opinion of those who had served in the Regular Army:

They witnessed the manner of organizing the volunteers with distrust and alarm, for they could not believe that regiments in which the highest and most responsible positions were usually bartered away to men without any knowledge of the Art of War, or any qualifications for their high trusts, could ever be made effective troops.⁴

Slocum also complained about the lax state of discipline among the volunteers in general and their bias against the regulars. They “could not appreciate the necessity of the severe discipline insisted upon in the Regular service—and under the influence of incompetent and ignorant officers, [they] soon became prejudiced against the only class of men in the country qualified to...lead them safely through the terrible ordeal in store for [them].”⁵

While the men resided in Elmira, they took the name “Union Regiment.” They chose it due to the fact that the various companies were recruited from seven different counties. Though residing in vacant buildings prior to its organization, the Twenty-seventh soon moved into headquarters constructed specifically for its use at Southport, just across the river. Once there, Slocum set to work, his strict enforcement of discipline sometimes annoying the troops. He kept his men busy with a varied schedule of duties and drills. The Twenty-seventh spent its days on guard duty, drilling from Hardee’s Tactics, on dress parade, and cleaning the camp. Slocum generally kept the men busy eight hours a day. They grumbled a great deal about it, particularly when Slocum forced them to move rocks and grade the parade ground.⁶

By far though, the men complained the most about the rations. Their dislike for government food also provided some colorful episodes. On one occasion, the men of Company E objected to their supper on the grounds that it was so undercooked it must still be alive. They boxed it up to prevent it from escaping. Someone at that point proposed the idea of having a funeral for it and they formed into line. Parading to the tune of “The Rouge’s March,” they proceeded outside the camp and buried their dinner with full military honors. Private Albion W. Tourgee delivered a moving funeral speech.⁷

Slocum, absent from the camp at the time of the incident, heard of it on his return. After indulging in “[s]ome very strong language,” Slocum sent for Tourgee. Tourgee found him, “smoking, not very quietly, and...talking to himself quite emphatically.” Slocum asked the private if he was involved in “that operation.” Tourgee tried to avoid a direct answer, but Slocum wrung it out of him. He asked Tourgee if he “did not know that [his] conduct was derogatory to good discipline and in defiance of authority.” Tourgee, rather cheekily replied that he “never knew that beef had any particular rank.” Slocum, evidently amused by the answer, let the private off with only a lecture.⁸

Other dinner related incidents occurred off and on while the regiment remained at Elmira. On another occasion two companies overturned their mess tables. Slocum did not always respond negatively, taking this latter occasion to assure his men that though “they should have what the government intended for them to have,” that “it should be served in palatable style.” After that, the regimental historian declared, “everything was in apple-pie order, and Col. Slocum was idolized.”⁹

While all sources agree that the regiment respected Slocum, Slocum himself served as a publisher of the Twenty-seventh’s history. Its author, Charles B. Fairchild, knew Slocum well and, while likely truthful, probably put a positive spin on even uncomfortable situations.¹⁰ H. Seymour Hall, for instance, noted that these sorts of incidents continued throughout their time at Elmira. Even Fairchild, after claiming that everything went along in perfect order, notes two “memorable events.” One, the drumming out of a deserter, he passes over quickly, but the other, a near brawl with the Thirty-third New York, he relates in more detail.

A drunken member of the Twenty-seventh, Gibson Dunn, insulted the colonel of the Thirty-third, who threw the offender in the regiment's guardhouse. Upon hearing of their comrade's incarceration, the men of the Twenty-seventh formed what amounted to a mob and went to release Dunn. The Thirty-third turned out determined to stop them. Ironically, many of the men on both sides left in the middle of the camp's first prayer meeting in order to take part in the fight. Each side armed itself with rocks and drew up into line of battle. The few officers that remained with the men managed to keep the opposing sides from attacking until word could be sent to Slocum, who was quartered in the city. The colonel arrived, and called the regiment into formation. He gave them a long speech in the pitch darkness, assuring them that Dunn would be released without the need for such antics. This evidently cooled enough tempers to allow the groups to disperse peacefully, though whether it was with the "good feelings" that Fairchild describes is another matter. In the end, it turned out to be pointless anyway, as Dunn had already escaped captivity by removing a board from the roof of the guardhouse.¹¹

Shortly after this incident, possibly because of it, the Twenty-seventh moved from Southport to barracks on the Elmira Fairgrounds. There they received their first pay, \$8.60 each, for their first full month of service. They did not receive their first issue of government gear for another four days. Putting on the blue for the first time seems to have had a sobering effect on the men. They began to realize that they were soldiers, and their civilian life, at least for now, had ended. Slocum allowed his newly minted soldiers to return home for a few days. When they returned, on 5 July, Uncle Sam officially mustered the Twenty-seventh New York into his service.¹²

Slocum sent Chambers ahead to Washington to arrange for the men's food and quarters in town, and he followed with the Twenty-seventh on 10 July 1861.¹³ Along the way, the Twenty-seventh sat down with the people of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, who had prepared a fine supper for them. Like many others at the time, the people there were very enthusiastic; many of the ladies in particular could not wait to serve all sorts of good food to the troops. Passing through Baltimore proved to be exciting, as the city remained wracked with sectional tension. Mobs had threatened to riot against troops who had passed through earlier, as Maryland, the northernmost slave state in the east, forcibly debated secession. Slocum refused to let his men load their guns, but had them fix bayonets. The Twenty-seventh marched through town without incident, treated to raucous cheers for both the Union and Jeff Davis. They arrived in Washington just in time to find enough empty beds for the entire regiment in Camp Anderson, on Franklin Square northeast of the White House. Unfortunately, Chambers failed in his mission, and they found only two barrels of salt pork waiting to feed all ten companies. The men went to bed that night with no supper, furious at Chambers, who apparently had spent the time "refreshing his own inner man."¹⁴ The next day, they were attached to the First Brigade of David Hunter's Second Division in Irvin McDowell's army, and presumably received rations.¹⁵

Slocum kept his men busy in Washington with more drill and camp chores. On 15 July, the regiment had the novel experience of actually firing the guns they had carried with them from Elmira. They had been issued .58 caliber Harper's Ferry rifle-muskets that "would kick about as hard as a government mule." In fact, one soldier later joked that in battle his firearm "kicked him back over a rail, and kicked him several times after

he was down.” Slocum arranged for his men each to fire twenty rounds in a vacant lot about a mile from camp. This was the only target practice the regiment had before embarking on the road to Manassas.¹⁶

The Confederates had mustered two small armies to oppose the Federals in Virginia. One, under General Pierre G. T. Beauregard, most recent commandant of West Point, sat at Centreville, staring across the Potomac towards McDowell. The other was stationed in the Shenandoah Valley under Joseph E. Johnston and faced off with Union General Robert Patterson.

Irvin McDowell was born in Columbus, Ohio, on 15 October 1818. He studied in France before attending West Point, graduating in 1838, but returning to teach tactics to some of the very same soldiers that now faced him on the battlefield. He performed well during the Mexican War, where he served as the adjutant general of the army. Due to the patronage of Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, he received a brigadier generalship when the war broke out, even though he had never commanded a single man on the field. Lincoln then placed him at the head of the army about to move against Richmond.¹⁷

McDowell had no intentions of going anywhere. His army was completely inexperienced, and many units failed to live up to even lax military standards. The antics of the Twenty-seventh give just a taste of the many types of foolishness that would disappear before the war was over but for the time being never seemed to end. Many thought of soldiering as a game, and wanted to join up quickly and get their share of the glory before the war ended. Some regiments remained unequipped and nearly all had received only cursory training and discipline. Yet, Lincoln and the papers demanded

action. And so, with its commander already doubting both the outcome and his forces' abilities, the Union army prepared to advance. In reality, the Confederates were no better prepared.¹⁸

McDowell proposed to move on Manassas Junction, an important railroad hub, north of Richmond whilst Patterson attacked Harper's Ferry at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. If Union forces pushed forward quickly enough, McDowell hoped to catch the Confederates before Johnston and Beauregard could merge their armies.¹⁹

Slocum later remembered McDowell's plan as a good idea that degenerated into a comedy of errors, mostly due to inexperience. He lamented the fact that the government had publicly issued the order to advance over a week before it was to start. "Just think of it!" he said, "Three years later there were no military men who would not have laughed at such an order, advising your enemy when you intend to move."²⁰ He also noted that on the day they were to break camp, he was handed, like a railway ticket, a notice detailing the names of the officers and the numbers they commanded. He felt sure "a copy of that would be immediately placed in the hands of the enemy."²¹

The march itself proved to be the next act in the show. Sometime between two and three o'clock on the afternoon of 16 July, the Twenty-seventh received the order to move and got underway. While professing no concern over the outcome of the battle, sheer terror of what the rebels had in store for them slowed the Union advance to a crawl. Marching until midnight, McDowell's army paused for supper around 6:00, and ended up covering only about twelve miles. The Twenty-seventh was no exception to the

unthinking fear that pervaded the march (though its historian mainly blames felled trees for their pace).²²

Obstructions may have slowed them somewhat, but the major offender proved to be inexperience. Slocum noted, “the dread on the part of our men of those ‘masked batteries’ and ‘the fierce black horse cavalry,’ neither of which ever had any existence, except in the imaginative brains of our newspaper reporters.”²³ The army inched forward, men and volunteer officers alike terrified of the reports of hidden cannon around every bend. When some noise or odd sight set them off, they stopped and deployed, advancing tentatively in line. The sound of galloping hooves also horrified them, as they grew more and more certain that the ferocious Confederate cavalry would soon bear down on them from behind.²⁴

An incident that took place on the march did nothing to improve the volunteer’s view of the regulars. As they made their way, Slocum’s men and a regiment from Brooklyn, the Fourteenth New York State Militia, witnessed an example of the severe discipline that was routine in the regular army.²⁵ The Fourteenth U.S. Infantry under Major George Sykes became the object of their disdain. The division had bivouacked on the Warrenton Turnpike, near Centerville, when the regulars were called into line within sight of the two New York regiments. There, the Fourteenth Infantry watched the whipping and branding of two of their number, while the volunteer units looked on. Each man received thirty lashes on a bare back and had the letter D burned into his hips. The neophyte warriors denounced it as “a sickening sight,” righteously proclaiming that it “was the last case of flogging in the army, as this barbarous style of punishment was soon

after abolished.” It is doubtful that this episode accomplished much more among the volunteers than to further ingrain their dislike of the regulars.²⁶

In the Shenandoah, the Union army facing Johnston had one major job: keep him there. Unfortunately, their commander, Patterson, was an elderly man who proved to be past his prime. Johnston, on orders from Jefferson Davis, managed to get his troops safely to Manassas by rail in time for the battle. Unfortunately for McDowell, Patterson did nothing to stop Johnston.

When McDowell arrived across the creek from the Confederate army near Manassas Junction, he planned to attack its left flank the next morning. Oddly enough, the commander facing him, Beauregard, had exactly the same battle plan in mind. Both sides weakened their left flanks in order to build up the right and deliver a crushing blow, but McDowell struck first. The Confederates had expected him to try a head on assault, and accordingly they guarded a stone bridge on the most direct route from McDowell’s position. Instead, McDowell’s troops came marching via Sudley’s Ford to the north, while two brigades under William T. Sherman and Robert Schenck kept the Confederates occupied at the bridge. Confederate Colonel Nathan “Shanks” Evans opposed this flanking force with a scant two under strength regiments,. Sherman and Schenck made a good deal of noise early in the day, hoping to cover the real attack, but by seven-thirty Evans knew the attack would not come from that direction. The flanking movement managed to avoid Confederate intelligence for an hour longer. When Union troops poured over the ford, they found barely 700 Confederates to oppose them. They attacked the rebels quickly, pressing them backwards into an open field at the top of a ridge known as Matthews Hill. Before long, they pushed Evans down its far side.²⁷

Hunter's division served as part of the flanking column, leaving early on the day of the battle, 21 July 1861. Slocum's troops in particular got off to a slow start from Fairfax Court House sometime between one and two o'clock in the morning, following in the rear of a battalion of marines under Major John J. Reynolds.²⁸ Due to another comic episode, the march lasted a full eight hours.²⁹ A baggage wagon broke down, and no one yet had the sense to move it to the side and allow the army to pass. Instead, the entire column of men waited in line for the vehicle to be fixed. Also, it apparently never occurred to Hunter or any of his subordinates to give the order for the troops to lie down and rest in the meantime. The troops simply stood in place for several hours in the damp twilight, wearing themselves out.³⁰

The Twenty-seventh finally arrived on the field near Sudley Church in the vicinity of the ford and the entire division got thirty minutes rest.³¹ Shortly thereafter, they double-quickened into action on Matthew's Hill. While on their way, they passed the Eighth New York, dressed in gray state uniforms, tending their wounded. A group of Confederate infantry and artillery tried to make a stand near the Stone House at the bottom of the hill. The Twenty-seventh charged them, driving them away from their position. The Confederates scrambled up the side of rise on the far side of the road called the Henry House Hill. Slocum's men then shot at a battery of six howitzers that was firing as fast as it could into the Union ranks. After the men let off eleven rounds at the battery, the Confederates withdrew back towards their newly formed position on Henry House Hill. Slocum ordered the color guard to a position to the left and rear of the Stone House in order to close up his regiment.³²

So far, Slocum's Twenty-seventh had performed well, but another one of the strange occurrences that characterized so much of the Bull Run campaign soon betrayed it. As the regiment re-grouped, they saw a unit of gray clad soldiers approaching them through a ravine, colors furled. Thinking it could be the Eighth New York coming to their support, Slocum paid them no heed, but the men of the Twenty-seventh began to argue amongst themselves, some firing at the newcomers, others trying to stop them. Someone—survivors could never agree just who—called out for the regiment to show its colors. The "Eighth New York" unfurled a Confederate flag and poured small arms fire into the Twenty-seventh's right flank. They were in fact a southern regiment that had only lately retreated down Matthews Hill, hence they approached from behind Slocum. The Confederate colonel used the opportunity afforded by the confusion to put his men into an orderly line of battle, while the Twenty-seventh remained unformed. Some northern soldiers began to return fire at will, and despite the best efforts of Slocum and Bartlett, they began to fall back onto Matthew's Hill, some taking up positions along the creek between the two hills.³³

As the Twenty-seventh withdrew, a shot struck Slocum in the thigh and he had to be carried from the field, placing the regiment in the hands of Major Bartlett. A surgeon and several soldiers came to Slocum's assistance, but because of Confederate artillery, they had to move the colonel several times before his wound could be dressed. They finally carried him back to Sudley Church, where they were shelled again, but Slocum suffered no further wounds. Later, they removed him to Fairfax Courthouse, and finally to Washington for recovery.³⁴

Back on the field, Bartlett pulled the Twenty-seventh into the woods to rest and refill their cartridge boxes. They reformed on the top of Matthew's Hill and marched towards to Henry House Hill, where the fighting now raged. Confederate reinforcements had arrived just in time to stem the flow of McDowell's assault and made a stand on the crest of the hill. Unfortunately for the Union, Johnston's arrival from the Valley had turned the tide. The Twenty-seventh passed the Stone House again, making its way up towards the Henry House. They made it to the crest just in time to see the Union line crumble for the final time that day.³⁵

The Twenty-seventh retired in an orderly fashion amidst the chaos. Orderly, that is, until it passed the Sudley Church, where it disintegrated almost completely, becoming swamped in a mass of men, horses, wagons, and field pieces, all vaguely pointed towards Washington. Someone raised the cry of "Black Horse Cavalry!" which only added to the confusion. Several companies managed to stay together, but many of the Twenty-seventh's soldiers became lost in the mass of frightened men and animals. Over the next few days, the broken group made its way back to its camp at Franklin Square in Washington.³⁶

Members of the Twenty-seventh, Slocum included, carefully insisted during and after the war that their regiment managed to quit the actual field of battle in an orderly fashion. Slocum, perhaps, may be excused for a bit of exaggeration, as he had to rely on the reports of others for his version. Though the men of the Twenty-seventh had little to be ashamed of, neither did they have much to brag over. Their first attack went well, but when presented with the odd regiment on their flank, they lost order and had to retreat. Bartlett, for whatever reason, did not get them back into the battle until late afternoon,

just in time to retreat safely. Their coherence lasted only for a short while, after which they disintegrated like the rest of the army.

After the battle, Slocum recovered rapidly. By 25 July he was already sitting up in bed writing his wife. As far as his regiment's performance, he told her, he was "as happy as a clam in high water," describing it as "one of the first in, and last out."³⁷

Though no doubt his wound hurt badly, he put a brave face on it for his wife:

I had almost forgotten to tell you about my wound. It is doing well and pains me but little. I would agree to take another just like it if I could thereby secure as good a conduct on the part of my regiment when it takes the field again.³⁸

Strangely enough, there is some confusion as to exactly where he received his wound. In his official report, Bartlett said it came on Slocum's right thigh, but Fairchild, in the official history of the regiment, claims that it passed through his hip. A Syracuse newspaper at the time called it a "flesh wound in the calf of his leg." It is doubtful that he was wounded so high as the hip, as such a wound would no doubt have been permanently debilitating, and Slocum healed completely. The other two options are still reasonable. In any case, one of Slocum's men, H. Seymour Hall, is safe simply noting that he received "a bullet through the leg."³⁹

After his initial stay in Washington, Slocum returned to Syracuse to continue his recovery. Upon his arrival, a large crowd greeted him at the platform cheering and waving flags. Another wounded soldier, though of lower rank, also arrived at the same time, but was overlooked by the rambunctious crowd. A local paper later made note of this, and Slocum, reading the article took it to heart. On his subsequent visits home during the war, he consciously tried to avoid crowds and celebrations. While in Syracuse, he still relied upon the use of a cane, but continued to recover. Slocum

received a promotion to brigadier-general on 9 August 1861 at home, and took command of the Second Brigade of William B. Franklin's Division.⁴⁰ Eventually, after he had healed enough to take the field, Slocum took over active command of his brigade in early September 1861.⁴¹

It took some maneuvering for Slocum to establish firm control of his brigade. On one occasion in either late September or early October, he issued an order concerning depredations to private property. Eighteen officers of the Sixteenth New York objected strenuously, thinking it too severe. They "respectfully demanded" that Slocum modify it. The general responded by arresting the whole lot and confining them to their tents. A day or two passed, but suddenly the apologies began pouring into his headquarters and he released the men. As he put it, "it had a most wonderful effect."⁴²

One member of the Sixteenth, though, seemed pleased with Slocum's appointment. Frederick F. Wead, newly appointed to Slocum's staff, wrote to his family on 10 October that Slocum was "altogether...one of the most admirable men whom I personally know." Wead looked forward to serving with Slocum, especially because, were he to take another assignment, it would "deprive my future years of the satisfaction of having been present at the death blow...of the Slaveholder's Revolt."⁴³

Wead offers historians a glimpse into Slocum's time as a brigade and division commander. Overall, he was very impressed with Slocum, invoking his name as a child might a father or an uncle. Slocum took Wead under his wing, first attaching him to his staff and later lobbying to get him a position as a regimental officer. While Wead wanted to stay attached to Slocum's staff, the general eventually encouraged him to seek a lieutenant colonelcy, a position with less immediate appeal but more possibilities for

promotion. In this, Slocum showed a great deal more realism than Wead. Slocum maintained before the war that the conflict would not be a short one. By sending Wead, whom he described as “an energetic and capable officer very familiar with the details of the service,” back down to the regimental level, he demonstrated that his opinion had not changed.⁴⁴

Wead’s letters also accent Slocum’s continuing dedication to military maneuvers and discipline. Slocum drilled his brigade incessantly, devoting every morning to working with his brigade as a whole. Wead stated that “[e]very pleasant day (and that means nearly every day...) we have out our four battalions and the General puts them through the most complicated evolutions of the line for two or three hours.” While Wead and Slocum departed on various other chores during the afternoon, Slocum likely had his colonels fill the time with practice on the regimental level and camp duties. Occasionally, General Franklin called the entire division out to take part in maneuvers. Unfortunately, this was rare, as the division’s entire drill ground was only about one half of a square mile, and did not allow for much movement on that scale.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, Lincoln had appointed a new commander for the eastern Union armies. George Brinton McClellan was born in Philadelphia on 3 December 1826, a little less than a year before Slocum. Of distinguished Connecticut ancestry, he had graduated from West Point in 1846 second in a class that produced twenty Civil War generals. During the Mexican War, he served on Winfield Scott’s staff and garnered a great deal of attention for his gallantry and engineering ability. After spending three years as an instructor at West Point, he traveled over seas to observe the armies of Europe in the Crimean War. Everything about the man seemed to point to a great destiny. He even

earned the nickname “Little Napoleon.” An arrogant man by long habit, McClellan carried himself in a manner that conveyed confidence and assurance.⁴⁶

After McClellan’s initial successes in the West, Lincoln called on the young general to reform the masses of men coalescing around the capital after the defeat at Bull Run. McClellan managed to do just that. He organized the camps, made sure they were clean, and re-equipped the men with standard arms and uniforms. He drilled his men constantly, parading them in their new gear and giving them rousing speeches. The food improved notably. Soon the men began to feel like soldiers again, and the officers in particular grew to idolize McClellan. He also gave his force the name it would be known by from then on: the Army of the Potomac.

McClellan stayed in the vicinity of Washington, drilling his men and gathering supplies for what seemed an eternity to Lincoln. The President and the Congress grew more and more restless with his inactivity. At one point, the President reportedly even suggested to McClellan that if the general was not using the army, Lincoln would like to borrow it for awhile. Eventually, after what seemed like endless prodding, McClellan proposed a plan of operations. Instead of advancing on Richmond from the north, as everyone expected, he would transport his entire army, numbering over 100,000 men, by boat to the far end of the peninsula on which the Confederate capital sat. They already had a safe landing zone at Ft. Monroe, taken earlier in the war.

By advancing east to west instead of north to south, McClellan gained several advantages. First, he would defy expectations. More important, the rivers in Virginia flow from west to east. Had McClellan advanced from the north, Johnston, now commanding the Confederate Army in Virginia, could have contested his approach at

every crossing, and there were many. By starting at the tip of the peninsula, McClellan insured that his road to Richmond would be relatively unobstructed by such natural obstacles. In fact, such a line turned them into advantages. With both the York and James Rivers flowing parallel to his approach, McClellan could use them for solid, easily utilized lines of supply that extended from the coast almost to the doorstep of the Confederate capital. Though rightly criticized for his execution (or lack thereof), McClellan's basic plan was sound.

Slocum's brigade received several false marching alarms before the army actually moved anywhere.⁴⁷ This might help to explain why the real order apparently caught Slocum by surprise. It arrived at his headquarters on the night of 11 March 1862, but Slocum had gone into Washington and had not returned. Wead wired him and, getting no reply, actually rode into town in search of him. He found him on the corner of Fourteenth Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, and the pair started immediately to the stable. His horse was missing, so Slocum managed to find a buggy and get to his brigade in time.⁴⁸

For all of Slocum's haste, the army accomplished nothing important. McClellan, finally ordered into action by Lincoln, moved south toward the Rebels at Manassas, but really had nothing planned. When they discovered that Johnston had retreated, he pulled back up to Washington. With Lincoln still pressuring him, McClellan implemented his original plan of moving against Richmond by way of the Peninsula. He ordered transports assembled and began to move his troops to the landings. His immediate army numbered around 100,000, and to this he expected to add another 40,000 under

McDowell, which Lincoln kept in the vicinity of Washington until he felt it safe to release them.

When its turn came, Slocum's brigade left for the peninsula along with the rest of the army. Slocum loaded his men onto their assigned transports and arrived at Fort Monroe. Slocum took up a position in front of Confederate General John Magruder on 22 April 1862. Magruder occupied a series of defenses around Yorktown, including some of those originally held by the Continental Army in 1781. Though George Washington would have been glad to have them, Magruder had only about 10,000 men with which to confront McClellan's rapidly multiplying thousands. If reinforcements could not be sent soon, Macgruder would find himself in the unenviable position of confronting a force roughly ten times the size of his own. In order to stave off the attack he felt sure would soon be coming, Magruder staged a show of strength for his Federal visitors, but a show was all it was. He paraded units back and forth across his defenses, had officers shouting orders to non-existent regiments, and trains act as if more reinforcements arrived by the hour. Shenanigans such as these would save the Confederates more than once in the upcoming campaign.⁴⁹

McClellan swallowed the performance. Allen Pinkerton, of Pinkerton's Detective Agency, served as McClellan's chief spy. Unfortunately, he managed only to prove that his intelligence (in either sense of the word) could not be trusted. His flawed information gathering techniques greatly exaggerated Confederate strength, feeding the misconceptions McClellan had come up with on his own. McClellan moved very carefully, actually convinced Magruder outnumbered him by at least two to one. He wanted everything perfect, before making his move. In addition, he kept up a series of

whining communications with Washington, begging that McDowell be sent to his aid. So, instead of sweeping by the Yorktown defenses, McClellan laid siege to them. He called up his heavy guns, hoping to pummel the Confederates into surrendering. He ordered miles of crisscross trenches built. As such, instead of pressing rapidly on to Richmond, his attack would take weeks.

Suddenly, just as McClellan's noose seemed about to close around MacGruder's neck, the Confederates withdrew. Slocum, along with the rest of Franklin's Division, followed them up the Peninsula. Along the way, Slocum performed able service at a heavy skirmish at Eltham's Landing. As McClellan advanced after the retreating Confederates, he sent Franklin's Division, on transports, to West Point to try to cut off Johnston's retreat. Unfortunately, this movement came two days too late; the Rebels had already passed. Franklin disembarked his division at Eltham plantation on 7 May, arraying them across the open fields. He posted skirmishers in the woods surrounding the plantation.⁵⁰

Johnston, aware of this new threat but fearing to bring on a general engagement, sent John Bell Hood and his Texas Brigade with an assortment of supporting regiments to stave off Franklin until the army's trains were well clear of him. Hood, a bear of a man who loved a good fight, pushed his troops into the woods and drove in Franklin's pickets. A general firing broke out, primarily on Franklin's right, held by John Newton's Third Brigade. Slocum dispatched two of his regiments to Newton's assistance, but this gesture proved to be too late. After charges and counter charges, several of the Yankee regiments, fearful that Hood had flanked them, broke for the rear. They managed to reform closer to the landing and stave off defeat. The Federals lost around 186 men as

opposed to Hood's scant 48. Overall, the battle proved to be of little importance, but did effectively quash McClellan's feeble flanking attempt.⁵¹

When General Franklin took command of the Sixth Corps, Slocum succeeded him in command of the First Division. Less than a year from his interview with New York's governor in which he asked for a captaincy and a small battery of artillery, Slocum found himself at the head of three brigades totaling over 9,000 men.⁵² Things could not have looked better as the Army of the Potomac moved forward, straddling the Chickahominy River just outside the Confederate capital. Slocum could hear Richmond's clocks chime the hour.

Unfortunately, "Stonewall" Jackson's Shenandoah Valley campaign had worried Lincoln. He decided to retain the 40,000 under McDowell around Washington. McClellan chose to view this decision as a betrayal on the part of Lincoln administration, whereby traitors had denied him the edge he needed to capture Richmond. From that moment on, he convinced himself that the entire campaign was a failure. In a few short hours, McClellan's grand scheme changed from a careful attempt to take Richmond, to a desperate search for an excuse to retreat and still have it look good. After all, if the "Little Napoleon" had lost his campaign (which in reality he had not), then the defeat must become as spectacular as any victory could have been.

Exactly how much Slocum bought into this new outlook is not really known. Still, some educated inferences can be made. Slocum served directly under Franklin, an old friend of McClellan's and one of his most trusted men. Virtually every bit of information he received would have been filtered through Franklin, skewing it in McClellan's favor. Slocum seems to have been taken with McClellan, as were many

others who commanded during his tenure. As late as 1864, McClellan thought he could count on Slocum to serve as an advocate for him in the army during his Democratic presidential bid, even though he acknowledged Slocum to be a Republican.⁵³

Again, a look into Wead's letters is revealing. When the army reached Harrison's Landing after the campaign, Wead wrote several letters home to explain how they got there. The defense he crafted could very well have come from the pen of McClellan himself:

Beyond doubt the rebels have over 200,000 men about Richmond...[other matters being equal] their central position makes their 200,000 equal to 300,000.... To counter this advantage of "interior lines" we must have one half more troops than they have. To get there, even if the dullard of the War Dept. can be driven to see the necessity of such augmentation...is a work of long time, as McClellan will not risk anything on so critical a juncture.... Yet, we are in a desperate position, there is no disguising that we are here against McClellan's judgment and protest.

Even so, Wead maintained that "[w]e have a wonderful army." As there is nothing original to Wead in the above statements, it is not too great a stretch of logic to suppose it was a common opinion in and around Slocum's headquarters. Wead openly admits he got a great deal of his information from Franklin. Though he does not explicitly mention Slocum, he likely would have noted if his patron's views differed from Franklin's.⁵⁴

While McClellan sulked over his imagined betrayal, he arrayed his army against Richmond. He approached from the east, and placed his forces along a north-south line, bending around the city to the north and west. The Chickahominy River flowed through his lines, effectively dividing his army in two. McClellan ordered several bridges built to overcome this hazard, and then gingerly worked his way forward towards Johnston's entrenchments.

Though the Yankees seemed to think they had plenty of time, Confederate high command grew increasingly frustrated with Johnston's inaction. Finally, Johnston launched an assault on McClellan's corps south of the river. McClellan's men managed to repulse their attackers in what came to be called the Battle of Seven Pines/Fair Oaks. More importantly, shrapnel wounded Johnston as he rode forward to observe the fighting. In his place, Davis appointed his own personal advisor: Robert E. Lee.

McClellan continued to advance very slowly, giving Lee plenty of time to reorganize his army. Despite McClellan's complaints, the armies were evenly matched, with McClellan possibly enjoying a slight advantage. Lee's plan called for a vicious assault on the corps north of the Chickahominy. One force would charge the Yankee entrenchments head on, while Jackson and his foot cavalry would attack from the flank and rear. If all went well, Lee planned not only to push McClellan away from Richmond, but to annihilate him completely. At the Battle of Mechanicsville, Lee's men surged forward to the attack. When the smoke cleared from the air, Lee's men pulled back defeated, and McClellan remained unmoved.

Strangely enough, Slocum's Division managed to miss both Seven Pines and Mechanicsville. They served north of the river when Johnston launched his ill-fated attack in the former, and had moved to the south side of the Chickahominy before Lee attacked in the latter. Their luck would soon run out.

Though the Confederate assault had done nothing to force the Yankees to change their plans, it had a devastating effect on McClellan's morale. He was certain that legions of screaming rebels would overrun his position and crush his army. As such, he took the opportunity to change his grand campaign from one to take Richmond into a

masterful retreat in the face of an enemy he felt sure outnumbered him two or three to one. Prior to this time, the Army of the Potomac had used the York River for its supply line. Now, McClellan thought to retreat southwards, away from Richmond, to the James River. Accordingly, he began to pull his troops, including those Lee had attacked at Mechanicsville over to the south bank of the Chickahominy.

Lee had no reason to expect his opponent to retreat. As he prepared for his next attack, his men discovered the Federal works empty, with no idea where the Yankees could have gone. It simply made no sense for McClellan to take the course he had. When Lee next located his enemy, he discovered that they had in fact begun a retreat. Knowing that his chances for destroying the Federal army north of the Chickahominy were slipping away, Lee ordered an attack on 27 June. He had his men attack the Union rearguard, hoping for a break through. If he could somehow prevent their retreat and force a surrender, a good portion of McClellan's army would cease to exist. The assault went in that morning, and the Federals soon found their position strongly pressed. They occupied a curved line along Boatswain's Swamp, their precious bridges protected in the rear. General Fitz-John Porter had command of the field. He faced Confederate assaults on all sides as Lee desperately tried to prevent his escape. As the day grew old, Porter's troops began to waiver. The Confederates showed no inclination of drawing off.

Though he and the other commanders had likely been listening to the fighting all morning, Slocum did not become officially involved until a courier arrived from General Franklin at two o'clock in the afternoon. Franklin, heeding Porter's cries for help, directed Slocum to send reinforcements as soon as possible. Slocum immediately ordered Newton's Brigade across the river. Before that force had gone far, a second

order calling up the entire division came. He set the rest of his troops moving without hesitation.⁵⁵

The division crossed the river and arrived in Porter's rear. Very soon, a member of Porter's staff appeared bearing orders for Slocum. The Confederates pressed Porter along a wide front, threatening to break through in several places. To meet these various threats, Porter sliced regiments and brigades off of Slocum's division, sending them hither and yon across the field to trouble spots. Within short order, Porter assigned every part of Slocum's command, except his old brigade under his former major, now colonel, Joseph Bartlett. This unit Slocum directed into line on the extreme left. Soon, Porter ordered Bartlett's brigade to another part of the field as well, sending it instead to the far right.⁵⁶

As night fell, the Confederates finally achieved the breakthrough they had been seeking all day long. In fact, they managed to create several of them almost simultaneously. The Federals proved too busy on all fronts to retaliate against any of them with any kind of significant counterattack. Porter's line disintegrated and he had no choice but to retreat in the most orderly fashion possible. He rapidly contracted his lines back towards the crossings. Darkness finally put an end to the fighting, saving Porter from possible annihilation.

Porter's decision to break up Slocum's Division as he did is questionable. In effect, Porter reduced Slocum to a mere spectator in that afternoon's battle. Slocum certainly could not be expected to exert any sort of reasonable control over his men. All of the division and brigade drills Slocum had pounded into their heads became useless. They simply had to fight where they were. Many regiments did not know the ones in line

next to them. In the ensuing confusion, it is not surprising that some became lost and separated. The Confederates captured two units, the Fourth New Jersey and Eleventh Pennsylvania, nearly intact. Porter's spur-of-the-moment organization proved to be so poor that the captured regiments simply did not receive the order to retreat. Porter's decision also insured that whatever help Slocum could have given in directing the retreat after the lines crumbled would be minimal. Had he been able to lead his division in any kind of coherent fashion, the Confederates might still have won, but the Union retreat could have been slower and more orderly.

Slocum's division paid a heavy price at Gaines Mill. Of the 8,000 men in his division who had crossed the bridge in Porter's support, the list of killed, wounded, and missing came to 2,021. The loss in responsible officers, Slocum stated in his report, "was particularly severe, not only in numbers, but in the character of those killed and wounded." Still, the Army of the Potomac managed to cross the river in safety. Lee's opportunity to destroy that half of McClellan's force slipped away. Unfortunately for the Yankees, he would soon be ready to try again.⁵⁷

McClellan resumed his retreat immediately, and Lee made another attempt to destroy him at the Battle of Savage's Station. The Army of the Potomac's rear guard managed to hold the Confederates off. Lee took another opportunity to pitch into his foe at Glendale, an important road crossing. While Jackson continued to press their rear, Lee threw James Longstreet and A. P. Hill at the center of the Union army. If successful, he could split the Yankees in two and destroy the halves one at a time.

Lee hit the Federals hard, but once again, they managed to hang on. Slocum held the far right flank of the Union line in this battle. It was his job to control the

northwestern approaches to Glendale. In addition to the three batteries attached to his division, he also had another two loaned him from the Fifth Corps. Due to his distance from Franklin, Slocum, for practical purposes, exercised an independent command. Benjamin Huger, with the largest, freshest Confederate division, faced him down the Charles City Road. Lee had picked Huger to lead off his assault. Huger moved so slowly that his men did not even come into direct contact with his enemy. In addition, Slocum's men felled dozens of trees to block his path. Instead of clearing the road, Huger tried to cut a new one. This proved such an arduous task that it was late afternoon before the Confederates even came close enough to lob artillery shells into Slocum's lines.⁵⁸

Rather than press on with an infantry attack, Huger decided to push forward two batteries to pound his enemy. Slocum would have none of this. As the first few rounds fell within his lines, he posted all five of his batteries against Huger's two, giving the Confederates the worst of it. Other than this small affair, Slocum loaned a brigade to Philip Kearny, and it participated in the final push against the Confederates in his front.⁵⁹

Having survived his second brush with destruction at Glendale, McClellan continued moving south. He drew his army up onto an impressive defensive position at Malvern Hill that night. One more march and they would be safe at the river, under the guns of the Union Navy. Lee made one last desperate assault against the hill the next day, and his men died by the thousands. Unlike the previous battles, Malvern Hill proved to be a lopsided Union victory. Slocum's Division, placed on the back of the hill, did not participate at all during the course of the fight. Soon, they arrived at Harrison's Landing on the James, intact and in good order. At the landing, Slocum received a bit of good

news. As of 4 July 1862, he was promoted to major general of volunteers for services rendered during the Seven Days, particularly Gaines' Mill and the march to the James.⁶⁰

As McClellan hovered near the river, delivering any number of excuses for his failure, events moved apace to the north. The force remaining with McDowell received a new commander. John Pope, a successful Union general in the western theatre, began building an army just outside Washington. Pope's Army of Virginia prepared to march on Richmond directly, posing another threat that Lee could not afford to ignore. Lincoln, tired of McClellan but unable to remove him due to his popularity with the troops, took a different tack. If he could not throw McClellan out, he would pull his army out from under him. He began breaking off groups of men from the Army of the Potomac and attaching them to the Army of Virginia. With luck, McClellan would be a commander with no army, and Pope would be in Richmond before the year was out.

Slocum's turn to be parted from McClellan came soon enough. On 16 August, he marched his command away from Harrison's Landing and five days later reached Newport News. The next day the division boarded transports bound for the wharves at Aquia Creek, but somewhere along the way it was diverted to Alexandria, Virginia, where it disembarked on 24 August. Pope had already begun his advance on Manassas, and Henry Halleck, overall commander of the Union armies, worried about Pope's safety. Knowing that Confederate forces were somewhere in the area, Halleck ordered Slocum to send a brigade through to Centreville.⁶¹

On 27 August, Slocum moved a body of troops across Bull Run Bridge in obedience to Halleck. Two miles beyond the bridge, his men collided with a portion of "Stonewall" Jackson's forces, sent by Lee to contain Pope's advance. Slocum's troops

were badly outnumbered, subjected to a murderous artillery barrage, and emerged handled very roughly. A number of Slocum's men were killed or wounded, including the commander of the expedition, George W. Taylor.⁶²

Not long after Taylor's defeat, Pope met Jackson on the battlefield of First Bull Run. Jackson had given his opponent quite the run around, hiding from him, and even raiding the Yankee supply depot at Manassas. Jackson managed to hold off Pope's attacks long enough for Lee and the rest of the army to arrive on the Union flank. The Confederate attack crushed Pope, and his badly beaten forces withdrew toward Washington, though in better order than McDowell's had done a year and a month before.

Slocum and his division actually missed the battle. In accordance to orders, he took his division to Annandale on 29 August, a position south of Fairfax Court House, on the route to Manassas Junction. Slocum put his men into line astride the Warrenton Pike, acting as a net to catch the many stragglers streaming back from Pope's army. They worked at this job for a day and a night, after which they fell back into the fortifications around Centreville. After Pope's humiliating failure, his army faded from the prominence and McClellan, with the Army of the Potomac, ascended again to the spotlight. Having finally returned to Washington with the rest of his men, he began to rebuild his forces.⁶³

On the heels of his second success at Bull Run, Lee decided the time had come for a full-scale invasion of the North. His plan called for the Army of Northern Virginia to move into Maryland, reducing the Federal garrison at Harper's Ferry. Lee would then send forces to hold the various passes along the Shenandoah Valley, using it as a

protected supply line. He knew that once he set foot onto free soil, even McClellan could not help but attack him. Lee would fortify and then wait for the sea of blue uniforms to dash themselves against the rock upon which his army stood. With McClellan destroyed, Lee hoped negotiations would soon follow. At the very least, the armies would be away from Virginia for a time, giving the Old Dominion a chance to recover.

At first, everything went according to Lee's plan. He marched straight into Maryland and started his movement against Harper's Ferry. McClellan, true to form, followed him slowly, almost grudgingly. Unfortunately for Lee, his men lost a detailed copy of his plan of campaign, a copy that quickly fell into Federal hands. McClellan now knew exactly where Lee was going and what he would do. The Little Napoleon actually began to move.

On the morning of 14 September 1862, Franklin's Sixth Corps found its way blocked by the Confederates at Crampton's Gap on South Mountain. Franklin, determined to carry the pass by infantry assault, sent Slocum's division through Burkittsville, Maryland to attack the Confederate right.⁶⁴

Several Confederate commanders held different parts of the field, including Howell Cobb and Thomas Munford. They set what infantry they had at the base of the mountain along a stone wall, lining their artillery, Chew's Battery and a portion of the Portsmouth Battery, roughly parallel to the wall about halfway up the slope. The Rebels had an excellent view from the side of the mountain, and the Yankees no cover whatsoever. As the Sixth Corps drew near, the Rebel artillery opened on them, but discovered that their guns did not have the range to reach the enemy. To remedy this,

they moved a pair of Napoleons to the top of the slope. Two dismounted regiments of cavalry took up positions to the left and right of the road through the pass.⁶⁵

Slocum drove the Confederate pickets from their positions in Burkettsville itself. His old brigade under Bartlett pursued them back to the mountain where they came under fire from the Confederate batteries on the crest. Slocum, in no particular hurry, gave the order to halt so he could mass his troops. Years after the engagement, Bartlett reported that Franklin and his division commanders met behind a building in town to enjoy a few cigars and discuss matters. A disagreement arose over which side of the road they should use to attack the position. When someone asked Slocum who he intended to lead the assault, he replied that he planned to have Bartlett do it. Franklin called Bartlett to him and had him decide the question of which side of the road to use. In the meantime, the men took cover in the woods and his artillery played on the enemy while Bartlett and Slocum made preparations. According to the account given by Bartlett, Slocum deferred to his judgment on the tactical formation that he would use on the grounds that Franklin had let him choose the approach. As the general saw it, it would only be fair to let him finish the job. Still, it is likely that in reality Slocum's pride interfered with his judgement. Franklin, for whatever reason, had chosen Bartlett's opinion over Slocum's. Slocum, irritated, then refused to maintain active control of his troops, almost pouting over Franklin's slight. Bartlett arrayed the men in two lines, one behind the other. Each line was one regiment wide. Bartlett took charge of the leading line himself. Between three and four o'clock Slocum gave the nod and his men went forward.⁶⁶

As they approached, the Rebels put up a horrendous fire. The Federals found themselves marching through the middle of a crossfire from the guns mounted on both the left and right slopes of the mountain and the infantry behind the stone wall immediately to their front. Bartlett threw out a strong line of skirmishers and developed the enemy line. The opposing infantry hammered each other for approximately forty-five minutes, with the Yankees losing almost one hundred men. When Bartlett looked for his support, he found Newton's brigade had not followed as planned. It remained on the far edge of the field, out of harm's way. Seeing the situation, Slocum himself began ordering troops up to the front. Eventually, when his troops revealed the full extent of the Confederate position, Bartlett withdrew his skirmishers and gave the order to charge at the double-quick.⁶⁷ Col. William B. Hatch of the Fourth New Jersey described what happened next:

We leaped the walls, and continued, in pursuing over the mountain into the gorge and up the next ascent to its summit, the enemy retreating in disorder into the valley below. We took many prisoners, including a large number of officers...also two stand of colors. In the eagerness of pursuit we ran over two other rebel flags, which were picked up by a New York regiment. Among the spoils of the engagement obtained by us were a sufficient number of Springfield rifled muskets to equip my whole command.⁶⁸

General Franklin, described it this way:

The advance of General Slocum was made with admirable steadiness through a well-directed fire from the batteries on the mountain.... The line of battle thus formed, an immediate charge was ordered, and most gallantly executed. The men swept forward, with a cheer, over the stone wall, dislodging the enemy, and pursuing him up the mountainside to the crest of the hill and down the opposite slope. This single charge, sustained as it was over a great distance, and on a rough ascent of unusual steepness, was decisive....⁶⁹

The engagement ended with the Rebels fleeing through the gap into the valley below in confusion. Including those spoils mentioned above, Slocum's command captured three stands of colors, over 700 rifles, 300 prisoners, and a great many knapsacks and blankets. His division lost 5 officers killed and 16 wounded. Of the enlisted men, 109 were killed while 381 fell wounded. The totals for the day were 114 killed and 397 wounded for an aggregate loss of 511.⁷⁰

What some found most impressive about this battle was the precise manner in which Slocum's men executed the orders. Slocum himself noted that though under fire, "the troops advanced steadily, every line in the entire column preserving its alignment with as much accuracy as could have been expected at a drill or review."⁷¹ Bartlett also made note of this in his report, mentioning that clearly written orders had much to do with it:

The success was fully and clearly established by the masterly arrangement of the column of attack by Major-General Slocum, and circumstances seemed to have been controlled by some master-hand to enable us to carry out the clear instructions received before the assault. All orders were carried out in detail. No more and no less was done than to execute the plan during the fiercely contested assault which was so clearly expressed in the bivouac.⁷²

Bartlett himself noted an exception to this glowing account. The second line of attack followed much farther back than was intended, so far back in fact that it could hardly support the first. Still, this had not adversely affected Union success. Slocum himself called it "the most complete victory of war [to that point]."⁷³

Therein lies the problem with Bartlett's later account of the early portions of the battle. Though he explicitly refers to "the masterly arrangement of the column of attack by Major-General Slocum," he later changed his story in an article on the battle for The

National Tribune in 1889. There he claims that he was actually responsible for this “masterly arrangement” and that Slocum, Franklin, Hancock, and others seemed more worried about smoking than pushing out the Confederates. Exactly which Bartlett is to be believed? The Official Records and Slocum’s own writings seem to support the idea that Slocum himself was responsible for the success of the attack. Bartlett wrote his article full twenty-seven years after the event. His memory could easily have been clouded by any number of influences, or he simply could have been trying to increase his own reputation.⁷⁴

Franklin remained at South Mountain while McClellan, having finally caught up with Lee at Antietam Creek, near Sharpsburg, prepared to attack. Lee’s army made a stand along a low line of hills behind the creek, but a significant number of his troops had not yet reached the field. The Potomac River ran across Lee’s rear, and he knew of only one small ford through which he could escape if necessary. If his lines broke here, Lee knew that it would likely prove to be the end of his army. McClellan attacked on 17 September 1862. Though greatly outnumbering Lee, the Federal attacks, which occurred on three separate fronts, went in one at a time. This gave the Confederates time to shift their men from one trouble spot to the other. McClellan had also set aside a significant number of reserves, which did not enter into the fight at all, while Lee committed his army to the last man.

Slocum’s division remained at South Mountain three days before moving to join the rest of McClellan’s army, already engaged at Antietam. It reached the field about noon and took up a position in front of a small church on the southern end of the field, on the Hagerstown and Sharpsburg turnpike. Once there, Slocum relieved a part of General

Edwin “Bull” Sumner’s Second Corps. The Sixth Corps did not actively engage the enemy, but rested on their arms in line of battle for more than forty hours. During this time, Confederate artillery pounded their position mercilessly. Though they did little that day, the barrage wore greatly on their nerves.⁷⁵

Though the infantry could do little against their attackers, Slocum’s artillery, under First Lieutenant Emory Upton, had its hands full. All of the First Division’s batteries engaged the enemy and succeeded in silencing the Confederate guns for two short intervals. Slocum also mentions that they “[held] in check a large force of...infantry.”⁷⁶ As Lee’s army was in no condition to attack by this time, Slocum no doubt misinterpreted what he saw. At the end of the battle, Lee’s army held on by the thinnest of threads, but had repulsed McClellan at every point. The Army of the Potomac could easily have renewed the battle the next day, especially given its reserves, but McClellan once again ignored his opportunities and did nothing. In an amazing feat of daring, Lee remained in McClellan’s front for a full day, hoping that by doing so he would make the battle appear to be less of a loss. Afterward, he slipped back across the Potomac to rest and refit his army.⁷⁷

As Lee returned south, McClellan made a small show of pursuit, but did not go very far. On 20 October, with the army encamped at Harper’s Ferry, Slocum received word that he was promoted to command of the Twelfth Corps.⁷⁸ Its previous commander, General Joseph Mansfield, had died due to wounds received during the fighting at Antietam. The Twelfth was the smallest corps in the army, consisting of only two divisions, but it had in its favor a number of West Point educated officers and a great number of veteran troops.⁷⁹

Unfortunately, Nathaniel Banks had commanded the corps before Mansfield, when it had been on the receiving end of Jackson's Valley Campaign. Its morale would be a serious concern indeed. Still, this began an association that would leave its mark on both Slocum and his new command. As time passed, the two became so closely linked that Oliver O. Howard would later remark, "even in the records to say, 'The Twelfth Corps.' is to say, 'General Slocum.'"⁸⁰

¹ See Charles E. Slocum, The Life and Services of Major General Henry Warner Slocum, (Toledo, Ohio: Slocum Publishing, 1913), 13-14 and William F. Fox, "Life of General Slocum," In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1904), 69.

² Chaos of this sort was nothing new in America. These attitudes were clearly demonstrated in every war the U.S. had fought using the volunteer system. See Lawrence Cress, Citizens in Arms: The Army and Militia in American Society to the War of 1812, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982).

³ Henry W. Slocum, Military Lessons Taught by the War, (New York: G. F. Nesbitt, Printer, 1869) 6.—HL

⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 7

⁶ Charles B. Fairchild, History of the 27th Regiment New York Volunteers, (Binghamton, NY: Slocum and Wells, 1888), 3.

⁷ See H. Seymour Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," War Talks in Kansas, (Kansas City: Franklin Hudson, 1906, Reprint Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot, 1992), 150; Fairchild, History of the 27th, 3-4.

⁸ See Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," 150; Fairchild, History of the 27th, 3-4.

⁹ Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," 150; Fairchild, History of the 27th, 3-4.

¹⁰ Slocum served as publisher, and is prominently featured on the book's frontispiece.

¹¹ Fairchild, History of the 27th, 5.

¹² Fairchild, History of the 27th, 5-6.

¹³ Chambers remains a bit of a mystery. He was elected to his position, and then sent to Washington. Afterward, he virtually falls off the pages of history. He is not mentioned anywhere in the Official Records, and not discussed further by Fairchild regarding Bull Run. Slocum's major, Joseph J. Bartlett, wrote the report on Bull Run, and received the promotions that one might expect to be given to Slocum's second in command. Most likely, Chambers was thrown out of his position after his failure at Washington, and then ignored by historians thereafter.

¹⁴ Fairchild, History of the 27th, 8.

¹⁵ Fox, In Memoriam, 69; Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," 150; Fairchild, History of the 27th, 8.

¹⁶ Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," 150; Fairchild, History of the 27th, 7-8.

¹⁷ Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue, (Ann Arbor: Louisiana State University, 1964), 298.

¹⁸ Maurice Matloff, ed. American Military History, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1988), 196-97.

¹⁹ William C. Davis, Battle at Bull Run, (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1977), 69-70.

²⁰ "Gen. Slocum's Recollections," Courier (Syracuse), 2 April 1879.—OHA

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Fairchild, History of the 27th, 9-10.

²³ Henry Slocum, Military Lessons, 8.

²⁴ Fairchild, History of the 27th, 9-11.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

²⁷ Davis, Battle at Bull Run, 162-166.

- ²⁸ Slocum and Bartlett's watches were almost exactly on hour apart.
- ²⁹ Report of Maj. J. J. Bartlett, US War Department, The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume II, (Washington DC: GPO, 1881-1901), 388.
- ³⁰ Henry Slocum, "Recollections."
- ³¹ Report of Col. Andrew Porter, ORs, Series I, Volume II 384.
- ³² Report of Maj. J. J. Bartlett, ORs, 388-89; Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," 155; Fairchild, History of the 27th, 11-13.
- ³³ Report of Maj. J. J. Bartlett, ORs, 388-89; Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," 155; Fairchild, History of the 27th, 11-13.
- ³⁴ "Col. Slocum's Experience after he was Wounded," Journal (Syracuse), 30 July 1861.
- ³⁵ Report of Maj. J. J. Bartlett, ORs, 388-89.
- ³⁶ Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," 156-159.
- ³⁷ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 15.
- ³⁸ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 16.
- ³⁹ Hall, "A Volunteer at First Bull Run," 156; Fairchild, History of the 27th, 13; "General Slocum's Condition," 24 July 1861.
- ⁴⁰ Fox, In Memoriam, 70.
- ⁴¹ "A Contrast," Courier (Syracuse), 24 August 1861; "Gen. Slocum's Command," Journal (Syracuse), 10 September 1861.
- ⁴² See Fox, In Memoriam, 70-71.
- ⁴³ F. F. Wead to Father, 10 October 1861, F. F. Wead Papers.—All of the Wead papers reside at NYSL.
- ⁴⁴ Henry W. Slocum to Hillhouse, July (?) 1862, F. F. Wead to Father, 27 July 1862, F. F. Wead Papers.
- ⁴⁵ F. F. Wead to Parents, 11 January 1861, F. F. Wead Papers.
- ⁴⁶ Warner, Generals in Blues, 290-291.
- ⁴⁷ Wead reported packing up to move as early as January. F. F. Wead to Father, January 1862.
- ⁴⁸ F. F. Wead to Father, January 1862, F. F. Wead Papers; Journal of the March of the Army of the Potomac, F. F. Wead Papers.
- ⁴⁹ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 21.
- ⁵⁰ Sears, To the Gates of Richmond, 84-85; Report of Brig. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XI, Part I, 622.
- ⁵¹ Sears, To the Gates of Richmond, 86.
- ⁵² Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 24.
- ⁵³ McClellan to Samuel Barlow, Stephen W. Sears, ed., The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan, (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1989), 600-601.
- ⁵⁴ F. F. Wead to Parents, 7 July 1862, F. F. Wead Papers.
- ⁵⁵ Reports of Brig. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XI, Part II, 432.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 432-433
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 433.
- ⁵⁸ Sears, To The Gates of Richmond, 280-81, 284-85.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 285, 303.
- ⁶⁰ Reports of Brig. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, 434-436; Fox, In Memoriam, 71.
- ⁶¹ Charles Slocum, Life and Services, 38-39.
- ⁶² Report of Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XVI, Part I, 536.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, 537.
- ⁶⁴ Reports of Maj. Gen. William B. Franklin, ORs, Series I, Volume XIX, Part I, 375.—As an interesting aside, in recent times Burkittsville has been the scene of another invasion of a completely different sort. Thousands of movie fans and legend hunters descended on the town searching for the paranormal after it was featured in "The Blair Witch Project".
- ⁶⁵ Reports of Col. Thomas Munford, ORs, Series I, Volume XIX, Part I, 826-827.
- ⁶⁶ Reports of Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XIX, Part I, 380; Report of Col. Joseph J. Bartlett, ORs, Series I, Volume XIX, Part I, 388; John Priest, Before Antietam: The Battle for South Mountain, (Shippensburg, PA: Whitmane, 1992), 272-283.
- ⁶⁷ Report of Col. Joseph J. Bartlett, 389; Priest, Before Antietam, 282.
- ⁶⁸ Report of Col. Joseph J. Bartlett, ORs, 388.
- ⁶⁹ Report of Maj. Gen. William B. Franklin, ORs, 375.

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- ⁷⁰ Report of Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, ORs, 380.
- ⁷¹ Ibid., 380.
- ⁷² Report of Col. Joseph J. Bartlett, ORs, 388.
- ⁷³ Ibid.; Slocum to Howland, 28 September 1862.—NYHS
- ⁷⁴ See note 29 on page 278 in Priest, Before Antietam.
- ⁷⁵ Report of Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, ORs, 382.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid., 382.
- ⁷⁷ Matloff, American Military History, 227-229.
- ⁷⁸ Reports of Maj. Gen. Henry W. Slocum, ORs, 431.
- ⁷⁹ Fox, In Memoriam, 74.
- ⁸⁰ Howard, "To the Memory of Henry Slocum," 40.

Chapter III

Stagnation and Controversy: Harper's Ferry, the Mud March, and Chancellorsville

When the Army of the Potomac moved after Lee on 1 November 1862, they left their newest corps commander behind in Harper's Ferry.¹ Unfortunately, there is not much information available to historians in order to determine Slocum's attitudes and thoughts during this time. Chances are Slocum chafed at not being able to accompany the army on its next campaign. If the state of affairs did indeed grate on Slocum's nerves, his frustrations must have been legion when the War Department began detaching brigades to aid McClellan's newly appointed replacement, but left him in Harper's Ferry.²

Whatever he may have thought, Slocum did not have an insubstantial command; it totaled over 15,000 men in and around the town. Nearby, Major General George Morell, commanded another 5,000 men. Together they chased roving bands of Confederate guerillas active in the Valley, but Slocum and Morell had little success in sweeping them from the Shenandoah.³

Slocum made the most of his time. Unhappy with the state of the Twelfth Corps when he assumed command, Slocum instituted a series of reforms. Slocum noted with regret that his new corps "was not much like the old Division."⁴ Having already gained a reputation as a strict disciplinarian, Slocum set himself to the task of rebuilding his new command. A board of officers examined the corps, weeding out inferior men, while Slocum also began court martial proceedings against some individuals whom he felt guilty of egregious transgressions. As he put it, "all the most approved appliances [are] in full blast."⁵ By 6 January 1863, he proudly stated that the Twelfth had shown much

improvement. Still, even after those few months, he found himself casting his mind longingly back to his division, not feeling quite at home with the Twelfth.⁶

Lincoln had finally tired of McClellan. In his place, Lincoln wanted to promote a corps commander who had succeeded in establishing several Union bases of operations in the south. Ambrose Burnside took command of the Union army from McClellan only reluctantly. Though arguably a decent corps commander, he simply did not feel up to the job of leading an army. Fletcher Pratt put it well when he wrote that no one conversing with Burnside “for five minutes ever doubted that [he] was a fine man, although people who talked with him for ten were known to express skepticism as to his intellect.”⁷ He was an inventor, pioneering an excellent breech-loading carbine, but he will ever after be known more for his facial hair. Barbers have since inverted his name, but kept the style, which millions know today as the “side-burn”.

Burnside possessed a charming personality and became a favorite of Lincoln after his successes. Lincoln had arranged for Burnside to head an expedition along the North Carolina coast. Thoroughly successful, it brought the Union a base of operations early in the war and Burnside a promotion to major general of volunteers. He commanded the Ninth and First Corps at Antietam, but wallowed in mediocrity along with the rest of the army. Executing his orders with excruciating precision, he delayed his assault against the extremely weak Confederate right. Instead of dealing Lee’s army its deathblow, he allowed them time to reinforce, losing a grand opportunity. It was not a performance that would normally lead to greater responsibilities.⁸

Yet, that was exactly what Lincoln had in mind for his hairy favorite. In one of his first actions, Burnside split the army into what he called “grand divisions.” Each of

these consisted of essentially two corps in addition to cavalry. Though this would not have been considered too large a group of men in absolute (Napoleonic) terms, a number of Burnside's contemporaries, including Slocum, objected to the scheme. They thought that it created gigantic, unwieldy bodies of men that actually impeded the tactical control they were supposed to enhance.

Burnside planned for his troops, now nearing 120,000 strong, to march quickly on Fredericksburg, Virginia. Once safely across the Rappahannock River, he would lead his men rapidly down onto Richmond's defenses before Lee could react. Burnside planned to use all of his superior numbers at once, something Lincoln thought key to success. It was a good plan. Yet, like other Union commanders both before and after him, his trouble came when he took it off the drawing board.⁹

The Battle of Fredericksburg began with great promise for the Union. Burnside managed to reach the river crossing before Lee, but someone's failure to bring their pontoon bridges insured that the Confederates had time to arrive and contest the crossing. Once the Union had managed to reach the far bank of the river, Burnside chose to use a head-on attack, in keeping with his plan to exploit his superior numbers. Unfortunately, he chose to focus his assault towards a virtually impregnable section of Lee's line. Union soldiers fell by the hundreds on one of the best fields of fire known to military history. As the sun set, the remaining attackers scrambled back into Fredericksburg. For the day, Burnside lost over 12,000 men as compared to Lee's figure of less than 6,000.¹⁰

Burnside called for Slocum as things turned bad for the Union at Fredericksburg. Burnside ordered Slocum to move his entire corps to the east, with the exception of those men manning the permanent entrenchments. Burnside then sent word to Morell to fill the

gap left by the Twelfth Corps with Brigadier General John R. Kenly, and also push either Brigadier General Benjamin F. Kelly or Brigadier General R. H. Milroy farther down to Martinsburg. The desperate Burnside hoped for Slocum to reach Hillsborough that very night.¹¹

Some historians have criticized Slocum's abrupt departure.¹² It is definitely true he moved so quickly that there were few troops left in Harper's Ferry to guard it. The simple fact is that Slocum left in such a hurry because he had been ordered to do so by Burnside. Slocum knew very well what this meant for the defense of Harper's Ferry and brought this to Halleck's attention before leaving.¹³ Morell, though warned of this movement at the same time Burnside notified Slocum, seemed surprised. Objecting to the sudden a withdrawal of so many men, Morrell pushed forward two regiments to fill the gap.¹⁴ Unfortunately, this stretched his lines dangerously thin.¹⁵

Slocum and his men marched on through Chantilly at the additional request of his immediate superior Major General Hans Sigel, who had joined Burnside's chorus. Sigel commanded the Reserve Grand Division of the army, stationed near Fairfax Courthouse, Virginia. The Twelfth Corps, along with the Eleventh, made up this Grand Division, which technically interposed Sigel between Slocum and Burnside.¹⁶ Slocum asked for a day to shoe his weary horses, which had been performing sweeps down the Shenandoah, but Sigel insisted he press on. He directed Slocum to link with the rest of the Reserve Grand Division at Dumfries, Virginia, even if it meant his cavalry should fall behind a day's march.¹⁷ That neither Sigel nor Slocum mentioned artillery seems to imply that Slocum had little, if any, along with him. What he had he most likely left in Harper's

Ferry to man the redoubts. Meanwhile, Burnside interjected that they must move even faster.¹⁸

Slocum and Sigel stripped their commands down and pushed their men even harder. With all their haste, they did not make it to Fredericksburg before the battle culminated in a devastating loss. Had they made it in time, their presence would have made little or no difference in the outcome. Burnside initially thought to renew the attack the following day, but his subordinates managed to talk him out of it. As the Army of the Potomac retreated back across the river, Slocum and his men settled down on the north bank, in the vicinity of Stafford, Virginia.¹⁹

Burnside, the fate of his slow moving friend McClellan still fresh in his mind, knew that he must keep on the move, even if Fredericksburg was not the place. He ordered another march in late January, trying to move back up the Rappahannock. Whereas a combination of ineptitude and the Rebel army foiled the Fredericksburg campaign, it seemed that Burnside now must deal with God as well. As the march commenced, so did a rainstorm of Biblical proportions. The Army of the Potomac, already swamped in a deep gloom brought on by the Fredericksburg fiasco, started literally sinking into the Virginia mud. Wagons mired to their hubs and men down to their knees. Artillerymen struggled for hour upon weary hour with their pieces, eventually having to leave some where they lay. A chill January wind bit and the rain kept coming. The men remembered it simply as the “Mud March.” It proved to be the death knell of Burnside’s tenure as commander of the Army of the Potomac.

Slocum’s Twelfth, though absent from the Battle of Fredericksburg, arrived just in time to join in on this abortive campaign. The First Division, under Alpheus Williams,

reported no real difficulties during the first two days' march. By 20 January, they had marched back to Dumfries, Virginia. On the next day, they found themselves able to move only about three miles. Due to the storm, Chopawamsic Creek overran its banks, and the men settled in as best they could while the engineers constructed a bridge. When they made it to Aquia Creek, they found it flooded as well. Williams' men bivouacked again, but this time without food or shelter. The supply wagons remained three or four miles to the rear, stuck in the mud. Finally, on the twenty-third, they managed to cross the creek and make it to Stafford Court House. John W. Geary's Second Division met similar difficulties, but actually took a few days longer to complete the trip. Unlike Williams, who advanced in a straight line, Geary found himself marching and countermarching from creek to creek. Most days the second division only covered three or four miles. The entire corps settled in for the remainder of the month at Stafford Court House.²⁰

Slocum described the march in a letter to Joseph Howland. His unit had simply been caught between two creeks when the storm hit. He found the roads in awful condition, and noted that the Twelfth Corps lost many good horses and mules along the way. His men, he said, "bore up well and appeared cheerful to the last." Staying with the rear guard to see to the safety of the train, Slocum entered Stafford Court House bone tired and covered with mud. He noted with some amazement Thomas L. Kane's brigade of Williams' division out at drill "appearing as clean as if they had never seen any mud." Actually they had arrived the previous evening and set themselves to cleaning up at once, afterwards heading straight back to drill.²¹

Major General Joseph Hooker, commanding Burnside's Center Grand Division, rose up against his superior after Fredericksburg, trying to have him thrown out of command. Hooker used his political connections to launch a campaign of criticism. Unsurprisingly, his name resided at the top of the list of officers Burnside wanted relieved. Early in his life, Hooker acquired an enviable reputation in the Regular Army. In the Mexican War, he had participated in the campaigns of both Zachary Taylor and Winfield Scott. He had won brevets for gallant service for all the ranks from first lieutenant to lieutenant colonel. By 1853, he had apparently tired of peacetime army life, resigning his commission to farm in California. His fortunes rapidly declined, leaving him so impoverished that when the war started he had to borrow money to head east to accept his commission as a brigadier general of volunteers.²²

He had a solid record for the Civil War as well. He commanded a division on the Peninsula, where he acquired his nickname of "Fighting Joe" because of a widely circulated newspaper error. He also gave good showings at Second Bull Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburg. His personal life caused the most controversy. A notorious womanizer, he drank an incredible amount, and could explode into fits of rage in which he flung out obscenities thick enough to stick to the walls and ceiling. Some described his headquarters as a place where "no gentleman cared to go and no lady could go." He also spent a great deal of time in Washington's red light district. Due to that fact and his management policies while stationed in the city, that section became known as "Hooker's Division."²³

Yet, if Lincoln had any moral qualms over Hooker's character, he did not let them keep him from giving Hooker the job. In all probability, his association with Secretary of

the Treasury Salmon P. Chase and an excellent war record availed him more than his personal views.²⁴ When “Fighting Joe” took command of the demoralized Army of the Potomac in the winter of 1863, Slocum was his youngest corps commander.²⁵ Whether or not he knew of Hooker’s vocal attacks on Burnside, Slocum worried about the tendency of army officers to express their opinions so openly. He felt that “all this must stop or we are ruined.” At first, he found himself wary of his new commander, but decided to talk to Hooker before passing judgment. Whatever the two men said in that meeting, “Fighting Joe” impressed his subordinate. Slocum wrote afterwards “I am willing to follow him. My confidence has greatly increased with him.” Slocum’s greatest hope for the immediate future, though, was for the disbanding of the grand divisions. He disliked serving under Sigel, and knew that such an action would free him of this obligation.²⁶

In light of the hatred the two men later developed for each other, it is important to take note of Hooker and Slocum’s meeting. Though his opinion of the man was “greatly increased,” he still had nothing more enthusiastic to say than he was “willing to follow” Hooker. From this, it is not difficult to infer that his initial opinion must have been low indeed. Slocum did not react to the news of the appointment with enthusiasm. Part of his problem may be the fact that Hooker was simply the latest in what was turning out to be a long line of commanders. Also, Slocum remained faithful to McClellan and therefore probably prone to hold subsequent commanders to the abnormally high standard he thought the Little Napoleon capable of reaching. Yet, this can only go so far in explaining Slocum’s opinion. He later stated “Hooker was a worthless loafer in the Republican Army, an oaf and vagabond in civil life, a braggadocio and drunkard in our

present army.”²⁷ He wrote this in October of 1863, when their feud had developed for some time, so it must be taken in the context of Chancellorsville. Still, it is not too much to suppose that Slocum disliked Hooker before the debacle in the Wilderness, and while there may have been some hope for their relationship after their talk, subsequent events only reinforced his initial opinion.

Boasting that he would have no mercy on “Bobby Lee,” Hooker set quite a high mark for himself to reach, regardless of others’ expectations. He also knew that the first order of business was to convince both the Lincoln Administration as well as his own men that he could live up to his claims. Washington, as always, continued to not-so-gently demand action. Its newest commander refused to be hurried. Hooker knew that he needed to rebuild the Army of the Potomac, and this would take time.

Hooker instituted a series of reforms to resurrect the army’s morale from the depths to which Fredericksburg and the Mud March had buried it. Desertion in the army had reached monumental proportions. As of 15 February, he reported over 85,000 officers and men absent without leave. To curtail this, he instituted a program of liberal furloughs and cracked down harshly on stragglers. In order both to give his men something to be proud of and improve the ease with which they could be identified, he started a system of corps insignia. Over time, the men grew intensely loyal to these bits of fabric. The Twelfth Corps received a five-pointed star. He ordered the weekly ration spiced up with onions, potatoes, and soft bread, issued several times a week. He saw to it the camps were better policed and kept sanitary. As a result, the army’s overall health improved, and the men began to return to camp. Drills improved efficiency, making the men act like soldiers again. Gradually, they started to believe that Hooker really could

deliver on all his promises. More importantly, they began believing in themselves again.²⁸

Organizationally, Hooker also made many changes. He discontinued Burnside's grand divisions and split them back into their component corps, with Slocum remaining at the helm of the Twelfth.²⁹ But Hooker's ascension also brought with it other changes that Slocum liked less. Hooker cleaned out quite a few of the top-level generals who had served, and some might say still did, under McClellan. Three of the most notable were William F. "Baldy" Smith, Edwin "Bull" Sumner and William B. Franklin, Slocum's former corps commander. In some cases, particularly Smith's, Slocum saw the removals as simply the result of each officer's own stupidity. As he said, "I have lost my confidence in [Smith] and think the Government will be justified in removing him." On the other hand, Slocum felt that Franklin would soon be cleared of any charges brought against him. Overall, he perceived a relatively clear division between the "old...[and] new order of things." For the moment, he gave it his nodding approval.³⁰

Hooker spent over a month rebuilding the army. Lincoln, as always, felt the campaign *must* get underway. He visited the camp with his family on 5 April, catching the general in the midst of some carousing at his headquarters. Hooker had not expected the president's arrival, and was entertaining several women, likely recruited from his Washington-based division. Lincoln surprised Hooker so badly that he had to send his playmates scampering out the back, while Lincoln and his family approached from the front. The Lincolns stayed for five days, reviewing the army and consulting with Hooker and his officers. Hooker had done a thorough job; the finely tuned machine presented to the president barely resembled the demoralized mess Burnside left in January. Lincoln

also did what he could to light a fire under Hooker, making clear that Lee was the target, not Richmond, and, that he expected Hooker, unlike McClellan, to commit all of his overwhelming numbers at once. That said, the first family returned to Washington.³¹

Less than a week after the president's departure, Slocum wrote his wife Clara about the visit:

I received a beautiful bouquet this morning from Mary [Todd Lincoln]. The flowers are all from the President's garden. It is beautiful.... I thought Mary would remember me. I take back all I have said unless she has sent one to all the other generals.

The letter also revealed his romantic side, though he also may have simply known what his wife may think of another woman sending him flowers:

I do not think I was as happy over this bouquet of rare flowers from the wife of the President as I was over a single blue forget-me-not received by me while in Albany from a young country girl.³²

Apparently, Slocum had made the acquaintance of Mary Todd earlier in life, though it is also clear that they had not known each other very well. Mary Todd must have failed to speak to Slocum while the Lincolns visited the army, which caused Slocum some consternation. Of course, he had obviously mentioned his frustrations to his wife. Apparently Mrs. Lincoln had recognized Slocum during the visit, but for one reason or another had failed to speak to him. After returning to Washington, she sent Slocum the bouquet as penance for ignoring him. Where they met or how this association may have benefited Slocum during the war remains pure speculation.

After the Lincolns left, Hooker wasted no time. The next day he put his preliminary plans onto paper and fired them off to the president. Though he did not outline a specific blow-by-blow tactical plan, he stated that he would move directly against the Army of Northern Virginia. He intended to march part of his force quickly to

the west, cross the river, and turn Lee's left. True to boastful form, Hooker's only fear was that Lee might get away towards Richmond before the Army of the Potomac could trap and destroy him. In order to prevent Lee's escape, Hooker ordered almost all of his cavalry away, trying to interject them between the Rebel army and their capital. In doing so, he hoped to cut off both Lee's communications as well as his line of retreat. That Lee might just turn around and maul the Army of the Potomac does not seem to have been a real consideration. Lincoln approved of the plan and did what he could to speed it along.³³

Lee failed to give the movements in his front the appropriate attention. Thinking that Hooker would stay on the defensive for a good while, Lee continued to rebuild his own army. Hooker encouraged this inactivity by feeding Lee's signal officers a steady stream of misinformation. From the fake intelligence, the Confederates believed that George Stoneman and his cavalry were headed out to the Shenandoah Valley. This would only make real sense if Hooker intended to stay where he was, and therefore needed no cavalry screen or reconnaissance. It would soon turn out the Confederates were both right and wrong at the same time. Hooker would move in short order but came to rue greatly sending his cavalry on what would turn out to be a useless errand.³⁴

Before embarking on his great flanking movement, Hooker gave Major General John Sedgwick, in command of the Sixth Corps, his instructions. Sedgwick was to stay in the immediate vicinity of Fredericksburg and occupy Lee's attention. After Hooker had gotten around Lee, he ordered Sedgwick to move his forces across the Rappahannock, through Fredericksburg, and press Lee's lines. In doing so, Hooker could take advantage of his numbers, as the president had insisted. He could come at Lee from

multiple directions, and no single unit would be small enough for Lee to defeat in detail, theoretically. Even if Lee discovered Hooker's plan, the wily Confederate could not react with impunity. If Lee attacked Hooker's column and Sedgwick would be in his rear. If he remained at Fredericksburg, Hooker would be on his flank. If he retreated, he would run into Stoneman's throng of cavalry, and have the entire army right behind him.

Hooker's advantage proved to be greater than even he had imagined. Lee, assuming that his opponent planned on dallying around north of the river for a bit longer, had dispatched General James Longstreet with two whole divisions to Suffolk, Virginia to gather much needed supplies and deal with an anticipated thrust from Burnside, who had transferred there with the Ninth Corps. Once away, Longstreet beleaguered Lee with all sorts of schemes for how the war should be run, many of which Lee heeded. As a result, Longstreet remained absent for the bulk of the upcoming battle. With him, he kept an aggregate of 13,000 desperately needed men, depleting Lee's army substantially. Hooker's main thrust on Lee's flank involved some 60,000 men, Sedgwick's holding force comprised just less than that number, while Stoneman would command around 10,000 in Lee's rear. After Longstreet's departure, Lee and Jackson had to face this lumbering behemoth with just over 40,000 men.³⁵ If ever an opportunity presented itself to crush Lee, this was it.

Hooker ordered the Eleventh and Twelfth corps to move on 27 April 1863. The former was to reach Kelly's Ford on the Rappahannock and camp as soon and as quietly as possible, with the latter joining them quickly. Both corps had to be in place by the next day. Hooker insisted that the men be kept in camp, threatening to hold the corps commanders themselves responsible for any indiscretions.³⁶

Slocum received the orders to move and got as far as Hardwood Church. He continued onward the next day and reached Kelly's Ford at four in the afternoon. Here, word came that he would take command of not only the Twelfth Corps, but the Eleventh as well. They proceeded over the Rappahannock and headed towards the Rapidan River. As they did, they fought a series of running battles with Confederate cavalry and small cadres of infantry. Their advance hardly slowed at all. As they approached Germanna Ford on the Rapidan, Slocum's men encountered their stiffest resistance. A small body of infantry, Slocum thought them to be about 125 in number, opened fire as they approached the crossing. Though badly outnumbered, these Confederates enjoyed several significant advantages. Sometime earlier, the bridge over the ford had been destroyed, but Rebel builders had assembled piles of heavy timber on the bank for repairs. Some Confederates were still hard at work when the Twelfth arrived. The few troops, mostly from a Louisiana regiment, took advantage of the piles for ready-made breastworks. A mill stood by conveniently, and served as a sniper's nest. Slocum reacted by deploying the Second Massachusetts and Third Wisconsin volunteers. These advanced in line of battle, enveloping the tiny Rebel line, taking them all prisoner.³⁷

On his way south, Joe Hooker unleashed his infamous temper onto the Twelfth. After scolding John W. Geary for not keeping the gap between his division and the First closed up, Hooker descended upon Slocum with a similar complaint. He accused him of delaying the Fifth Corps by lagging behind the Eleventh, and, as Alpheus Williams said, "seemed full of dire anger, swearing heavily at somebody or something [on] which he was not very clear headed."³⁸ Williams' Division, the head of the Twelfth Corps column,

had in fact been delayed by the dallying rear guard of the Eleventh, and Williams sent forward for them to hurry up.³⁹

As Williams described Hooker as “not very clear headed,” it is possible that Hooker, though not outright intoxicated, had at least drunk enough to slightly impair his judgment. This is not too much to suppose. It certainly would not be out of character for “Fighting Joe,” and the circumstances were such that any man, no matter how dry, would be sorely tempted to take up the bottle. He knew the lives of thousands of men in his army, not to mention the very future of his country, rode on his performance. Probably even more important, though, for a man of Hooker’s temperament, he knew that the time had finally come for him to make good on all his swaggering bravado. It would only be natural for a man with such well-known proclivities towards drink to reach for it at a time like this.

This is not to say that Hooker spent the duration of the battle drunk, or even that liquor necessarily passed his lips once they reached the field. Here, he knew Lee was still miles away and that it would be quite a while before the battle was joined. Also, for all his bluster, Hooker had very little tolerance for alcohol.⁴⁰ Therefore, it could easily be that before catching up with the Twelfth he had imbibed a small amount, but nothing substantial. Another possibility, mentioned by his senior corps commander, Darius Couch, is that Hooker had in fact quit drinking both suddenly and completely. For such a regular, heavy drinker to do so could easily have put Hooker’s body into chemical withdrawal. Whether because of the presence of alcohol in his system or its sudden absence, his judgment was certainly suspect in this instance.⁴¹

Slocum reached Chancellorsville at two o'clock on the thirtieth, where General George G. Meade and the Fifth Corps met him. Meade crossed the river at a different ford, arriving before Slocum and his two corps. With him he herded over three hundred prisoners the Fifth had captured up along the way. The three corps presented a solid front, the Twelfth Corps occupying the middle, while the Eleventh took a position to the right, with its flank anchored on Hunting Run.⁴² Though Slocum biographer William Fox places the Fifth squarely under Slocum's direction and Charles Slocum refers to it as "a degree of command," the Fifth seems to have been completely independent of him until it actually arrived at Chancellorsville. Once there, Meade would report to Slocum as the senior commander on the field, as neither Hooker nor Couch were yet present. Slocum never discussed it prior to this time in his report, and neither did Meade.⁴³ Yet, Alpheus Williams mentioned the Fifth camping near them at Kelly Ford.⁴⁴ In his reports, he stated that Slocum was in charge.⁴⁵ It is possible that Slocum was in defacto command, as he outranked Meade, but both he and Meade thought it superfluous to their reports. In either case, when Hooker arrived later on in the evening and took over, Slocum returned to the Twelfth Corps.⁴⁶

There is some discussion over whether Slocum and Meade should have pushed forward that first day. Meade wanted an immediate advance. "This is splendid Slocum," he said when the New Yorker's column joined the Fifth Corps, "hurrah for old Joe! We are on Lee's flank and he does not know it."⁴⁷ Whether or not Slocum thought it a good idea himself, he informed the ecstatic general that they could go nowhere. Though the plan had originally been to push forward, Slocum reportedly received personal instructions altering his orders from Hooker just before the march. The fact that Hooker

himself arrived that night and seemed quite pleased with the progression of the campaign lends credence to this. Instead of attacking, the three corps set themselves to digging entrenchments. Even so, they expected to take up the offensive in the morning.⁴⁸

The area they settled into was one of the worst possible places Hooker could have chosen. Known as the “Wilderness” it was covered with an extremely dense forest that impeded troop movements and proved a nightmare for artillery. The gun crews could not see their enemy, and in an age that still relied on visual targeting, this virtually neutralized any Northern advantage in that respect.

To understand the terrain that confronted the armies, it is helpful to visualize what most people in modern America think of as regular, unimproved woodland. Saplings, briars, and underbrush grew up thick, but were far from impenetrable. It appeared abnormally dense to the soldiers by comparison. Due to fence-out laws, which protected crops, most areas in nineteenth-century America allowed livestock to range where they liked. Thousands upon thousands of cattle and hogs roamed most of America’s woods, grazing down the scrub. In places like these, troops could maneuver with relative ease and see the ground for hundreds of yards in front of them. That was not the case in the Wilderness. Though a few individuals could walk fairly easily through it, it was difficult to maintain the large-scale tactical formations that had dominated the battlefield since the days of Napoleon. The vegetation limited visibility to a few yards. Overall, the Wilderness would be a major boon to Lee in the upcoming battle, making his job much easier.

The next morning around eleven o’clock, Slocum sent the Twelfth Corps forward on Hooker’s orders. His men followed the Plank road towards Fredericksburg.

Hitting a few skirmishers about a mile from their original position, they formed into line of battle and began driving the rebels before them. As they approached a series of entrenchments Union troops were in very high spirits. Like Meade the day before, they could feel that they finally had Lee on the run. All that was left for them to do was push on to Fredericksburg and finish the war once and for all. Then, an order arrived from Hooker directing them to fall back into the breastworks they had left just that morning!⁴⁹ It shocked Slocum and frustrated his men. They felt that something must be wrong; the message had to be an accident. They desperately wanted to press on. Alpheus Williams described it this way:

[T]he men went back disappointed, not without grumbling, and it really required some policy to satisfy them that there was not mismanagement somewhere.⁵⁰

They reached their original positions with minimal loss, only ten casualties. Once there, they set back to work on their entrenchments. They spent the remainder of Friday and all of Saturday morning so engaged.⁵¹

For the remainder of the battle, the whole army, most corps commanders included, did not seem to be able to reconcile themselves to the fact that after all his offensive bluster, Hooker had suddenly gone on the defensive. Unfortunately for Hooker's career, they continued to act as if the former were still the case. Hooker handed his opponent the initiative on a silver platter. Lee took it graciously, handing the plate back in short order, this time with Hooker's head on it.

While the Union entrenched, Lee recalled Longstreet, left a screening force to watch Sedgwick in Fredericksburg, and moved to meet Hooker in the Wilderness. As he approached, his cavalry discovered a very important fact. The Federal position

resembled a large horseshoe, open end facing the fords of the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers. Unknown to even Hooker himself, his right flank was “in the air,” which essentially meant that no geographical feature prevented it from being attacked. Also, Oliver O. Howard, newly appointed commander of the Eleventh Corps, which occupied that section of the line, had not even refused his flank.⁵² With the help of some local boys serving in the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee and Jackson acted on this intelligence on 2 May. In a very daring move, Lee stripped down his already sparse lines to a mere screening force, giving 33,000 men and 108 guns to Jackson. Stonewall then marched his force across the Federal front.⁵³

Though completely unaware of Jackson for the moment, Hooker had some inkling of the danger to Howard’s flank. At 9:30 in the morning on 2 May, Hooker sent a communication to both Slocum and Howard that his advocates have waved ever since. It came by way of his adjutant, J. H. Van Howard:

I am directed by the major-general commanding to say that the disposition you have made of your corps has been with a view to a front attack by the enemy. If he should throw himself upon your flank, he wishes you to examine the ground and determine upon the positions you will take in that event, in order that you may be prepared for him in whatever direction he advances....⁵⁴

Van Howard went on to say that Hooker was not pleased with the disposition of Howard’s force in particular and wanted it changed. They thought, Hooker added, that Lee might try moving against the right. This did not really affect Slocum, as the Third Corps covered his right; he really had no flank to attack. Howard felt that the brush and scrub on his flank grew so thick that no army could pass through it and left his position alone.⁵⁵

Meanwhile, Jackson's flanking force drew dangerously close to the federal position. His column passed so near that it could be heard and seen easily. At Hazel Grove, the road turned southward, away from the Union army. Here, Union men observed Jackson, apparently heading off the field. This convinced Third Corps commander Daniel E. Sickles, who occupied the line between Slocum and Howard, that what he saw in front of him was Jackson in full retreat. Geary's men also observed this movement, firing a few volleys into the rebels' back. Sickles in particular sent a steady stream of reports into Hooker's headquarters claiming that he had Lee on the run, urging that an attack get underway at once. Hooker, in turn, broadcast this faulty intelligence throughout his whole army, reinforcing the idea that he would soon take up the offensive again. He let Sickles loose after his prey, also sending Slocum forward to support him.

By the time Sickles finally moved, the rear of Jackson's column was almost out of sight. Still, he collided solidly with Jackson's rearguard, and began to push them heartily. Fierce fighting erupted around Catharine Furnace that kept the overconfident Yankees busy while Jackson finished his march. The Third Corps pressed some of these men, Georgians, back into an unfinished railroad cut. Soon, they flanked them out of this position taking around three hundred prisoners.⁵⁶

Geary personally led his Second Division forward about five o'clock that afternoon. Hooker wanted him to get in among the Confederate supply train, cutting it off from their main army if possible. Unfortunately, Lee did not have retreat in mind, and instead of a few regiments fighting a delaying action as a rearguard, Geary ran straight into a well-entrenched, well-manned, line of battle. Its fire wrecked havoc with his exposed artillery, which he soon sent to the rear. He continued pressing the Rebels'

position until ordered to retire by Slocum. Two of his regiments failed to fall back and received a pounding for it.⁵⁷

Slocum's First Division, under Williams, also advanced. They moved in direct conjunction with Sickles men, intending to sweep the Plank Road clean of Rebel rifle pits. Sickles thought that by doing so they would lay bare the Confederate retreat, leaving Lee open to a crushing blow. Yet, the evils of the Wilderness soon took effect, and the Yankee lines became tangled in the dense thicket. While in the process of cleaning up the mess, Williams received the order to return to his works.⁵⁸ Slocum, a little more wary than Hooker or Sickles, apparently remained unconvinced of Lee's retreat. Instead of an all out attack, he sent forward the entire First Division, but only part of the Second in an attempt to ascertain Lee's position. When he found that the Rebels in fact had gone nowhere, he ordered his men back into their trenches.⁵⁹

Hooker had finally taken some sort of action, but it was only a glimmer of what he could have done. Lee had stripped his already thin position bare to give Jackson the men he needed. Hooker easily could have called for a general advance, a sensible action if his enemy really were in retreat. If he had, he almost certainly would have punched through the farce of a Confederate line, breaking Lee's army in two. It could have changed the whole demeanor of the battle. In the end, he did much too little, much too late.

Hooker called on Sedgwick to cross the Rappahannock at Fredericksburg. Just after four o'clock that afternoon, Hooker dispatched a message informing his subordinate that he had the Rebels in full retreat. Now, he thought, the time had come to take Fredericksburg, and press Lee as hard as possible. Unfortunately, something delayed the

message and Sedgwick did not receive it until after six that night. Even if he had, if Hooker's orders had actually been followed, Sedgwick could have done little at that time. Hooker had ordered him to take up his pontoon bridges over fourteen hours before, an order which Sedgwick ignored.⁶⁰

Along the Orange Plank Road, Howard's Eleventh Corps had settled in to enjoy supper after a hard day of ditch digging. Some kicked back for a few games of poker, others probably wrote letters to home. Suddenly, dozens of animals poured out of the woods on their right flank. Deer, turkeys, and rabbits scattered this way and that, in a frantic attempt to get away from the advancing Confederates. It proved to be an eerily accurate portrayal of what the Eleventh Corps was about to do. Only a moment or so passed before Howard's men found themselves facing thousands of yelling rebels charging out of the woods. Faced with such a daunting opponent, the Eleventh broke and ran, some regiments not even bothering to fire a shot. Quite a few kept going until they had completely fled the field, making for the fords on the Rapidan and Rappahannock Rivers, hoping find ultimate safety.⁶¹

Jackson's attack threw Hooker's headquarters at the Chancellor House into chaos. Orderlies darted this way and that, carrying reports from and orders for various commanders. Stragglers from the Eleventh Corps quickly surrounded the building, which stood only a half-mile away from Jackson's advance. The air filled with shouts and cries, a mixture of German and English, many bearing tall tales of complete defeat. Forcibly stirred out of his complacency, Hooker finally did something decisive. He scrambled to plug the hole, throwing any troops he came across into the breach. One of

these was Williams Division of Slocum's Twelfth Corps, which was falling back into position at that very moment.⁶²

Williams had been quietly retreating, when the sounds of pitched battle erupted on the Union right.⁶³ Slocum sent for Williams and Geary to hurry, also hoping to stem the tide of Jackson's advance. Unfortunately, Williams knew nothing of the retreat of the Eleventh Corps, specifically that as a result of it the Rebels now occupied the right of his former line near the Plank Road. The hidden Confederates used this element of surprise to their advantage and poured devastating volleys into the startled Yankees as they drew near. One regiment, the 128th Pennsylvania, lost its colonel and lieutenant colonel as well as over 150 men when, on approach to its former position, it found itself partially enveloped. Williams successfully reoccupied the left of his original position and set about stopping the stragglers. Those that rallied he armed and put into line of battle, but the sight of the Confederates proved to be too great a strain on the reformed line. As Jackson's men approached, they left Williams where he stood, fleeing farther into the darkness and away from the gray monstrosity flying towards them. Still, Jackson's troops had become disorganized in their rapid advance. Paired with the fresh Union reinforcements arriving by the moment, Jackson's assault ground to a halt in the growing darkness.⁶⁴

Having made an ass of himself earlier in the day by insisting that Lee was in full retreat, Sickles now felt that he must do something to salvage both his career and his reputation. Not willing to wait for morning, he planned to launch a night assault to dislodge Jackson's forces. He wanted to send in his men between ten and midnight, and accordingly sent messages to the other corps commanders. Slocum's men occupied the

position immediately to Sickles' left. A staff officer found Alpheus Williams, but Slocum still had not returned to general headquarters. Williams asked that the movement be deferred until Slocum could make it back. The aide left, but soon afterwards, Sickles evidently decided against holding off and opened his attack anyway.⁶⁵

Night battles in the Civil War are few and almost always dismal failures. Sickles' attack at Chancellorsville only further proved that rule. Slocum himself knew nothing of the plan until he heard firing in front of Williams's Division. He had been out walking his lines, and apparently did not credit Sickles with enough foolishness to send his men stumbling around in the dark. Thinking the Confederates had renewed the battle, Slocum ordered his artillery to open on the spot. One large group of guns contained as many as thirty-four cannon. All of these converged blindly on the firing. What effect they had on Sickles' men, if any, is not clear. As Slocum put it, "I have no information as to the damage suffered by our troops from our own fire, but fear that our losses must have been severe."⁶⁶

The next day, Sunday, 3 May, Rebel troops pushed against the divisions of Williams and Berry, even without their beloved Stonewall, who had been mortally wounded the night before.⁶⁷ The large battery Slocum and his artillery chief, Captain Best, had assembled during the night fired on them as they approached. Though Williams and Berry held, one division of Sickles' corps fell back, losing a battery and causing confusion as they raced back into Williams' line. The Rebels soon moved against the side and rear of Geary's division and the artillery with dreadful results. By eight o'clock, Slocum and Williams informed Hooker that they were nearly out of ammunition. Hooker's gruff reply was that Williams must furnish his own. Fortunately,

as this was impossible, Hooker sent forward men of Sickles' command, who relieved part of Williams's Division.⁶⁸

Eventually, with Sickles' line faltering and a great slaughter commencing as the rebels pushed their infantry against the artillery, Slocum retired his command. He took up a position along the extreme left of the Union line, where his men began fortifying with a vengeance. Even though he still had the power to fight Lee, Hooker simply curled up and waited for help to come.⁶⁹

In Fredericksburg, Sedgwick had crossed the Rappahannock in order to press Lee's retreat. After trying to assault the Confederate flanks, Sedgwick found them to be held with much determination. He sent his men in to take Jubal Early's position on Marye's Heights by direct assault. Surprisingly, this time it worked. Early evacuated his force, placing it between Sedgwick and Lee.

When Lee heard of Early's retreat from Fredericksburg, he made an even more daring move. For the third and final time in the campaign, Lee split his forces. Leaving a tiny screening force to watch the cowering Hooker, he marched the remainder of his army towards Fredericksburg and pounced on Sedgwick at Salem Church. Over the next two days, Lee boxed Sedgwick up against the Rappahannock, taking a large number of prisoners. Sedgwick finally managed to pull his corps back over the river intact on 5 May. With that threat taken care of, Lee turned back to face Fighting Joe.⁷⁰

All this time, Hooker had waited patiently for Sedgwick to reach the field and save him. Instead, he found Lee marching from Fredericksburg, ready to attack him again. The Confederates pushed against his position all day on the sixth, but Hooker had already begun his withdrawal. On Tuesday night, the Twelfth Corps recrossed the

Rapidan and on Wednesday made its way back to its former camps. The brilliant campaign of Fighting Joe Hooker settled out into failure, made all the more humiliating and inexplicable by its very promising start.

For all the controversy that has arisen since the war, Slocum harbored no doubts whatsoever as to who was responsible. How had they let Lee defeat them again, when all the cards were in their favor from the beginning? Slocum blamed Hooker's timidity for the failure. Like the rest of the army, he felt depressed after the let down, even ill. As he put it,

It was a sad failure, a bitter disappointment to us all. Our movements up to the arrival at Chancellorsville were very successful & were unflawed. Everything after that went wrong, and fighting Joe sunk into a poor driveling cur. The fact is whisky, boasting, and vilification have been his stock and trade. Sickles and Butterfield are his boon companions, and everything is conducted as might be expected with such leaders.⁷¹

Hooker and Slocum's personalities clearly clashed. Hooker had been treading on Slocum's sensibilities since at least before the battle, as evidenced by the cursing Slocum received on the road to Chancellorsville. From this point on, Slocum remained Hooker's enemy. Ironically, after complaining about other commanders speaking against their superiors, Slocum proved to be very openly critical. He mentioned to Joseph Howland, "Hooker knows my hatred of himself and all his gang. I have not even attempted to disguise my disgust." This vocal opposition put Slocum in a very awkward position. Though he wanted to continue to serve his country, he was unsure of the wisdom of remaining in the army under Hooker, who could be very vindictive.⁷² If he was to stay, he wanted something done.

In keeping with the tradition of politicking in the Army of the Potomac for which Hooker himself was renown, Slocum, Darius Couch, and other corps commanders set

plans in motion to replace “Fighting Joe.” No doubt it took some degree of cynicism on Slocum’s part to ignore the hypocrisy of the situation, given his previous views on this sort of subterfuge.⁷³ Their choice for successor, Meade, was junior to all the other commanders, but each sent him word that they were willing to serve under him. Slocum intended to approach Lincoln when the President visited the defeated army. The one snag in the plan was Meade himself. Though he implied that he would vote to remove Hooker if it came to it, he would not allow his name to be used by the cabal. That being the case, according to some historians, Slocum allowed the President’s visit to pass uneventfully, and remained silent.⁷⁴

Actually, Slocum proved to be a good deal more energetic than that. Though he missed an opportunity in camp, he made another when he contacted Secretary of State William Seward, who, on 19 May, informed Lincoln via telegraph that Slocum wished to consult with him.⁷⁵ The actual meeting in Washington took place sometime before 23 May. During the meeting, Slocum told the president the “whole story,” likely dwelling on his critique of Hooker as a “driveling cur.” “I have no faith whatever,” he stated,

in Hooker’s ability as a military man, in his integrity, or honor. Nearly all his officers feel towards him as I do and several have already left the army. Others will do so. I am strongly tempted to do it.⁷⁶

In a later letter to Seward, he reminded him that at this encounter, he “implored [the President] for the sake of the Army and the Country, that [Hooker] should be relieved from the command of that Army.”⁷⁷ Slocum did not report what Lincoln said in reply, but obviously it was sufficient to keep him from resigning. Lincoln likely already knew that he may choose remove Hooker from command. He certainly would not like to lose a veteran corps commander over an issue that might be solved in short order. It also may

be that Slocum's acquaintance with Mary Todd may have influenced Lincoln. Lincoln did not tell Slocum that Hooker would be replaced, as Slocum was still wrestling with the idea of serving under him when he wrote his letter to Howland on 29 May. Lincoln probably acknowledged Slocum's complaint, but stopped short of committing to anything.

Despite all that had happened, Slocum still believed in the Union cause. It was the prosecution of the war that bothered him:

I believe...that in the end we shall be successful. It cannot be otherwise, but how dearly we are paying for our folly, for the folly of our administration.⁷⁸

Before the war, Slocum was a Republican. Yet, since the opening of hostilities, he had dealt with an ever-increasing number of ignorant politicians and generals. Every one of these men, whether meddlers from Congress or failures like Burnside and Hooker, came to the field as arms of Republican policy. Slocum resented what looked like a boatload of fools guiding the ship of state through the tumultuous waters of rebellion. This may have lessened his attachment to his party, but he was not about to switch to another at this time. He wanted the war prosecuted vigorously, and, for all their failures, the Republicans supported this seriously. The Democrats on the other hand, were overrun with Copperheads.

Independent of all conniving, Lincoln fulfilled the cabal's wish to see Hooker gone. In the waning days of June, Fighting Joe packed his bags at his headquarters and turned the command over to the man they had wanted in the first place: George Gordon Meade.

¹ Special Orders No. 282, US War Department, The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume XIX, Part II, (Washington DC: GPO, 1881-1901), 431.

² Chester G. Hearn, Six Years of Hell: Harper's Ferry During the Civil War, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996) 198.

³ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁴ Slocum to Howland, Nov. 17, 1862.—NYHS

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Slocum to Howland, January 6, 1863.—NYHS

⁷ Fletcher Pratt, A Short History of the Civil War, (New York: Pocket Books, 1961) 160.

⁸ Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue, (Ann Arbor, MI: Louisiana State, 1964) 57.

⁹ Maurice Matloff, ed. American Military History, Army Historical Series, (Washington: Center for Military History, 1988) 230.

¹⁰ Matloff, American Military History, 230-232.

¹¹ Reports of Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, ORs, Series I, Volume XXI, 62.

¹² Hearn, 198.

¹³ Slocum to Halleck, ORs, Series I, Volume XXI, 847.

¹⁴ He did not send two divisions, as Chester Hearn suggests on page 198 of Six Years of Hell.

¹⁵ Morell to Cullum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXI, 847. Hearn bases his comments about Slocum on this sudden withdrawal. Why he chooses to place the blame on Slocum, who was following orders, instead of Burnside, who issued them, is not explained. In Hearn's defense, this section is a minor part of his book, taking up only a few pages. Nothing important happened while Slocum occupied the town, so he had no reason to lavish effort on the subject. Still, he ignores important items from the Official Records that contradict his depiction, even though they occur on the very same page as his given citations. Also, as mentioned before, information on Slocum's attitude in Hearn's cited sources is sparse to non-existent. He pushes his arguments too far in this regard, presenting speculations as fact.

¹⁶ It is notable that Burnside continued to send orders directly to Slocum, bypassing Sigel. This might imply the most practical objection Burnside's contemporaries had against the Grand Divisions: Burnside didn't use them. He continued, at least to some extent, to treat his army as a group of individual corps. This would negate the value of the Grand Divisions, in effect creating an extra set of useless middlemen. When Sherman used this same basic scheme on the March to the Sea, he kept the meddling to a minimum, and Slocum had no further objections.

¹⁷ Sigel to Burnside, ORs, Series I, Volume XXI, 850.

¹⁸ Park to Sigel, ORs, Series I, Volume XXI, 850.

¹⁹ William Fox, "Life of General Slocum," In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1904), 74.

²⁰ Extracts from "Records of Events," ORs, Series I, Volume XXI, Part I, 754-755.

²¹ Slocum to Howland, February 4, 1863.—NYHS

²² "Joseph Hooker," Generals in Blue, 233-234.

²³ *Ibid.*, 234-235.

²⁴ On one occasion, Hooker had declared that the United States could do with a good dictator!

²⁵ Daniel E. Sutherland, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1998) 99.

²⁶ Slocum to Howland, February 4, 1863.

²⁷ Slocum to Howland, October 22, 1863.—NYHS

²⁸ See Stephen W. Sears, Chancellorsville, (Boston: Houghton and Mifflin, 1996) 54-82; Edward J. Stackpole, Chancellorsville: Lee's Greatest Battle, (Harrisburg, PA: Stackpole, 1958) 13-36.

²⁹ Summary of Principle Events, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part I, I.

³⁰ Slocum to Howland, February 4, 1863.

³¹ Daniel E. Sutherland, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 126-127.

³² Fox, In Memoriam, 74.

³³ Hooker to Lincoln, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part II, 199-200.

³⁴ Sutherland, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, 129.

³⁵ See Sears, Chancellorsville, 96-97 and Stackpole, Chancellorsville, 76, 93.

³⁶ To Commanding Officers, Eleventh and Twelfth Corps, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part II, 255-256.

³⁷ See Report of Major General Henry Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part I, 669; and Report of William A. Daniels, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part I, 699.

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- ³⁸ Alpheus Williams, From the Cannon's Mouth, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1959) 180.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 180
- ⁴⁰ Stackpole, Chancellorsville, 11.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12. A very notable defender of Hooker takes issue with the charge that he drank at any point in the campaign. Basing his argument on the testimony of several trustworthy sources, he makes the claim that except for a doctor's brandy, no liquor passed the general's lips for the duration of the battle. Once he neared the field, this could be true. (see Sears, Chancellorsville, 506).
- ⁴² See Report of Major General Henry Warner Slocum, 669; and Report of Adj. General William A. Daniels, 699.
- ⁴³ See *Ibid.*, and Report of Major General George G. Meade, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part I, 505.
- ⁴⁴ Williams, From the Cannon's Mouth, 179.
- ⁴⁵ Report of Brigadier General Alpheus S. Williams, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part I, 676.
- ⁴⁶ Report of Major General Henry Slocum, 669.
- ⁴⁷ Sutherland, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, 136.
- ⁴⁸ Fox, In Memoriam, 75.
- ⁴⁹ Williams, From the Cannon's Mouth, 186.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 187.
- ⁵¹ Report of Major General Henry Slocum, 670.
- ⁵² A commander occupying the end of a line would often bend a short section of it back to a 90-degree angle to fend off any attacks that might come from that way. This was called "refusing" his line.
- ⁵³ Sears, Chancellorsville, 225-264. The figures appear on the final page.
- ⁵⁴ J. H. Van Howard to Howard and Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part II, 360.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁶ Sutherland, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, 151-152.
- ⁵⁷ Report of John W. Geary, ORs, Series I, Volume XXV, Part I, 730.
- ⁵⁸ Report of Alpheus S. Williams, 679.
- ⁵⁹ Report of Major General Henry Slocum, 670.
- ⁶⁰ Sutherland, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, 154.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² Stackpole, Chancellorsville, 244-246.
- ⁶³ Report of Major General Henry Slocum, 670.
- ⁶⁴ Report of Brigadier General Alpheus S. Williams, 679.
- ⁶⁵ Williams, From the Cannon's Mouth, 194.
- ⁶⁶ Report of Major General Henry Slocum, 670.
- ⁶⁷ Jackson had fallen to the fire of his own men the night before while riding his lines.
- ⁶⁸ Williams, From the Cannon's Mouth, 198.
- ⁶⁹ Report of Major General Henry Slocum, 671.
- ⁷⁰ Sutherland, Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, 165-177.
- ⁷¹ Slocum to Howland, May 29, 1863.—NYHS
- ⁷² *Ibid.*
- ⁷³ It is notable that Slocum's official report contains little criticism of Hooker. He apparently planned on expressing his disdain through unofficial channels.
- ⁷⁴ See George Meade, The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913) 373; Sears, Chancellorsville, 435.
- ⁷⁵ William H. Seward to Abraham Lincoln, May 18, 1863 (Meeting with General Slocum), Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois. (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>).
- ⁷⁶ Slocum to Howland, May 29, 1863.
- ⁷⁷ Henry W. Slocum to William H. Seward, November 14, 1863, (Does not want to serve under Hooker) Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois, (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>).
- ⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Chapter IV

Gettysburg: A controversial performance in Pennsylvania

After consolidating and resupplying his army, Lee felt that the time was ripe for another invasion of the North. With his brilliant victories at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville right behind them, Lee hoped winning a major battle on Yankee soil would convince the northern populace that the war could never be won. If so, then victory, or at least survival, through negotiation would be a real possibility.

Lee planned to use the Shenandoah Valley as a cover for his invasion. The Army of Northern Virginia moved westward into the Shenandoah in June of 1863. From there, Lee planned to move straight up, past Harper's Ferry, across the Potomac, through Maryland, and into Pennsylvania's fertile Cumberland Valley. He wanted all of this to take place long before Washington had any inkling that his army was on the move.

Meanwhile, Joe Hooker remained commander of the Army of the Potomac. He needed to know where Lee was and what he planned for the upcoming summer. In order to find out, Hooker sent his horsemen south of the Rappahannock to gather intelligence. As Lee started to move quickly west to the sheltering walls of the Shenandoah, he fully expected that his excellent cavalry would screen the movement from prying Yankee eyes. And why not? The southern cavalry had literally ridden circles around their inept northern counterparts earlier in the war.¹ Yet, as time had progressed, northern riders grew steadily better at their jobs, a fact to which an overconfident J. E. B. Stuart, Lee's cavalry commander, discovered for himself when they attacked at Brandy Station. There, while the rest of Lee's men marched west, the northern cavalry had hit Stuart so hard that he was forced to call up Confederate infantry for support. Hooker now knew that Lee

was on the move, and in what direction he was headed. Fighting Joe and the Army of the Potomac scrambled to catch up with the Confederates.

During Hooker's pursuit, Slocum took up the uncomfortable question of dealing with deserters. Several corps commanders, including Slocum, met sometime before 20 June to try to decide how they could bring the problem under control. In particular, they hoped to deal with the bounty jumpers. These men enlisted in a regiment, taking the \$1,000.00 signing bonus offered by the government. The jumper would then simply desert and enlist again under a new name in a different city, collecting the money again. Some deserted several times, and it proved to have a devastating effect on morale. Slocum argued very strongly in favor of shooting captured offenders. Lincoln, much to Slocum's annoyance, sometimes intervened with a pardon before the men could be killed. Feeling that the president was inadvertently hurting the army with his tender heart, Slocum and some of the other commanders determined finally to go through with some executions before Lincoln could interfere.²

Shortly after the meeting, a court martial found several men of Slocum's command guilty of bounty jumping. As they approached Leesburg, Virginia, Slocum acted quickly, knowing that it would not be long before the signal corps established telegraph communications with Washington. At nine o'clock in the morning, his men rolled out and dug graves. At ten minutes to twelve, the convicted knelt on the edge of the holes. Slocum noted that his men actually bet five to one that the final order would never be given. They lost their money when, at noon sharp, Slocum ordered the condemned shot, their lifeless bodies falling into the earth. Sure enough, when the

operators set up the telegraph, Lincoln wired for the men to be spared if his message were not already too late.³

While Lee marched and Slocum dealt with deserters, Hooker tried to set another plan in motion. Where other commanders saw a danger, Hooker thought he had an opportunity. He wanted to trap Lee north of the Potomac, far away from any supply or help. To that end, he ordered Slocum to move the Twelfth Corps to Williamsport, Maryland, the place Lee had crossed the Potomac only a few days before. He wanted Slocum given command of the remaining troops at Harper's Ferry, about 10,000 men. This force, when paired with the Twelfth Corps, would total nearly 20,000 strong. With Slocum isolated and planted firmly in Lee's line of communication and supply, Hooker assumed the Army of Northern Virginia would turn on Slocum as it had on Hooker himself at Chancellorsville. In the mean time, Hooker would take advantage of the time Slocum bought him and assemble his army. From there, Fighting Joe could turn on Lee and hopefully destroy him.⁴

The fact that Hooker chose Slocum to occupy such an important position is very curious. He did not do so out of convenience or sheer practicality; Slocum's corps, the smallest in the army, could not get there as quickly as other, closer corps. The two men hated each other, and Slocum was actively engaged in trying to remove Hooker from command. Moreover, Hooker knew the extent of Slocum's loathing for him, so much so that Slocum apparently feared retribution of some sort. It is possible that Hooker ignored his pride and placed Slocum there because he honestly felt him the man for the job, or he simply may have made the decision based on seniority. In all likelihood, he saw Slocum as competent enough to pull it off, yet, if Lee embarrassed one of his men, why not have

it happen to such an open critic? At best, he could annihilate Lee's army in friendly territory when the Confederates bogged down fighting Slocum. In that case, Slocum might get some glory, but it would be a mere flicker of what would fall to Hooker. At worst, Lee would crush Slocum and escape, with Hooker simultaneously ridding himself of a hated critic and taking credit for repelling Lee by superior strategy.

Of course, Hooker had thought his plans for the Chancellorsville campaign were perfect as well. Whether Lee, who was raiding and not likely to put much stock in a line of supply he did not depend on, would have acted as Hooker expected is another matter entirely. Still, in order to find out, Hooker had to put his plans into action. To do that, he needed the troops in Harper's Ferry, and all that stood in his way was Henry Halleck's approval. Anything Hooker wanted outside his own direct command would have to get by Halleck. It could be said that Halleck literally wrote the book on nineteenth-century warfare, as his best-known accomplishment was a well-respected treatise on the subject. Unfortunately for the Union, he often showed himself to be a much better writer than general.

For Hooker, Halleck's approval proved to be an insurmountable obstacle. Hooker, even after all this time, failed to appreciate the value of diplomatic manners, phrasing his request as a demand: Halleck had to release the troops at Harper's Ferry or Hooker would resign. Having his own longstanding feud with Hooker, Halleck refused to bow to the pressure. Offended, Hooker asked to be relieved of command, abandoning the movement to Williamsport.⁵ As the Confederates pushed deeper and deeper into Union territory, Lincoln quickly honored his request, as it turned out, only two days before the Battle of Gettysburg. No doubt this surprised Hooker, who probably thought

that given the circumstances, he could be more demanding than usual. In his place, the President appointed Meade⁶

George Meade was born on the last day of 1815, in Cadiz, Spain. His father lost most of his money there supporting Spain in the Napoleonic Wars. Most of his brothers and sisters returned to the U. S. and married well, but Meade chose West Point. He graduated in 1835, ranked nineteenth out of a class of fifty-six. After a short stint in the army, he tried civilian engineering, but gave it up and went back into the service after less than ten years. With brief asides in Mexico, Meade spent the years from his re-enlistment until the Civil War working with the Army Corps of Engineers. In 1861, he received an appointment from the governor of Pennsylvania as a brigadier general of volunteers, commanding a newly formed Pennsylvania brigade. He led his men through the Peninsula Campaign, receiving severe wounds at Glendale. After recovering, he commanded them at Second Bull Run, South Mountain, and Antietam. He took charge of a division for the Battle of Fredericksburg, and within a few days of that fight, succeeded to command of the Fifth Corps. After the infamous campaign of Fighting Joe, Meade suddenly found himself in command of the entire army.⁷

Meade had no chance to accustom himself to command. He put his army in motion immediately. Even if he had little time to put together an overall strategy, common sense (not to mention Lincoln and Halleck) told him he must keep between the Confederates and Washington. Meanwhile, Lee knew next to nothing about recent developments when he needed to know everything. His army was spread out and moving fast. At one point, Lee had elements strung across three states, with the most advanced units actually reaching Carlisle, Pennsylvania, threatening the state capital at Harrisburg.

Such long, thin lines put Lee in a very vulnerable position. If Meade could concentrate and attack before Lee could round up his scattered forces, he could defeat Lee.

Lee and his other generals remained ignorant of their peril, as the bulk of their cavalry had recently embarked on a wide, wheeling raid around the northern army. Stuart's troopers would not reach Lee until late in the second day of the upcoming battle. The Army of the Potomac remained close enough to capitalize on Stuart's blunder. The first inkling of trouble reached Lee through a spy by the name of Harrison. Once impressed with the full danger of his position, Lee recalled his scattered forces to Cashtown, east of a relatively unimportant road hub called Gettysburg. Lee knew that if Meade started the battle before the Confederates were ready, the results could well be disastrous.

Meade wanted to be sure that he had an excellent chance of success before he brought on a general battle with the increasingly legendary General Lee. Hearing that the Confederates had abandoned their attempt to take Harrisburg and were concentrating, he did not decide on an immediate attack. He knew that any defeat north of the Mason-Dixon Line, even a minor one, could have a ruinous effect on Union morale and therefore on the overall war effort. On the evening of 30 June, after receiving various scouting reports, he issued his famous Pipe Creek Circular. In it he left John J. Reynolds's First Corps, Howard's Eleventh, and Buford's cavalry in an advanced position near Gettysburg. The rest of the army hung back a short distance.

Meade wanted to be sure of what Lee had in mind before taking any decisive action. He left orders, like Lee, for his men to avoid a general engagement. If the enemy showed fight, he ordered his army to retire to a defensive line along Pipe Creek. It was a

sound strategy. If an opportunity presented itself to strike, Meade kept his most competent commander, Reynolds, close enough to act. Reynolds had at his disposal over 21,000 troops, with another 9,000 in the form of Slocum's Twelfth Corps nearby. Otherwise, the Army of the Potomac could easily fall back to an excellent position and wait for Lee to exhaust himself attacking them. If the circular went into effect, Reynolds was to assume command of the left wing and Slocum of the right. Slocum therefore would have received responsibility for the Fifth Corps, situated at Hanover. Not receiving this intelligence until late on the night of 30 June, Slocum would have no time to communicate with the Fifth's commander, George Sykes, before the chaos of Gettysburg's first day.⁸

In appointing Slocum wing commander, Meade caused a necessary shuffling of the Twelfth Corps' command structure. With Slocum temporarily promoted, Alpheus Williams took command of the Twelfth Corps. In the First Division, Thomas Ruger stood in for Williams. The adjustments did not directly affect Geary's Second Division.

The next day Henry Heth's division of Lee's army made its way towards Gettysburg, looking for anything but a fight. In particular, the foot sore soldiers wanted to get their hands on a large number of shoes that rumor had placed there. Instead, they found the waiting cavalry of John Buford ready to receive them. Buford had not received a copy of the Pipe Creek Circular, and had posted his men on a road northwest of town, determined to resist any Confederate advance until help could arrive. This normally proved to be no real problem for a commander in Heth's position. Infantry could nearly always put cavalry to flight very quickly, and once Heth's entire division reached the field, he would outnumber Buford substantially. Heth thought that he would easily be

able to brush the Yankees out of the way and get to his prize, thereby staying true to Lee's orders. Buford's men held fast, though, frustrating Heth.

When Heth began his attack on the morning of the first, Reynolds and Howard, with the Eleventh Corps, still had miles to go before they could reach the field. Buford's stubbornness bought Reynolds in particular the time he needed to get there. When the Confederates could just taste victory against Buford, they ran headlong into the Iron Brigade of the First Corps. The battle quickly outgrew Heth's ability to control it. Reynolds soon fell, putting Howard in overall command. A. P. Hill reached the field with more Confederate reinforcements. By midday, the Federals had fought brilliantly and managed to blunt Heth's push from the west. The battle then slowed down into an uneasy calm.⁹

The lull would not last more than a few hours. Richard Ewell, commanding Jackson's old corps, approached from the north, and was set to arrive on the Yankee flank. Though not at all pleased that Heth had engaged against orders, when the battle began to go his way, Lee ordered his army to converge on Gettysburg. Howard's outnumbered men could not hope to hold their line and retreated through town with the Confederates right behind. They eventually settled onto a line of hills east of Gettysburg called Cemetery Ridge.¹⁰

While the battle opened to the northwest of Gettysburg, Slocum and the Twelfth Corps headed out for their appointed march. They did not have far to go, so they were in no hurry. The battle had fallen into its midday lull when they arrived at Two Taverns and settled down for a rest. This tiny settlement was about five miles southeast of Gettysburg in a fertile valley, surrounded by fields. Between it and Gettysburg stood Culp's and

Cemetery Hill, obscuring any view Slocum may have had of the action on the far side. Though Howard had been heavily engaged at Gettysburg, exactly how much Slocum knew of this is still open to question. He stated that “[o]n the march and while at Two Taverns, some firing was heard, but the sounds did not indicate a great battle.”¹¹ His division commanders heard very little of it also, only muffled booms that many wrote off as a cavalry scuffle.¹²

The eyewitness accounts are confusing. John Hill of the 107th New York said that after beginning that morning’s march “heavy cannonading was soon heard in the front.”¹³ A soldier of the Third Wisconsin claimed that though they could hear the skirmishing, it was impossible to tell whether or not it was an important battle.¹⁴ Charles F. Morse of the Second Massachusetts reported hearing a “heavy and continuous firing,” but did not note any delay in marching.¹⁵ George Fox explained this strange silence as due to an odd phenomenon called an acoustic shadow, in which geographic features such as hills and ridges deflect sound over or away from a potential observer. This most likely afflicted Joseph E. Johnston at the Battle of Seven Pines and Don Carlos Buell at Perryville. The terrain between Two Taverns and Gettysburg makes this a possibility.¹⁶

In all likelihood, Slocum’s failure to hear a major battle at Gettysburg resulted from a number of factors. First, the Twelfth arrived at Two Taverns around noon. They probably did not hear much because there was not much to hear. The battle had slackened off considerably since about eleven o’clock. What little cannonading and firing could be heard would have sounded like a smaller skirmish. Slocum likely availed himself of lunch in the local hotel, given the time of day, and being indoors meant he would have heard even less.¹⁷ Any acoustic effects would have made it virtually

impossible to know what was going on at Gettysburg. In any case, it would not be the last curious thing to happen with Slocum on what would turn out to be a very controversial day.

As the situation deteriorated, Howard sent Slocum several messages asking him to push the Twelfth Corps forward and take command. The first left via courier around one o'clock and doubtless reached the general after two. It stated simply "The general commanding directs me to inform you that Ewell's corps is advancing from York. The left wing of the Army of the Potomac is engaged with A. P. Hill's corps."¹⁸ Yet, Slocum apparently took no action. Sickles of the Third Corps received the same message, and replied that he would move forward immediately.¹⁹

At three o'clock, Howard sent Captain Daniel Hall to locate Slocum again and find out if the Twelfth was on its way. Hall delivered Howard's message and briefed him on the situation, but apparently he found Slocum's response somewhat lacking. Though Hall did not explain himself, he stated, "[Slocum's] conduct on that occasion was anything but honorable, soldierly or patriotic." Slocum got his men moving by three thirty that afternoon. Not long after Hall delivered his message, a dispatch from Meade arrived. In it, Meade noted Reynolds' death and appointed Winfield Scott Hancock to take his place. This could be the first time Slocum learned of Reynolds demise, but he also could have heard of it already from Hall. A third message from Howard reached him while he was en route.²⁰

According to Slocum, the first real indication of the magnitude of the fight came with the arrival of a civilian heading down the pike. Some officers casually asked the man what news he had. The man replied, "a great battle was being fought on the hills

beyond Gettysburgh.” Slocum’s officers brought the information to him, and he dispatched Major Eugene W. Guindon to ride ahead and discover the truth. Guindon returned in a few hours with news that an engagement raged only a short distance away. Slocum got moving immediately. According to him, “I was not summoned by Gen. Howard or any other person, but marched of my own volition, the instant I knew help was needed.”²¹

The main, but not only, reason Slocum’s hesitation looks so bad here is because it is seen in the light of the now infallible martyr Reynolds as represented in the Gettysburg mythos. Reynolds and Howard accidentally disobeyed a direct order from Meade, but because the battle ended up being a turning point in the East, they are not held accountable for it. In fact, Reynolds in particular actually garnered a good deal of post mortem praise for his part in it. Everyone knows that Gettysburg was the final turning point in the east, the logic seems to run, so how could anyone have dared delay?

Unlike Reynolds and Howard, Slocum had received the Pipe Creek Circular. What is more, he had also received extra instructions from Meade that had reiterated the commanding general’s strong desire to fall back on that line. Meade stated through Butterfield:

You will also be prepared to commence the movement indicated in the inclosed [sic] circular upon receipt of intelligence from General Reynolds that he has uncovered Two Taverns. You will, if in good position for the purposes of the circular inclosed [sic], halt your command where this order reaches you, and, in communicating to General Sykes, half his advance in a similar manner, and give him the instructions necessary for a proper compliance with the circular order inclosed [sic] in case intimations from General Reynolds render it necessary.²²

Slocum, therefore, was to judge everything that took place by the retreat outlined in Meade’s circular, and prepare Sykes and the Fifth Corps to do the same. How differently

would history's depiction be if Reynolds and Howard had brought on another Chancellorsville, even if the Union still won the war? In any other circumstances, historians would not hardly attack someone on the grounds that he followed orders. Yet, during the battle at Gettysburg, it would happen twice to Slocum.

All of the criticisms of Slocum's performance, both on the first day and later, are contained in Samuel P. Bates's history of the battle. Historians since that time, knowingly or not, have simply parroted the essence of Bates's attacks in both cases. Slocum himself provided a synopsis in a letter to T. H. Davis:

“...Marched a short distance; passed Two Taverns; formed in line of battle; hearing firing in front; a report that the 1st and 11th corps are engaged with the enemy. The roar of battle was constantly resounding. But here the corps remained all day.”

“But why so tardy in his movements? It is of little moment at what hour Howard summoned him—if he summoned him at all. The guns of the enemy had been resounding all day long.”

“Both Slocum and Sickles were morally culpable for not going to the assistance of the forces engaged at Gettysburgh on the first day; Slocum having full warrant for doing so in the orders and circular of General Meade.”²³

Slocum also noted that, “it is evident to me that...he publishes it with no feelings of malice towards me.... If there was any semblance of truth in the[se] statement[s], I should consider Mr. Bates treatment of the subject, by far too generous.”²⁴

Slocum's time at Two Taverns needs to be put in perspective. Though Bates and others depict the Twelfth Corps as puttering about their camp all day, the actual time in question is much shorter. The Twelfth arrived at Two Taverns around noon, and got moving again before three-thirty that afternoon. In the worst-case scenario, Slocum could not have stayed in place for more than a few hours. The rest of the day he spent

marching, first to Two Taverns and then to Gettysburg itself. In any case, it is a far cry from wasting an entire day.

While Slocum may have appreciated Bates's restrained treatment, others are not so generous with the subject. One of these is A. Wilson Greene in "A Step to All Important Victory: Henry W. Slocum and the Twelfth Corps" in Gary W. Gallagher's Second Day at Gettysburg. Here, he portrays Slocum as vacillating, deathly afraid to take responsibility for the fight, calling up every excuse imaginable to keep his troops, and therefore himself, away from the field.²⁵ The evidence supports nothing of the kind.

Greene swallows the Gettysburg mythos whole when he ascribes Slocum's hesitation to fear. There are many other reasons for Slocum to have held back. First of all, he did not have the benefit of hindsight that Greene enjoys. Whether or not Meade had issued an order calling for an outright retreat to Pipe Creek, Slocum knew very well that Meade would rather face Lee there. Moreover, Slocum had received further instructions from Butterfield just that morning re-emphasizing Meade's desire to avoid a general engagement and fight at Pipe Creek. That being the case, whether or not he should join a premature battle up in Gettysburg would need serious consideration. Again, if Slocum knew, as Greene does, that the ensuing battle would become the most famous of the war, then he would not have thought twice about marching headlong into it.

Slocum also historically exhibited the classic characterizations of a good corps commander. Almost always, he did what his superiors told him to do, when they told him to do it, to the best of his ability, and then he stopped. He never seemed to display that creative drive that marked other men for independent command. There are notable exceptions to this rule during his time in Atlanta and Vicksburg, but even there, he either

already knew that his superiors would agree or made certain his ideas pleased them. As such, acting as Howard and Reynolds did ran against his grain, and the fact that he hesitated should not be surprising given the circumstances.

It probably seemed to Slocum that Reynolds and Howard were actively disobeying orders, and Howard was now asking Slocum to knowingly do the same. Also, as Harry W. Pfanz points out, Slocum objected to assuming command on the grounds that Winfield Scott Hancock was ordered to do so. Slocum was generally a stickler for the rules, and he saw no reason for them to be suspended at that time or any other. In addition, he simply did not want to take command. As he told Lt. Col. Charles H. Morgan of Hancock's staff, he had no interest in stepping into a position "which might make him responsible for a condition of affairs over which he had no control." Why should he allow himself to be thrust into a place that he did not want to be in, especially when it was not his duty to be there? Greene may still choose to call this cowardice, but Pfanz is right to imply that it is simply common sense. Slocum himself repudiated the idea with his actions. When Morgan informed him that Hancock would surrender command as soon as he reached the field, Slocum continued onto Cemetery Hill. All it took to have Slocum take command in the end was to convince him it was his duty. With that understanding, he plunged right in, though too late to accomplish much on that day²⁶

Another possibility is that Slocum still suffered from the effects of the humiliating defeat at Chancellorsville and his apparent abandonment at Harper's Ferry before Fredericksburg. He and his command had seen so many Eleventh Corps stragglers on their march to Gettysburg that he feared another defeat was already underway. Carl Schurz of the Eleventh's third division certainly seemed to think that Slocum expected as

much from them. Not long after the battle, he mentioned to Lincoln that Slocum seemed “to have made it his special business to lampoon the 11th Corps on every occasion.”²⁷ If another major loss was inevitable, then Slocum probably thought his troops would be better employed in checking a rout. Posting his corps near Two Taverns accomplished this. Knowing what he did about Meade’s plans, Howard’s actions, in the best of situations, would have been quite irksome. Howard and the Eleventh Corps had once again failed, so why should Slocum share the blame? Slocum had no apparent intention of becoming the scapegoat for a lost, politically important fight someone else started against standing orders. He knew first hand the fates of McClellan, Burnside, and Hooker.

In answering the question of Slocum’s lackadaisical start to the field that afternoon, the most difficult part for historians, as well as for Slocum himself, is how to deal with the question of Howard’s messages. An acoustic shadow at least has a precedent and there is some evidence to support the idea that it may have happened in this case. Yet, if Slocum received Howard’s messages, which he did, the case against him is strengthened notably. The first communication is the most difficult, as it clearly made its way into Slocum’s hands long before he actively got his corps moving. The second one, at three o’clock, probably arrived as he prepared to move, with the final one reaching him on the way to Gettysburg. As such, the latter two are not as important.²⁸

Events during the early part of the morning are not really in question. Slocum received Meade’s Pipe Creek Circular along with the extra, more explicit, instructions from Butterfield, around midnight the night before. With only a short distance to march, Slocum allowed his men to sleep in and then make their way easily to Two Taverns.

They arrived around noon, Slocum ordered the corps into the fields to take their lunch, but warned them to remain alert and ready to march.²⁹ The battle up ahead slowed down considerably around eleven o'clock, while Slocum was still miles away from his destination. By the time his men dispersed into camp, the lull was a full hour old, and would last for a few more. Aside from the muffling effect of the hills between Two Taverns and Gettysburg, he could hear little because little was going on. By the time the battle started up again around two that afternoon, Slocum had received other reports concerning it. Under the circumstances, listening for the sounds of the battle could profit Slocum little or nothing.

Around one o'clock, the civilian came down the pike with information on the fighting. It would have taken a short time for the report to reach Slocum himself, but when it did, he dispatched Guindon to determine its veracity. Guindon had around six miles to cover to top the hills and get a clear view of the field. Given that a good horse could ride that distance one way in about an hour, this meant the trip probably took him no less than about two, possibly more.

Sometime after two in the afternoon, Howard's first message arrived. This one, the only of the three in question to be reproduced in the ORs, is simple: "The general commanding directs me to inform you that Ewell's corps is advancing from York. The left wing of the Army of the Potomac is engaged with A. P. Hill's corps." Aside from Howard's intelligence being off by a great deal (Jubal Early, of Ewell's Corps, was approaching from Carlisle to the north, not York to the east), he did not mention Reynolds's death. Neither did Howard ask for any assistance, though in retrospect that is undoubtedly what he intended. Slocum, on the other hand, likely interpreted the short

dispatch in light of the Pipe Creek Circular. Howard and Reynolds would fall back, probably on his position, rather than bring on a full-fledged battle. Daniel Sickles and the Third Corps responded immediately and started marching, but Sickles was a notoriously aggressive commander, and not overly concerned with orders or military sense, as Day 2 would demonstrate.³⁰

In all likelihood, Guindon returned with his report sometime between two-thirty and three in the afternoon. He told Slocum what he saw, confirming the citizen's report, and probably pointing out that Howard showed no signs of the withdrawal Slocum expected. Finally realizing in full the desperateness of the situation, Slocum gave the order to move around three. (This is evident from the fact that Slocum's corps was on the move by three-thirty, and allowing thirty minutes for the execution of the order is reasonable.)

It is notable that, assuming Slocum made the decision to move before the other dispatches reached him, he told the truth in his 1875 letter to Davis. Howard did not call him to the field, at least not in his message of one o'clock. Possibly, it is not simply an either/or situation when choosing whose story to believe. If Slocum thought that Howard would fall back towards Pipe Creek as ordered, then that short message alone would not necessarily be enough to stir him to action. The Left Wing could have joined at least three other corps before the Confederate pincers closed. When it became apparent that Howard had no such intentions and given he now had Guindon's report, Slocum decided to move on his own, before the second, more explicit, message reached him.

Howard sent this message around three, so Slocum likely received it as his corps got seriously underway. Given Slocum's respect for following orders, he would have

been quite upset with Howard for acting as he had and as Hooker had learned, Slocum could be openly and loudly critical. If Slocum had criticized Howard's conduct, this might explain what Captain Hall referred to when he called Slocum's behavior unpatriotic. Slocum was in a foul mood and likely let Hall know exactly what he thought of Howard's actions.³¹

Howard acknowledged that Slocum's main problem rested in his perceived disregard for orders:

He explained the course he took by showing that it was contrary to the plan and purpose of General Meade to bring on a battle at Gettysburg, he having arranged for another defensive position at Pipe Clay Creek.³²

Slocum himself laid a heavy emphasis on standing orders in his letter to T. H. Davis on the subject. His fury can also explain why he did not want command. The army once again seemed headed for defeat, mainly due, in Slocum's mind, to the fact that its commanders would not obey orders. Now, it seemed, Howard and Hancock wanted to give the command away as soon as possible so they could avoid the brunt of the blame. He commanded, after all, in the Army of the Potomac, where such backbiting was far from an unheard of phenomenon. Even if their intentions were wholly pure, from all appearances they asked Slocum to jump on and captain a sinking ship, just in time to go down with it. As Pfanz points out, any normal person would have objected to this. No matter how noble a beast he may have been, common sense dictates that this should give him pause.³³

In the end, all historians are left with, barring new information, is reasoned speculation. Slocum steadfastly maintained that he answered no calls from Howard. It would be easy to simply accuse him of dishonorable conduct. Yet, there is the nagging

issue of his past and future. There is nothing in either one to suggest him as capable of such. Howard, who had the strongest complaint against him said just that:

I think he did wrong to delay, and was hardly justified under the circumstances, even by the written orders of General Meade; still in all his previous history and subsequent lengthy service by my side in the West and South he showed himself a patriot in spirit, a brave man, and an able commander.³⁴

So, Slocum dallied, much to the astonishment of those who served with him. Howard's brother wrote bitterly a week later that Slocum had earned his name: "slow come."³⁵

In terms of controversial Civil War actions, this does not rank high on the absolute scale. Slocum takes flak from historians when the subject is brought up, but then again, most historians prefer to focus on Lee, Longstreet, and Pickett. Still, no matter how solid his reasons, Slocum missed an opportunity to play a very important role in the most famous battle ever fought on this continent. Acoustic shadows and orders kept him away from the fighting when other corps desperately needed him. Instead of covering himself with glory that day, the best he can hope for is to be quietly excused.

Sometime during the afternoon, most likely in his second message, Howard apprised Slocum of the situation on the field. Slocum replied that he would bring the Twelfth up about a mile to the right of Gettysburg. Why so far out of his way? Why not simply march straight up the Baltimore Pike? If he had used that route, he would have arrived on the field earlier. Slocum chose this approach because his most recent intelligence placed the Left Wing still on the far side of Gettysburg, with Early bearing down on them from the north. In that case, it made more sense for Slocum to move to its right and extended the flank, which the Confederates had pressed hard. Slocum arrived and took command on the evening of 1 July. About seven o'clock p.m. an insulted

Howard had received a belated order from Meade giving command of the Left Wing to Hancock. Hancock thought he had exercised it all day, but Howard had not received the order on time. Crestfallen, Howard relinquished his charge to Hancock, who in turn had given it to Slocum when he arrived. Slocum paused a moment to inform Meade of the situation. He notified him that he had amended his order and placed Williams' Division on the right, and Geary's on the far left. He said that things had not gone well, but that he hoped their work was done for the day.³⁶

Meade arrived early in the morning of 2 July, and placed the Fifth Corps to Slocum's right. He ordered the Twelfth shuffled around briefly that morning. They ended their movement by settling into a position on a hill just east-southeast of the northern end of Cemetery Hill known as Culp's Hill. The Union army now occupied a long position that stretched from Little Round Top, along Seminary Ridge up to Cemetery Hill. Here, it bent backwards, running through a few low spots and onto Culp's Hill. Thus, the Twelfth formed the barbed end of what became known as "the fish hook." As soon as they came to rest, Slocum's men got to work building entrenchments.³⁷ It is notable that Slocum's men were the only ones to build substantial breastworks at Gettysburg. This would prove especially important during the next day and night.

The morning and afternoon passed relatively quietly for Slocum and the Twelfth, until a Confederate artillery bombardment from Major Joseph Latimer's cannon rained down on their heads. Union artillery replied, with various, widespread guns converging on Latimer's exposed position. Though the Confederates did some damage, the Federals proved more effective, and eventually Latimer himself fell wounded. His successor

withdrew the remaining pieces around six-thirty that evening. Skirmishers also traded sniper fire on a regular basis, but in comparison to the left flank of the army, Slocum's men had it easy.³⁸

While Slocum dealt with Latimer, Lee resumed his offensive, this time against the Union left. He ordered his "Old War Horse" James Longstreet to lead a flanking movement to the south. Due to mismanagement of the marching orders, Longstreet and his men ended up marching and countermarching in a vain attempt to remain concealed from the Federals. As a result, the morning attack actually took place in the afternoon.

As the Confederates advanced up the Emmitsburg Road, much to their shock and dismay, they stumbled over Union troops where there should have been none. Earlier that day, Sickles had asked if he could move his Third Corps into an advanced position. It seemed to him the ground in front of him was infinitely superior to what he then occupied; it was higher and had a good field of fire. Meade, knowing that Sickles held the extreme left of the line, denied his request. So, Sickles did it anyway. In doing so, he isolated his corps from the rest of the army and exposed their flank. A rightly infuriated Meade ordered him back into line, but there was no time before Longstreet's assault hit him.

Longstreet's men collided with the Third Corps and all Meade could do was wait. Brutal fighting raged all afternoon in the Peach Orchard and Wheat Field, with neither side gaining a decisive advantage. With all of the cover available, troops hugged the ground and hid behind trees, turning the conflagration at times into a stereotypical Indian fight.

Meanwhile, John Bell Hood, now one of Longstreet's division commanders, pointed his men towards the slopes of Big and Little Round Top. On the Union side, not long before, Gouverneur K. Warren noted the strategic importance of the rocky face of the smaller hill. If the Confederates took it, they would be firmly planted directly on the Union flank, holding the high ground. They would actually be able to fire down into the blue-clad ranks from above. He scrambled to find some men who could be posted there, ordering several regiments to hold it at all costs. The gray tide cascaded over the top of Big Round Top, easily brushing aside the few Federals they encountered.

They swept down onto Little Round Top with a vengeance. Others attacked from the front, up the face of the hill. Confederate snipers, firing from a strange rock formation below called "Devil's Den" harassed the beleaguered Union troops. As time passed, Union troops began to run low on ammunition. Wave after wave of Rebels continued to pound them, and though it looked for a while they might break, the Union line held, and Little Round Top was secured

Down in the Wheat Field, the battle continued to rage. The field changed hands several times during the course of the day, depending on which side happened to get reinforcements. Finally, the Confederates gave one mighty push, throwing a great many fresh men into the battle. The Union lines broke and panicked men poured back into the main line of the Army of the Potomac. Longstreet chased them as best he could, drawing dangerously near. Some worried that the Confederacy could be on its way to winning a decisive battle.

The possibility certainly worried Meade, and this thought led to another controversial moment for Slocum at Gettysburg. In a dispatch now lost, Meade ordered

Slocum to take most or all of the Twelfth Corps, and send it to the left. Slocum had a full Confederate division hovering in his front, and he worried that if he withdrew the Confederates could march in and easily occupy his works. The consequences of losing the Twelfth Corp's position could be disastrous. The Confederates would have planted themselves squarely on the Federal flank on high, fortified, ground. In fact, due to the fishhook position Meade occupied, they would be in the rear of the army, within easy striking distance of his main line of retreat/supply, the Baltimore Pike.

Realizing the danger of his situation, Slocum put the First Division in motion immediately, while appealing to Meade through his adjutant H. C. Rodgers to allow the Second Division to remain. Meade replied that the left was the real point of danger and that the Twelfth could retain only a brigade there. Rather than argue the point further, Slocum accepted Meade's decision and detailed George S. Greene's command to hold the Union right. He instructed Greene to extend his line as far as he could stretch it, hoping to fill the Union trenches before Ewell did. He then sent Geary and his remaining troops after Williams, who had personally accompanied Ruger and the First Division.³⁹

Historians have since criticized Slocum's willingness to follow this order. It was a foolish move; Slocum and Williams both knew it. Bates, A. Wilson Greene and, to a lesser degree, Pfanz, point to the fact that if there was any latitude in the orders, and there appears to have been some, Slocum could have corrected this error. Again, most of the original criticism seems to be traceable back to Bates:

“The error...of removing almost the entire right wing, and leaving a strong position which had been well fortified, and was vital to the integrity of the entire Army, does not rest alone with the Commander-in-Chief. The responsibility must be shared by Gen. Slocum.... He should never have consented to the withdrawal of those troops without remonstrance; and rigorous protest from him would have prevented it.”⁴⁰

And yet, what was this lost communication? Was there really that much leverage?

Meade's son, present at the battle and editing his father's letters stated simply that he had sent orders to Slocum, "directing him to send a division to the left."⁴¹ Others, such as Abner Doubleday, contradict this brief statement. Though no longer commanding the First Corps, Doubleday remained present for the entire battle, in relatively close proximity to both commanders. He stated clearly that the order asked for all of Slocum's men.⁴² Slocum himself explicitly states, "Gen. Meade sent me an order to remove the entire 12th Corps from its position on the right to the one on the left" (emphasis in the original).⁴³

In any case, Bates is wrong. Slocum *did* remonstrate to Meade over the subject. Again, even if he had not clearly stated that he had, it is implied by the fact that both divisions did not march at once. Ruger reported he moved to the left around six that evening while Geary and the Second Division moved an hour later, at seven.⁴⁴ Slocum delayed sending Geary's division until Rodgers had found Meade and made him aware of the situation to his front. Also, both Slocum and Doubleday insist that the former made efforts to convince Meade that moving so many men was a bad idea.⁴⁵ Then, if Meade wanted to persist and take his chances, it was not Slocum's place to argue.

In this vein, Slocum insisted after the war that he was right to follow the risky orders:

The first duty of a subordinate is to obey the orders of his superior; and this is particularly true when an army is engaged, and is in the very crises of a great struggle. Under such circumstances, I can hardly conceive of any excuse that would justify a subordinate in remonstrating, protesting, or even delaying for an instant any order for the transfer of troops from one point of danger to another, when directed to do so by his commander.⁴⁶

In Slocum's view, he had done all he ethically could by making Meade aware of the situation and asking him to reconsider. It is notable what difficulties can arise when high-ranking subordinates try to second-guess their commander, Braxton Bragg's Confederate Army of Tennessee being a prime example of Slocum's point. Only those with the benefit of hindsight, primarily, but not exclusively, armchair generals and academics, can say with any authority when orders can be "responsibly" disobeyed. If the battle had been virtually any other than Gettysburg, it would not be an issue at all.

A. Wilson Greene echoes Bates attacks once again. As with the question of Slocum's timely arrival, it is important to point out that in particular Greene commits two fundamental errors in framing his article. First, he grossly misuses Howard's eulogy.

Howard stated that,

The most impressive incident of the great battle of Gettysburg to me was Slocum's own battle.... Slocum's resolute insistence... upon leaving General Greene and his brigade... [on Culp's Hill the night of the 2nd] and more still, Slocum's organized work and engagement of the ensuing early morning... prevented Meade from losing the battle of Gettysburg. It was a grand judgment and action of Slocum's; a step to all important and essential victory.⁴⁷

That given, Greene chooses to set up his article this way:

Was Howard correct in ascribing a critical role to the Twelfth Corps at Gettysburg? If so, what part did Slocum and the rest of the relatively anonymous hierarchy of his corps play on July 1-2? Did they render service that altered the course of America's most famous battle?⁴⁸

Was Slocum's performance at Gettysburg the central facet of the battle that Howard claimed it was? Of course not, and if asked, Howard would likely reply that a eulogy to grieving family and friends is essentially different from professional history. What Howard is getting at in this passage is not that Slocum *changed* the course of the battle, but that he *prevented* it from changing.

Shedding reality for a moment and delving into the realm of reasonable conjecture, what would have happened had General Greene not been there? Chances are, the Confederates would have simply walked up the hill and taken the whole line. With the entire corps out of the way and his men occupying the only substantial works on the field, Lee might have reconsidered his options. His men would be squarely in Meade's rear, dangerously close to the Union line of supply and retreat, the Baltimore Pike. Even if Lee just reinforced Ewell, the Union position on Cemetery Ridge would have become untenable. If Meade remained, Lee could have rolled up his entire line.

Instead of launching Pickett's Charge the next day, Lee would probably have forced Meade to withdraw in a tactical defeat. It would have been disastrous for Union morale. If Meade had not retreated, Gettysburg could easily have become another Chancellorsville. So, in the sense that Slocum did not cause them to lose, it was a "step" to their ultimate victory. Howard should be excused if, given the circumstances of his speech, he embellished the tale a little, but A. Wilson Greene cannot be let off so easily. By framing the study as he did, he predestined Slocum to failure.⁴⁹

The results of Meade's order were nearly disastrous. While Slocum likely made the rounds of the right wing, Ruger's troops, led by Williams, made it to the left in time to participate in the final repulse of Longstreet. Henry Lockwood's brigade, in particular, charged over the crest of Cemetery Ridge and collided with the most advanced elements of Longstreet's assault. Still, they only cleaned up a few remnants; the attack had lost its momentum before their arrival. The onslaught of fresh troops proved more than enough to stop the Confederate assault.

Unfortunately for the Second Division, Geary had managed to blunder his way into the rear of the army, back in the direction to Two Taverns. It remains a minor mystery exactly how he accomplished this, actually walking away from the fighting. Once they realized that they had no idea where they were, Geary, instead of sending orderlies to find out their position, ordered his division to encamp. Meanwhile, with Longstreet thrown back, Slocum worried over the fate of half of his corps. He did not locate them for quite some time, but when a courier finally found them, he ordered them to return to Culp's Hill immediately.⁵⁰

While Greene states that this delay "speaks either to the timeliness or the efficiency of these searchers," it is more likely that it speaks to the dynamics of the odd situation.⁵¹ No doubt the reason it took them so long to find Geary was that he was in such an unexpected location. Who would think to look for a general, whose bravery was well known, encamped directly in the rear of the army, far away from any place he might do any good? Also, night rapidly crept over the field, complicating the search.

While Williams took part in the *coup de grace* of the repulse of Longstreet's assault and Geary's troops enjoyed their evening stroll along the Baltimore Pike, Slocum's worst fears became reality when Greene's brigade came under heavy assault from Edward Johnson's entire division. Lee had intended this attack to serve as a diversion for the assault on the Union left, but it had been delayed much as Longstreet's had. Instead, due to Meade's error, Johnson could easily accomplish the ends the main thrust failed to realize.

Greene was one of the oldest field officers in the Union army, born 6 May 1801. Graduating second in his class at West Point, Greene pursued a career as an engineer,

both inside and out of the army. He reentered the army in 1862, serving as a colonel in the Washington defenses until his promotion to brigadier general. Prior to Gettysburg, he served at Cedar Mountain, Antietam, and Chancellorsville.⁵²

Here, the breastworks proved their worth, as Greene and his men managed to cling tenaciously to a part of their entrenchments. Greene had not even been able to fully extend his line before the assault began. Knowing that he could not hold the entire hill against the Confederates' vastly superior numbers, Greene fell back into the left of the line of works with relatively little fighting. Once there, he refused to budge. Johnson's Confederates occupied the Federal entrenchments on the right, below the crest of Culp's Hill. Reinforced by regiments from the First and Eleventh Corps, Greene held on until darkness put an end to the fighting.

Greene's night battle stands out as one of the more important sidelights of Gettysburg. Though not as well known as Pickett's Charge or as brutal as the fighting around Little Round Top, it had the potential to alter the outcome of the fight. It very nearly did; Slocum would later remark that,

[Ewell] came very near to being successful, and if he...had been aware how nearly successful the attack was they would have done it.... There was little in the rear to interfere with them or prevent them from walking up to Meade's headquarters....⁵³

When Williams informed Slocum of the exact nature of the situation after the council of war that night, Slocum simply replied, "Well, drive them out at daylight."⁵⁴ Slocum ordered an attack for the next morning, and had the rest of the Twelfth Corps in line with Greene by midnight. They began preparations in earnest for the coming of first light.⁵⁵

At the close of the fighting on the second day, Meade called his commanders together to discuss whether he should stay or retreat closer to his supply lines. All of

them echoed similar sentiments, that Meade should stay, but it was Slocum's reply that was most notable: "Stay and fight it out."⁵⁶ As Pfanz notes, "[t]his epigram was one of the finest of the war; it represented Slocum at his best."⁵⁷

Slocum left the tactical planning for the upcoming fight to Williams, Geary, and Ruger. They managed to work up a plan that night. Mostly the brainchild of Williams, it called for Geary to attack on Greene's right after a short artillery bombardment. Geary occupied a position on Culp's Hill to the right of Greene's steadfast brigade. Ruger and the First Division remained off to the right, hovering on Johnson's flank. From there, Williams hoped they could exploit some weakness while at the same time preventing the Confederates from moving around them. Everyone knew well that the brunt of the fighting would fall on Geary.⁵⁸

The cannon roared right on time, about 4:30 that morning. Calling it "the most impressive incident of that great battle to me," Howard stated, "I was awakened from my Cemetery bed on the morning of the 3rd of July by the startling roar of Slocum's guns."⁵⁹ The massive infantry attack that Williams had carefully planned never materialized. Instead, Johnson, prodded by Ewell, launched a series of assaults of his own. Lee had in mind for this effort to serve as a distraction for Longstreet again, this time covering an assault that would eventually be executed as Pickett's Charge. Ewell gladly obliged, hoping to exploit the only gains he had. To this end, overnight he roughly doubled the number of Confederate troops on the hill, also sending in the famous Stonewall brigade.⁶⁰

After the bombardment subsided somewhat, Johnson sent in his men. They raced straight up the side of the hill, right at the same positions they had tried to take the night before. Geary planned for this, weakening his right flank somewhat by shifting these

troops to the left. Johnson's first assault broke against Greene's prickly front. He reformed his lines and launched a second assault at the same positions. This, too, met with failure. Finally, probably at Ewell's suggestion, Johnson gave it one more try. This time he pulled several brigades out of line, sending some to his left to extend the attack in that direction. Once again, they could not penetrate Geary's lines. Finally, around ten-thirty, Johnson withdrew his spent command as Slocum's men pressed forward. Long before Pickett's Charge went in, Ewell had attacked and failed. The Twelfth Corps finally possessed their entire line once again. They had secured the Union flank.⁶¹

The fight at Culp's Hill had proved to be a vicious one. Williams noted that Johnson's position "was quite impregnable for assault."⁶² Slocum would state in his report that the rebels

were fully prepared to resist our attack. The force opposed to us, it is said, belonged to the corps under General Ewell, formerly under General Jackson, and they certainly fought with a determination and valor which has ever characterized the troops of this well-known corps.⁶³

Geary reported that the 3,900 officers and men of his command expended over 277,000 rounds of ammunition. Considering the gauntlet they had just run, the Twelfth Corps was little the worse for wear. Johnson's men inflicted 1,082 casualties, only 204 of whom died as a result of their wounds. The Confederates, on the other hand suffered well over 2,000 casualties, and gained nothing.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, Longstreet assembled his men for what would be Lee's final assault. He chose George Pickett, commander of his only remaining fresh division to lead it and added any other ready troops Lee felt he could hazard. In all, over 15,000 Confederates lined up to take part in the attack. Lee warmed up the Federals with the largest artillery bombardment ever seen on the American continent. Unfortunately for the Confederates,

most of the shells flew high, doing little damage to the terrified Yankees hunkered down behind a small stone wall. When the Confederates had used up most of their ammunition, the guns fell silent and the first, somber lines of Rebels appeared out of the woods.

The approach to the Union position consisted of an open mile of land. The Confederates worked their way slowly across fields, farms, and orchards. Federal artillery opened on them with shell and canister shot as they drew within range. The masses of lead tore gaping holes in the Confederates' ranks. Lee's men reached the Federal line and in the brutal hand-to-hand that fighting ensued, the Rebels managed to capture a battery of artillery. Meade, worried about the break, this time called for Slocum to send only his first division to the scene. Williams and Ruger moved the division immediately. They arrived in time to serve as support if need be, but the men were not called into action. Instead, they watched as their comrades repelled Pickett's men, inflicting over 5,000 casualties in that single assault.⁶⁵

Beaten and demoralized, Lee's graybacks stayed in place an entire drizzly day before retreating. Lincoln rode Meade, pressing for him to follow up on his success, but Meade gave chase at a slow, careful pace that made George McClellan look fast. Lee, though harassed by cavalry, managed to stay ahead of his pursuers, finally reaching his crossing point at Williamsport in safety. Once there, he discovered his pontoon bridges destroyed, and no way to cross the river. With Meade bearing down on him, it could have been the end of the Army of Northern Virginia. Yet, Meade moved so deliberately that Lee had time to construct makeshift bridges and slip across the Potomac before his doom fell.

Not long after the end of the engagement at Culp's Hill, Slocum's men undertook the morbid task of dealing with Confederate dead on the field. They had buried over 900 when their marching orders reached them and they departed, leaving a large number of corpses to the tender mercies of animals and the elements. On 5 July, the Twelfth Corps moved to Littlestown, in the opposite direction of the Confederate retreat. Slocum and his men remained there until ordered to move on at 4:00 in the morning of the 7th, when they moved south, parallel to Lee's line of retreat. They marched through Frederick, Maryland on the 8th, camping on the far side of town. On the 9th, they passed through Crampton's Gap on South Mountain, site of Slocum's earlier victory in the Antietam Campaign.⁶⁶

Slocum arrived in Williamsport, where Meade had Lee bottled up against the Potomac on 12 July. Slocum had evidentially ridden ahead of his men, because he was present at Meade's council of war that night, but the rest of the Twelfth Corps did not arrive at the town until the next day. The council considered the situation, but apparently it was just as confounded as Meade at having beaten Lee. The majority present, including Slocum, voted against attacking immediately. Slocum may have had the courage to stay and fight it out earlier in a defensive battle, but when it came to offense, he was just as McClellanized as any soldier in the Army of the Potomac. Therefore, while Meade and his generals debated, Lee slipped back across the river during the night. The Gettysburg Campaign was over, and the wave of the Confederacy crested.⁶⁷

How did Slocum feel about the campaign? According to his official report, Slocum focused more on the fact that they had actually won a victory than anything else. McClellan's influence peeked out again when he noted that "every one felt convinced

that we were greatly [Lee's] inferior in point of numbers." Particularly, he praised Meade for shifting forces around rather than letting Lee attack one portion of the army whilst the others sat by idly.

Slocum would write about the battle later, but by that time he was much more concerned with the fact that Meade had ignored his role as wing commander and Williams service at the head of the Twelfth Corps.⁶⁸ One thing that was apparent: Slocum realized very early on how important the battle of Gettysburg was. He certainly wanted to be sure that his place in it would be remembered well. As he said in a letter to Meade,

Your report is the official history of this important battle, and to this report reference will always be made by our Government, our people and the Historians, as the most reliable & accurate account of the services of each Corps, Division, and Brigade of your army.⁶⁹

As the victors of war often write history, how it would judge Slocum's role in the war remained to be seen. For a general to quibble too much before he himself is a victor is pointless. So at least for the moment, Slocum had to turn himself back towards the task at hand.

¹ During the Peninsular Campaign, J.E.B. Stuart had actually circumnavigated the entire Union army, all the while being chased by his father-in-law, commanding the inept attempts to catch Stuart and his troopers.

² "Gen. Slocum's Recollections," Courier (Syracuse), (2 April 1879), Slocum to Butterfield, US War Department, The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume XXVII, (Washington DC: GPO, 1881-1901), 223.

³ "Gen. Slocum's Recollections," Courier (Syracuse), (2 April 1879), Slocum's dispatch to Butterfield says that the execution took place at one o'clock.

⁴ See Edwin B. Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), 128-133; William F. Fox, "Life of General Slocum," In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1904), 76.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Summary of Principle Events, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part I, 4.

⁷ Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue, (Ann Arbor: Louisiana State University, 1964), 315-316.

⁸ See Pipe Creek Circular, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part III, 458-459; and Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, 237-241.

⁹ Harry W. Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 31-44.

- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 45-70.
- ¹¹ Henry Slocum, Letter to T.H. Davis and Co., September 8, 1875, Slocum Folder, Robert L. Brake Collection—USAMHI
- ¹² Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 92.
- ¹³ John Hill, 5 July 1863, Folder NY-107—GNMP
- ¹⁴ Hinkley Letter, Folder 6-W3-3rd Wisconsin.—GNMP
- ¹⁵ Charles F. Morse, "History of the Second Massachusetts Regiment of Infantry," (Boston: George H. Ellis, 1882), 6.
- ¹⁶ Fox, In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, 77n.
- ¹⁷ Fox, In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, 175n.
- ¹⁸ Meysenburg to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part III, 463.
- ¹⁹ Sickles to Howard, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part III, 463. While Reynolds may have known nothing of the Pipe Creek Circular. Sickles doubtless did. His insubordination against Meade's orders, therefore, began before the battle had even really begun.
- ²⁰ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 94.
- ²¹ Slocum to T. H. Davis, 7-8.
- ²² Butterfield to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part III, 462.
- ²³ Slocum to T. H. Davis., 1-2.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.
- ²⁵ A. Wilson Greene, "A Step to All Important Victory," The Second Day at Gettysburg, Gary Gallagher, ed. (Kent: Kent State University, 1993), 87-135.
- ²⁶ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 97.
- ²⁷ Carl Schurz to Abraham Lincoln. August 8, 1863 (Breaking up of 11th Corps) Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois. (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>)
- ²⁸ There is little hard evidence available to either Slocum's prosecution or defense. What directly follows is the author's reconstruction of events on that hot July afternoon.
- ²⁹ Slocum to T. H. Davis.
- ³⁰ Howard to Slocum and Sickles, and Sickles to Howard, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part II, 463.
- ³¹ See note 13.
- ³² Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 98.
- ³³ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 97.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*
- ³⁶ Slocum to Howard or Hancock, Meade to Howard or Doubleday, Slocum to Meade, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part II, 462-463.
- ³⁷ Report of Major General Henry W. Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part I, 759.
- ³⁸ Greene, "A Step to All Important Victory," 112-113.
- ³⁹ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 195-196.
- ⁴⁰ Slocum to T. H. Davis and Co.
- ⁴¹ George Meade, ed., The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Vol. 2, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 87.
- ⁴² Abner Doubleday, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot, 1989), 180.
- ⁴³ Slocum to T. H. Davis and Co.
- ⁴⁴ Report of Thomas H. Ruger, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part I, 778; and Report of John W. Geary, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part I, 826.
- ⁴⁵ See Slocum to T. H. Davis and Doubleday, Chancellorsville and Gettysburg, 180.
- ⁴⁶ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 195.
- ⁴⁷ Oliver O. Howard, "To the Memory of Henry Slocum: A Eulogy by Oliver O. Howard," Civil War Times Illustrated, Thomas E. Hilton, ed., (21 March 1982), 40.
- ⁴⁸ Greene, "A Step to All Important Victory," 89.
- ⁴⁹ Howard, "To the Memory of Henry Slocum," 39, and Greene, "A Step to All Important Victory," 88-89.
- ⁵⁰ Report of Major General Slocum, 760.
- ⁵¹ Greene, "A Step to All Important Victory," 193, 98n.
- ⁵² Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue, (Ann Arbor: Louisiana State University, 1964), 187.

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- ⁵³ Henry Slocum, "Recollections."
- ⁵⁴ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 234.
- ⁵⁵ Report of Major General Slocum, 760.
- ⁵⁶ Reports of Major General George G. Meade, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part I, 73.
- ⁵⁷ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 200.
- ⁵⁸ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 284-285; Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, 465-476.
- ⁵⁹ Howard, "To the Memory of Henry Slocum," 40.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 310-352.
- ⁶² Williams, 230.
- ⁶³ Report of Major General Slocum, 761.
- ⁶⁴ Pfanz, Gettysburg—Culp's Hill and Cemetery Hill, 352.
- ⁶⁵ Coddington, The Gettysburg Campaign, 493-534.
- ⁶⁶ See Fox, In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, 82 and Report of Major General Slocum, 761-762.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, and Jacob Hoke, The Great Invasion, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1959), 466.
- ⁶⁸ Slocum to Greene, 30 December 1863.—NYHS
- ⁶⁹ Slocum to Meade, December 1863—NYHS

Chapter V

Heading West: Tennessee, Vicksburg, and Atlanta

After Lee recrossed the Rappahannock, the Union and Confederate armies remained in place for several weeks, on opposite banks of the river. All during the pursuit, Meade still reeled from his victory. That he had finally really beaten Lee proved almost too much for him. If he had moved cautiously before he won, triumph had made him so much slower that Lee had slipped away cleanly. Meade's apparent lethargy infuriated Lincoln. He had finally found someone who could face Lee on equal terms, but he had not found the man to best him. The President knew that something more must be done.

When Lincoln called Meade to Washington, Slocum, by reason of seniority, took temporary command of the Army of the Potomac. He occupied Meade's headquarters, but nothing untoward occurred to transform his command into anything more than a shepherding operation.¹ After Meade returned, Slocum left for Syracuse around the first of September for a few days of rest.²

The story of the Twelfth Corps' operations in the months immediately following Gettysburg is a singularly uninteresting one when compared to other times. The armies moved from place to place, but neither side accomplished anything. Alpheus Williams describes this time as being taken up mostly by marching and camping. Pickets and cavalry saw some action, but the bulk of the army had to find other ways to pass the time. Slocum remained a strict disciplinarian for the course of the war, and likely took advantage of the lull to drill his men. Otherwise, they probably indulged in the many pastimes for which Civil War soldiers are renowned: reading, writing, gambling,

drinking, etc. Only the occasional visit of foreign dignitaries or the execution of a deserter or two broke their monotonous life.

One instance of the latter took place on Friday, 18 September 1863 on the Rapidan River. The day dawned with a gale, the wind whipping through the trees and rain coming down in torrents. Around noon, the storm let up, and Williams called the First Division into line to witness the execution. As Williams proceeded, it began to pour again. Williams thought it an appropriate setting for such a dark duty. The man sat down on the edge of his coffin, apparently without a struggle. Perhaps he simply realized that he had no hope of escape (Williams had seen to it) and so had resigned himself to die well. The man had deserted twice, and while the army extended mercy to him the first time, none now remained. The man's former comrades loosed the fatal volley and he fell dead in his coffin, "like one going to sleep." Though he hoped displays like this would cut down on desertion, Williams expected to lose twenty or so of his men to the executioner.³

Meanwhile, events had moved quickly in the Western Theatre. The Union's rising star, Ulysses S. Grant, had been striving in Tennessee and Mississippi to open the "Father of Waters" since the beginning of the war. As Lee dispatched one Federal general after another in the East, Grant had done the same with his opponents in the west. Starting with his successful assaults on Forts Henry and Donleson, Grant drove progressively deeper and deeper into the heart of the Dixie. He suffered setbacks, such as the battle of Shiloh, where Confederate General Albert Sydney Johnston caught him by surprise and threatened to destroy his army. Yet, thanks to Johnston's death and Grant's

legendary tenacity, the Union army not only survived, but also drove the Confederates into retreat.

After the fall of New Orleans in 1862, Grant knew the key to the Mississippi lay in the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg and he turned his attentions there. Opposed by John C. Pemberton and Joseph E. Johnston, not to mention difficult terrain and long supply lines, Grant nevertheless managed to meet and defeat the Confederates at Champion's Hill. After the battle, Pemberton retreated back into Vicksburg while Johnston hovered nearby, crying for reinforcements. Grant invested the city, and, after direct assault failed miserably, settled in for a siege. On 4 July 1863, as the eastern armies sat exhausted in Pennsylvania, the half-starved garrison at Vicksburg surrendered. With the fall of Port Hudson five days later, the Union finally possessed all of the Mississippi River.

In Tennessee, Confederate General Braxton Bragg unknowingly conspired to relieve the Twelfth Corps of its boredom. As Grant dueled his way south towards Vicksburg, Bragg faced off with Union General William S. Rosecrans, and had steadily fallen back in the face of Rosecrans superior numbers. Rosecrans followed Bragg slowly but steadily through Tennessee and into the far northwestern corner of Georgia. Once there, Bragg attacked at Chickamauga Creek, hoping to turn the Yankees and destroy them.

Fortunately for Rosecrans, he detected the movement just in time, and the two armies met on more even terms than Bragg would have liked. At first the Yankees held their own quite well. Then Rosecrans bungled an order that left a gaping hole in his lines at the worst possible moment. As luck would have it, Longstreet, on loan from Lee, sent

in an assault just as the Federals scrambled to plug the gap. Rosecrans' entire right wing disintegrated around him as Confederates poured through the break. The Union left, under the command of George H. Thomas, managed to hold on and cover the retreat, preventing greater destruction. Rosecrans pulled his forces back into Chattanooga, Tennessee, where Bragg laid siege to him, cutting off all lines of supply. Rosecrans, broken worse than his army by the defeat, simply hunkered down and waited for the killing stroke. Around him, his men began to starve.

Unlike Hooker cowering against the Rapidan after Chancellorsville, Rosecrans could count on a rescue. Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman had full intentions of relieving the forces in Chattanooga. They made a number of plans, and some of these would have a direct influence on Slocum and the Twelfth Corps.

On 24 September, Williams received orders to move. He expected to attack the flank of Lee's army, but he was wrong. In fact, both Slocum and Howard's corps left the Army of the Potomac and the Eastern Theater altogether. Lincoln hoped they could be used against Bragg at Chattanooga in Rosecrans' rescue. For the rest of the war, the men of both the Eleventh and Twelfth remained in the West.⁴

On the same day, "Fighting Joe" Hooker was placed in command of both corps.⁵ Unfortunately for Slocum, this reopened the wound that had festered since Chancellorsville. Upon receiving word of Hooker's appointment, he wasted no time. The very next day he dispatched a letter to the president tendering his resignation. He stated bluntly that,

My opinion of General Hooker both as an officer and a gentleman is too well known to make it necessary for me to refer to it in this communication. The public service cannot be promoted by placing under his command an officer who has so little confidence in his ability as I

have. Our relations are such that it would be degrading if made to accept any position under him. I have therefore to respectfully tender the resignation of my commission as major-general of volunteers.⁶

Whether he feared that Hooker might finally retaliate against him for his vitriolic attacks or if he simply felt he could not honorably accept such a situation is not known. Both may well have been true. What is known is that Lincoln would have none of it. Fearing he might lose an experienced general at an important juncture in the war, the President refused to accept the resignation.⁷

Exactly what Lincoln knew of the situation from Hooker's perspective no source directly reveals. Hooker had met with Lincoln on the evening of 13 May, but they obviously did not discuss the growing wave of criticism for Chancellorsville.⁸ In fact, Lincoln wrote Hooker the next day that he had "some painful intimations that some of your corps and Division Commanders are not giving you their entire confidence. This would be ruinous, if true; and you should therefore, first of all, ascertain the real facts beyond all possibility of doubt."⁹

Lincoln displayed little patience with other complaints from some generals, but here, he apparently understood Slocum's position. Lincoln met him again in Washington on 28 September. Once again, Slocum's acquaintance with the president's wife may have helped him. Instead of sending the general packing, Lincoln proposed a compromise. If Slocum would accompany his troops into Tennessee, he would not be placed under Hooker's command once they arrived. In addition to this, Lincoln assured him that he would be assigned to a command of equal importance, away from Hooker, as soon as possible. Lincoln composed, read, and mailed a letter to Rosecrans concerning the subject in Slocum's presence. Slocum accepted this arrangement and withdrew his

resignation. Though this settled the matter for the moment, it did not provide an ultimate solution. Lincoln's compromise would only hold back the tempest for a short time.¹⁰

It was probably at this meeting that Lincoln brought up the issue of the executions Slocum had surreptitiously carried out at Leesburg during the Gettysburg Campaign. Calling it an occurrence that "caused me more pain than almost any incident that had occurred during the whole war," Lincoln asked Slocum if he remembered it. Slocum said he had already forgotten the circumstance. The President, though, could not. The wife and sister of one of the men had come to Washington to plead for their loved one's life. Slocum's telegram announcing the execution arrived while Lincoln spoke with them in the oval office when. Lincoln opened it, and had to read it to them right there.¹¹

After the interview, Slocum did as asked and journeyed south with the Twelfth. Unfortunately, contrary to Lincoln's promise, Rosecrans did nothing to alleviate the tension. Rosecrans felt that he could not give any substantial commands to eastern generals because "Any attempt to mingle them [western soldiers] with Potomac troops by placing them under Potomac Generals would kindle a flame of jealousy and dislike."¹² Upon arriving in Tennessee therefore, Hooker took command of the department, assigning Slocum and the Twelfth Corps to guard the Nashville and Chattanooga railroad to the rear of Chattanooga. He particularly ordered Slocum to cover a section of the railroad that ran from Wartrace to Tantalum.¹³

Slocum took charge of civilian affairs in the area, and made certain the railroad ran smoothly. The majority of the official communications from that point forward are composed of brief orders from Hooker to Slocum via chief of staff Daniel Butterfield. Butterfield repeatedly warned Slocum of reports of rebels operating in the area and

instructed him on how to deal with them. Most of the important action in the area took place farther to the south, though Slocum's pickets and cavalry certainly kept busy.¹⁴

Slocum began to institute changes around Tullahoma, where he had his headquarters. When he arrived in Tennessee, he found, "thousands of 'poor white trash' eating up the supplies of the government..." and the railroad broken in several places nearly every day.¹⁵ In order to bring the problem under control, he took stern action to lift the burden off his own troops and place it on the backs of secessionist civilians. He reasoned simply that,

the natural protectors of these women and children now applying for support, are now in the ranks of the rebel army—and as in most instances they have been brought there through the influence of their wealthy secession neighbors, these women and children, have upon such neighbors, a much more equitable claim for support than they have upon the United States Government.¹⁶

In order to enforce this claim, Slocum established a camp at Fayetteville, in Lincoln County and put Colonel William Hawley of the Third Wisconsin Volunteers in charge of it. All refugees, women, and children in the vicinity of Federal posts that could "with propriety" be moved from their homes were to be sent to the new camp. Slocum authorized Col. Hawley to send out foraging parties to compel all wealthy secessionists within twenty miles to provide whatever supplies were necessary. Those people who could not be moved could remain at home, but not draw government rations. Instead, he ordered the post commanders to appoint a "worthy and compassionate" officer to impress supplies from secessionists around the base. In this way, Slocum freed up more of his troops to fight bushwhackers by concentrating the refugees into one area, easier to control and supply. Also, by forcing local wealthy secessionists to pay for the camp's upkeep, Slocum freed up more government supplies to go forward to the armies.¹⁷

Slocum displayed little patience with violence against Unionists. When he arrived at the post, guerrillas attacked virtually any loyal citizen attempting to take his cotton to market. If lucky, the loyalist escaped with only his cotton burnt, but all too often, he lost his life as well.¹⁸ Slocum attempted to end these attacks in the same order that established the refugee camps. If a property holder who had cotton destroyed proved their loyalty, they could apply to Slocum for help. If Slocum approved, federal authorities would then requisition an appropriate amount of undamaged goods from nearby secessionists. If the rebels refused, the provost marshal of the post would confiscate the needed assets, which would then be put up for public auction. He made it abundantly clear that this was to fall most heavily on wealthy rebels.¹⁹

This entire episode is very intriguing. Serving under Sherman's gigantic shadow during the March to the Sea and Through the Carolinas, it is tempting to simply view Slocum as a blank slate. It is easy to assume that Slocum absorbed his superior's ideas and put them into practice mechanically. Sherman had a very powerful personality that lends itself to this interpretation. Slocum's conduct in Tullahoma and later in Vicksburg points to a different conclusion. There is no evidence to suggest that the two men had extended contact up to this point. Yet, Slocum's approach to the administration of Tullahoma might be a page taken straight out of Sherman's manual on war. As such, it is notable that Slocum evolved his opinions on the treatment of civilians separately from Sherman.

It was not long before, the Slocum/Hooker feud boiled over once again. On 12 October, the day after Rosecrans refused to do anything about Slocum's command, Hooker made his opinion on the subject known. He wrote a letter to President Lincoln in

the hopes of ridding himself of Slocum and at the same time strengthening his own hand.

The letter dripped of polite condescension and thinly veiled disdain:

Permit me to make a suggestion with reference to my command.... It is that General Slocum may be tendered a command in Missouri or somewhere else.... Unless he gives more satisfaction in the discharge of his duties, he will soon find himself in deeper water than he has been wading in.... I shall act very deliberately with him...[as] [h]e now appears to be swayed entirely by passion in the exercise of his office. I hear that his grievances are hostility to myself...and disrespect shown his rank in detailing him for this service.... It seems that he aspired to the command of the Army of the Potomac, and that mortal offense was given in not naming him first. Of these you probably know more than myself.²⁰

If the president decided to honor Hooker's request, Hooker would both be rid of Slocum and be able to place his faithful crony, Daniel Butterfield, in command of the Twelfth.

From his perspective, it would be an ideal solution.

Several points present themselves in this letter. First of all, Slocum had not become any quieter in his criticisms of Hooker. This is not surprising, given that he proved very up front and open in the wake of Chancellorsville. It is also apparent that Slocum's criticisms annoyed Hooker. He had assigned Slocum to command the backwater of the department, and still attacks cut deep enough to make Hooker think it necessary to get him farther away. Hooker may also have been paranoid over the issue. Time had done nothing to assuage Slocum's mind. He despised Hooker, and let everyone know about it, apparently to the point that it caused some consternation among the higher echelon of the army.

The letter also implies that Hooker had not spoken of the situation extensively with Lincoln before, but did know that Slocum had met with Lincoln after Chancellorsville. He could have inferred this from Lincoln's letter on 14 May. There would be no real reason why Hooker should have mentioned it prior to this time. His

spat with Slocum was personal, and he would not want to accent the fact that half his command hated him. At any rate, Hooker seemed to feel he must feign ignorance of the situation. This was not the first time that Hooker tried this sort of subterfuge against Slocum, but he aimed his earlier attempts at his immediate superiors. For instance, he also mentioned that he had placed the matter before Rosecrans, who refused to remove Slocum from command. Lincoln also took no action, and let the situation stand as it was for the moment.²¹

Another interesting point reveals something of Lincoln himself. It is certain that Slocum, at least, had revealed to him the full extent of the ill will between himself and Hooker. Darius Couch certainly intended to follow suit, and other generals may well have done the same. Yet, Lincoln apparently never explicitly told Hooker of Slocum's more recent meeting with him. Had he done so, Hooker certainly would have altered the tone of his letter. As it stands, Lincoln probably read the dispatch with at least some amusement. Hooker condescended to inform him of a continuing squabble that Lincoln already knew all about. In this case as in others, Lincoln listened more than he spoke, and proved the wiser for it.

Though the letter contained a thread of truth, it was much more the work of Hooker's well-known bluster combined with an over active imagination. With well-practiced skill, he coated his statements with just enough truth to make the falsehoods easier to swallow. Yes, Slocum was furious at him for his failure at Chancellorsville and his tendencies towards drink and bragging. This much Slocum made abundantly clear in his letter to Lincoln as well as those to Howland. Slocum also apparently had few qualms about letting people know exactly what he thought. He had made it clear before

he accepted his current position that he did not think he could offer Hooker even the most basic faith. The fact that Lincoln himself promised Slocum that he would not be put in this situation rubbed his already raw nerves a little redder.

Hooker's letter also contains vagaries and outright lies that would continue to haunt Slocum for years to come. In what way was Slocum failing in his command? Hooker did not explain, but simply stated it in such a way as if to say any fool could see it. Slocum did connive to get command of the Army of the Potomac away from Hooker. Lincoln knew of this first hand, as this had been the whole point of Slocum's visit to him back in early May. It seemed to be no secret in the army that Slocum and Couch masterminded the plot. Meade, at least, and apparently several other corps commanders knew about it. But rather than place himself in the forefront, Slocum explicitly stated to Meade that he was willing to serve under him. Though the charge had no substance, it was easy to make, and Slocum would deal with it again after the war. As a corps commander, the most senior one at that, he would almost be expected to want command. In fact, it is somewhat surprising that he apparently did not.

Whether or not Slocum knew of Hooker's communication with Lincoln, he embarked upon his own letter writing campaign later that month. He had earlier written a letter to Rosecrans flatly stating that "under no circumstances would [he] take [his] men into action under an officer in whom [he] had so little confidence as [he] had in Hooker." In this letter, he did not offer to resign, as previously. When this brought no action, he sent what Grant called a "very disorderly communication, stating that when he came here it was under promise that he should not have to serve under Hooker, whom he neither regards with confidence as an officer nor respects as a man."²² Though the original copy

of this dispatch is lost, it apparently bore a great resemblance to his resignation letter to Lincoln. Its recipient differed; he addressed it to George H. Thomas, commander of the Army of the Cumberland. He also repeated his request to be relieved. Grant's paraphrase suggests that some of wording might have been the same, though apparently even more explicit. It certainly bothered Grant, whom Lincoln had just placed in command of the entire theatre. Grant placed a premium on harmony and loyalty amongst his officers. Whatever Grant's opinion of Hooker, Slocum's attacks basically defied the chain of command and the government's orders.²³

Nor had Slocum finished. On 14 November he wrote a long and detailed letter to Seward, which bore the endorsement of Lincoln himself. Slocum informed Seward that upon his arrival he had waited a month before asking Rosecrans to honor Lincoln's letter, only to be brushed aside. He settled for his command of the rear mainly to avoid contact with Hooker, but now it appeared the Twelfth Corps might be headed back into action. Slocum would be expected to cooperate with Hooker, and that he could not bear. He therefore tendered his resignation once again:

It is now apparent to me that my Corps will soon take the field—that it is the intention, notwithstanding my entire lack of confidence in Hooker as an officer—notwithstanding my utter detestation of him as a man, absolutely to force me to lead my men into battle under him.... My own reputation is not only endangered by it—but the interest of the country cannot but be injuriously effected by it.

Slocum repeatedly hurled down his gauntlet, challenging anyone who thought otherwise to hear him present the facts of his case against Hooker, even to the point of a board of inquiry.²⁴

While Slocum could rightly insist that Lincoln's promise to him be honored, for a subordinate to so unashamedly criticize his superior officer was clearly irresponsible.

Slocum, knowing that his principles and opinions would force him to refuse to serve under Hooker, had warned of it and hoped to avoid it in his letter to Lincoln. Both Lincoln and Slocum share the blame for any stress that occurred. Hooker cannot be faulted at this point, though his petty actions did nothing to soothe the situation. No matter what he tried, Slocum would still despise him. Slocum made very clear from the very beginning that he would not quietly serve under Hooker. Whether or not he actually expected his resignation to be accepted is superfluous; he knew that something had to be done or tension would result. Lincoln either should have made certain his promise would be kept, or simply let Slocum head back into civilian life. As for Slocum, whether he liked it or not, he should have kept his complaints to himself. He certainly should not have pushed the subject to the point he did, becoming guilty of gross insubordination. Fighting Joe was his immediate superior and Slocum's duty called him to serve Hooker, not like him. The fact that he proved incapable of the former, even when he knew the importance of teamwork, points to a definite character flaw. Such a weakness could have caused a great deal more harm than it actually did, had circumstances fallen into place a little differently.

Whereas Lincoln apparently ignored Hooker's request, Slocum's brought action. For the moment, Thomas dealt with the situation, as it was Thomas to whom Slocum's resignation was sent marked "personal." He had Slocum take his first division under Williams and guard the railroad between Murfreesborough and Bridgeport, away from Hooker. Becoming one of the few officers to observe the chain of command in this affair, Thomas passed Slocum's resignation on to Grant. Thomas then ordered Slocum to

report directly to his headquarters in Chattanooga, thereby sufficiently altering the command structure that so irked Slocum.²⁵

This state of affairs remained in effect during the climactic battle around Chattanooga. In fact, Geary's Division, which remained under Hooker's control, played a conspicuous role in the Battle Above the Clouds at Lookout Mountain. Earlier, Grant had managed to open a line of supply into the city, breaking Bragg's stranglehold on the Army of the Tennessee. In the meantime, Bragg had dispatched James Longstreet's division to attack Burnside, who occupied Knoxville. Unfortunately for Bragg, Longstreet neither took Knoxville nor returned in time. After ferrying in more troops and supplies, Grant launched a series of attacks that dislodged large portions of a reputedly impregnable Confederate position along Missionary Ridge. Bragg managed to leave the field with his army intact and retreated back into Georgia.²⁶

Though Slocum undoubtedly felt a sense of pride that his men had fought well, it probably irritated him to have been left behind in so important a battle. Thomas's solution had fixed the situation with Hooker for the moment, but in doing so, he apparently had exiled Slocum. Slocum himself is partly to blame for his own removal from the main fighting. His criticism of Hooker insured that the two could not work together. For the moment at least, Thomas set Slocum off to the side so that Hooker could do his job. Whether or not Thomas himself particularly liked this arrangement did not matter for the moment; it was a working solution.

In December of 1863, a small controversy erupted between the high command of the Twelfth Corps and their former commander, George Meade. Meade's report of Gettysburg had finally been published. Williams read a copy and, finding quite a few

errors in it, forwarded it along with his complaints to Slocum. Slocum then fired off a long letter to Meade on the subject, also sending along the reports of Ruger's Division, which had only recently been completed. The War Department called the Twelfth's First Division away immediately after the battle to help quell the riots raging through New York City. Slocum also wrote to General Greene, sending him a copy of the letter and asking him to broach the subject personally with Meade. He mailed both letters on 30 December. Slocum also brought up the subject on 3 January with his brother-in-law, LeRoy Morgan. He simply felt compelled to explain himself. He had earlier given Morgan an account of the battle, and wished to explain the discrepancies.²⁷ Slocum, Williams, and apparently Greene as well felt that a great deal was at stake. Slocum himself explicitly called it, "the most important contest of modern times."²⁸

The gist of their objections was that in his official report, Meade had neglected the First Division of the Twelfth Corps or mistakenly given others recognition for its role. While crediting Lockwood's Brigade with great service on the afternoon of the second, Meade mistakenly assigned it to the First Corps. This omission particularly irked Williams himself, as he had led the brigade into the fight. Next, Meade did not explicitly mention Greene's name in connection with the dramatic night battle on Culp's Hill. Greene had preserved the Union right while Williams, Ruger, and Geary were away, and Slocum thought this worthy of mention. He also charged that Meade had ignored Williams' movement in support of the left that night, while acknowledging Geary's, which had ended so comically. Next, he objected to the fact that Meade had not credited Williams with command of the Twelfth Corps nor himself with that of the right wing. He

pointedly reminded Meade that he had in his possession the order placing him in this position.²⁹

Meade replied to these charges much later than Slocum would have liked. He had been ill and away from his headquarters when the letter arrived and pleaded this excuse. He immediately wrote a revised report and forwarded it on to the War Department, fixing some of the mistakes that Slocum had pointed out. He sent a copy of the new report to Slocum along with a letter of apology that admitted some errors and denied others. In general Meade blamed his blunder on the fact that he had prepared the report hurriedly, at a time when several of his corps commanders had not submitted their accounts. Responding point by point, he at first stated that Slocum was right about Lockwood's Brigade, though he gave no reason why this error occurred in the first place. He would not apologize for the fact that he had overlooked Greene and Williams' First Division, for the reason that he aimed to produce a general account of the battle. He could not mention the services of every single brigade and division in the army, though had he known Greene's full story, he certainly would have included it.³⁰

Meade steadfastly refused to acknowledge Williams and Slocum's positions as corps and wing commanders respectively. Oddly enough, Meade said he had not included it because he had no idea that they had served in those capacities. He remembered the order to which Slocum referred. In it, Meade had placed Slocum in command of the Twelfth, First, and Sixth, with the idea of attacking Lee. Though Meade later called off the attack, he never explicitly rescinded the entire order. So, when Meade ordered the Fifth and Sixth corps away later, Slocum thought that he remained in command of the wing for the duration of the battle and acted accordingly. Williams

remained in command of the Twelfth, and Ruger of the First Division. Instead, Meade stated, he simply assumed that Slocum had realized that, after the assault was canceled, Meade intended him to return to the command of his corps. He thought the departure of the Fifth and Sixth would be another hint. In fact, when Williams accompanied Slocum to the council of war, Meade claimed to have been puzzled by his presence, but said nothing out of politeness.³¹

So, it seems that for all practical purposes, Meade had a wing commander of which he knew nothing. Did Slocum then actually occupy that position, as he later claimed? At the very least, he tried to act the part. In reality, he seems to have spent the last days of the battle floating in some sort of command limbo. Williams took charge of the Twelfth, and followed Slocum's orders, but Slocum did not try to exert his supposed influence over his "wing," though it certainly would have proven interesting if he had.

Meade should have informed Slocum of his intentions. It seemed a besetting sin of generals on both sides to think that their subordinates were capable of mind reading. From Slocum's perspective, Meade placed him in command and never took him back out. It should not be surprising that in the press of battle he continued to think as he did. As was his general rule, Slocum did exactly what his superior told him, no more or less. From a historical perspective, there may not be an easy way to categorize this strange event, though it might be safe to simply call Slocum an acting wing commander, while noting that Meade had no real idea what was going on in his own army.

Meanwhile, Grant remained unsure of what to do about Slocum and Hooker, but he wanted to solve the situation for good. Hooker, who "ha[d] behaved badly ever since his arrival," had thoroughly disgusted him, but Hooker's appointment by President

Lincoln made Grant hesitant simply to remove him from command. Grant's main problem with Slocum seemed to spring from his vocal opposition to Hooker. Indeed, he otherwise thought Slocum a very responsible man who could be trusted. Still, Slocum lacked the immense political pull of his rival, and his "disorderly communication had irked Grant. Grant's initial desire was to relieve Slocum of command and place Hooker in his stead as commander of the Twelfth.³² Grant changed his mind a few days later. He simply wanted to transfer them both out of his command, as he "[felt] that their presence [was] replete with both trouble and danger." He proposed that they consolidate the Eleventh and Twelfth under Howard.³³

Grant got mixed results. If Grant consolidated the Twentieth and the Eleventh, Howard would not be as strong a candidate for command due to the criticism he had garnered at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. Grant could not be rid of Joe Hooker so easily, due more to Hooker's political weight than to his personal acumen. Hooker had fought well in Tennessee, but if Slocum's sensibilities prevented him from working well with Hooker, Hooker's arrogance and bragging nature prevented him from cooperating smoothly with anyone who would not kowtow to him on a personal level. That Grant saw this is evidenced by his communications to Halleck mentioned above, but Slocum had caused the most visible trouble in his feud with Hooker. So the War Department consolidated the Eleventh and Twelfth into a new corps, the Twentieth, and placed it under Hooker's command. This displaced Slocum, and Grant now had to decide what to do with him.³⁴

Whatever he thought of Slocum's abilities as a general, Grant needed to get him away from Hooker as quickly as he could. To leave the two operating in the same

general vicinity would be asking for trouble, as no one could ever guarantee that they might not be asked to cooperate in some future crisis. Rather than exile Slocum to a militarily useless command in Missouri, Grant and Sherman sent him to guard one of the Union's most prized possessions: Vicksburg. Sherman issued the order in accordance with General Orders No. 5 from Huntsville, Alabama when Slocum reported there on 12 April 1864. Slocum started for Vicksburg on the morning of 18 April. Most agreed that he was well suited for his new command. He had, "acquired an enviable reputation in [Tennessee], on account of the system of economy...in the issuing of rations to indigent citizens."³⁵ Sherman stated simply that, "Slocum will be a good commander for Vicksburg and Natchez...."³⁶ James B. McPherson, former commander of the post, replied that he thought "the assignment of Major-General Slocum to the command of the District of Vicksburg an excellent arrangement...."³⁷ Grant also echoed this confidence in Slocum's abilities when he stated to Halleck that one of the reasons he sent him there in the first place was to take care of rampant corruption and mismanagement on the Mississippi. He doubtless hoped that the same rigid standards that had caused the friction with Hooker would be put to good use in Slocum's new position.³⁸

Slocum's charge in Mississippi proved to be anything but the military backwater Hooker would have been happy to see him get. The Department of Vicksburg embraced all the land between the mouth of the Arkansas River to the west, and the Tallahatchie River on the east, from Tennessee down to the Department of the Gulf.³⁹ His command consisted of more troops than some army corps, more than double the Twelfth, totaling in excess of 19,000 soldiers.⁴⁰

What should seem more impressive, though, is that Grant and Sherman chose to trust their hard earned prize to Slocum's keeping. Sherman, at least, actually worried little over the city itself. His later correspondence with Slocum showed that he cared a great deal for the interior of the state and expected Slocum to keep it secure. As he stated, "Vicksburg and its people are no use to us unless used offensively as against the interior of Mississippi." Slocum tried to look at his position in this light, and to use what troops he could spare to march into the interior as much as he could.⁴¹ His immediate goal was to draw the attention of Stephen D. Lee's Confederate cavalry, keeping them away from "that devil" Nathan Bedford Forrest.⁴² Overall, Slocum tried to wreak as much havoc as he could with any Rebel force that reared its head within his district boundaries.⁴³

Slocum made several small expeditions from Vicksburg over the course of his tenure there. He headed one expedition, composed of 2,800 men and six artillery pieces from the Seventeenth Corps, and destroyed the bridge over the Pearl River. He moved on and encountered Stephen D. Lee's cavalry about three miles from Jackson. Slocum attacked, forcing Lee back after two hours. Later, July 10-17, he led another incursion through Port Gibson and Grand Gulf, pushing back the Confederates in both places. He also organized a force that moved from Yazoo City to threaten Grenada. He would have undertaken more, but conflicting orders arrived from Sherman and General Edward Canby that prevented him from using nearly all of the troops under his command.⁴⁴

On the civil front, Slocum dealt primarily with unbridled fraud and depredations against the freedmen, but other matters demanded attention as well. In General Orders No. 4, Slocum cracked down on corruption. Only goods essential to loyal government

lessees could be sent across district lines. He required provost marshals to keep accurate and detailed records of all passes issued. He outlawed all trade taking place outside a town garrisoned by at least one regiment, and no one could use a landing that did not immediately fall under the guns of either federal troops or river gunboats. Anyone violating this order had his stock immediately confiscated.⁴⁵

Another problem arose sometime before 18 May, this time with the colored troops under his command. John Bobb, a Vicksburg citizen, returned home one day to find a group of black troops ransacking his house and garden. First, he called on them to stop, but when they ignored him, he was brazen enough to strike one. They shot and killed him on the spot.⁴⁶

Slocum responded with General Orders No. 7. First he denounced the breach in discipline. He reminded the officers in charge of the colored troops that they were involved in a program that was very new and very worthwhile, but they must prevent such violence. If not, history would remember them as a stain on the project rather than pioneers. He then went on to state,

if, in teaching the colored man that he is free, and that in becoming a soldier he has become the equal of his former master, we forget to teach him the first duty of a soldier, that of obedience to law and to those appointed over him—if we encourage him in rushing for his arms and coolly murdering citizens for every fancied insult, nothing but disgrace and dishonor can befall all connected with the organization.⁴⁷

He ended the order with a stern yet tempered reminder that “[e]very wrong done to the colored soldiers can and shall be punished, but he must not be permitted to take the law into his own hands....” Rather than simply punish the individual soldiers, Slocum intended to hold the white officers accountable for any crime that “brought disgrace upon the colored troops....”⁴⁸

Slocum spoke out against slavery both before and after the war, but this incident shook his faith in the black troops under his command. Doubtless, white troops committed similar atrocities, but the newness of the idea of black troops in the army probably led Slocum to treat them differently. One of his officers, Colonel Joseph Stockton, remarked that during one expedition, his unit was, on 13 July, "Rear guard again. General Slocum, fearing an attack on our train and not having as much confidence in the colored troops as in the two white regiments, kept us in the rear all the balance of the march."⁴⁹ Clearly, integration in the armed forces had a long way to go.

Slocum aimed a second order at Confederate guerilla bands attacking government-leased property. His policy was an eye for an eye in the individual localities. If a lessee's crops were destroyed, produce of the same kind was harvested from neighboring disloyal plantations and given to the victim as payment. If guerrillas killed a lessee, an assessment of \$10,000 was immediately levied upon all rebels within thirty miles of the place. He required full reports of all seizures be sent to his headquarters, thereby working against corrupt government employees who would be tempted to glean some extra cash on the side. Overall, the reports that filtered back home on Slocum's tenure at this time were very favorable. The Syracuse Journal stated that since, "he took command there he has made a raid upon the swindling contractors and rascally traders with the enemy, and his energetic and thorough measures have produced a new, wholesome, and credible state of things in his department." While this is surely overstating things, Slocum apparently did his best to insure that law and order returned to the city.⁵⁰

Back farther east, Sherman and Grant embarked on a pair of campaigns that would lead to the fall of the Confederacy. Grant stayed with the Army of the Potomac to the north and faced Lee, while Sherman headed an army group made up of the armies of the Ohio, Cumberland, and Tennessee in Chattanooga. Waiting for Sherman at Dalton, Georgia, the Army of Tennessee continued to entrench itself. In the wake of his loss on Missionary Ridge, Bragg asked to be relieved, and Davis replaced him with Joseph E. Johnston. Johnston had spent the winter preparing to give Sherman a very warm welcome when the time came for the spring campaigns.

Grant, having taken command of all Union armies, had a new plan in mind for that year. Instead of the armies moving piecemeal, left to the whims of their individual commanders, Grant ordered all Union forces to move together. He hoped to prevent the rebels from shifting troops around to the area of greatest need, as they had done many times before. Grant and Meade would move against Lee in Virginia, using Richmond to pin down the Army of Northern Virginia. He ordered Sherman to do the same to Johnston in Georgia, using Atlanta as the bait. Neither Confederate army would abandon either city, so Grant planned to use the Union's superior numbers and firepower to smash Lee and Johnston against their own strongholds.

Sherman and Grant began their campaigns on 1 May 1864. Instead of attacking Johnston outright (a suicidal idea) Sherman flanked him, hoping to cut off his retreat and force a surrender. Johnston caught wind of the movement and managed to pull his army out before the trap sprung. Sherman followed, flanking Johnston again and again. Johnston kept retreating until, by the end of June, he occupied a series of prepared works along the side of Kennesaw Mountain just outside Marietta. There, Sherman switched

tactics after Johnston checked yet another flanking attempt at Kolb's Farm. Hoping to catch Johnston by surprise, Sherman ordered a direct assault on a bulge in the center of the Confederate lines. After a short time, the Confederates repulsed the attacks, inflicting heavy casualties on Sherman's men. Still, a feint to the south succeeded in seizing an important road junction, and Johnston retreated again.⁵¹

During this time, Sherman, as overall western commander, paid close attention to Slocum in Vicksburg. Sherman had fought hard for the state, and wanted to be certain the Confederates never retook it. The day after the failure at Kennesaw, Sherman vented some of his frustrations at Slocum in a dispatch. An Atlanta newspaper of a few days earlier had come to hand, and Sherman was dismayed to read that the Confederates had begun to rebuild the railroad bridge at Jackson, Mississippi. Furious, Sherman warned Slocum that if he permitted this to continue, he could "expect no military favors from General Grant or myself." He then issued orders for a weekly expedition against the railroad, adding that "unless all the negro troops have disappeared," Slocum should have enough men to do the job.⁵²

Put off by Sherman's language, Slocum sent him an icy reply on 2 July 1864. He told Sherman that he had indeed led an expedition against the railroad soon after his arrival. Unfortunately, while it was still out, Canby arrived. Canby had been placed in command of the Military Division of West Mississippi, which put Slocum under his authority. He issued a number of orders, one of which required Slocum to keep 2,000 troops available for Canby's use at all times. Given that various garrison duties occupied most of Slocum's men, he reported that he could no longer spare enough troops to field any expeditions. When Sherman's dispatch arrived, Slocum ordered these men out, as

requested. Less than a week later, Slocum received an order from Canby to forward him the troops held in reserve, now out on Sherman's orders.⁵³

Slocum laid all this before Sherman, stating that he had not mentioned it before due to the fact that he had reasoned Sherman had other, more important concerns on his mind. He also made certain to point out that he did not enjoy receiving orders from Canby, his junior, especially when they contradicted others from Sherman. He ended his reply with a quote from Sherman:

If I fail to accomplish what you suggest I am, in the language of your dispatch, "to expect no military favors from yourself or General Grant." The penalty which General Canby proposes to inflict has not yet been announced. Without any particular desire to secure favors from yourself or any other person, I shall continue faithful in the discharge of my duty, which, I think, you readily perceive a very disagreeable and difficult one when you compare the different orders issued to me by General Canby with those issued by yourself.⁵⁴

Far from becoming angry over this letter, Sherman offered Slocum an apology, a promise, and what would prove to be a hint of things to come. He started by saying that "I fear you were more affected by the words of my telegram than I designed." He had not meant to offend Slocum by his choice of words, only to impress upon him how strongly he felt about affairs on the Mississippi, which he called "the spinal column of America." For a moment, far off in Georgia, Sherman thought he saw the Confederates repairing all the damage he had worked so hard to inflict. Also, since Sherman had sent the telegram the day after the slaughter at Kennesaw Mountain, he may not have been thinking clearly. He told Slocum to obey Canby's orders if conflicts continued on the grounds that Canby knew more of the situation in Mississippi than he did. Sherman would attempt to keep better informed in the future. Next, to prove his good will, Sherman told him to "[b]e assured of my sincere respect." If Slocum would try his best

to insure that the road stayed broken, Sherman promised him that he could “count on my personal and official support.”⁵⁵

Sherman also informed Slocum of the death of Major General James McPherson, to whom Slocum generally reported. In the time it had taken for these communications to pass back and forth, Sherman had chased Johnston all the way back into Atlanta. Fearing that Johnston might give up the city, Jefferson Davis appointed yet another commander for the Confederate army in Georgia. The fiery Texan, John Bell Hood knew that he got his position to do one thing: fight. And fight he did. On 20 July, he attacked an isolated Union army at Peachtree Creek, including Slocum’s former men now under Hooker. The attack failed, and Hood sustained a great many casualties. He tried again on 22 July 1864 in what became known as the Battle of Atlanta.⁵⁶

Sherman reported that McPherson had been directing some of his units into line when he encountered a group of advanced Confederate skirmishers. Before he could ride away, they shot him in the breast. His horse staggered to the side of the road, where he fell off dead. His men managed to recover the body, which was then sent north for burial. Sherman greatly rued the loss, describing his friend as “a noble, gallant gentlemen, and the best hope for as great a soldier that I had in my mind’s eye.” More importantly for Slocum, Sherman was not sure what would come of the inevitable shuffling of generals that would follow. As he put it, “General Logan is in command of the army in the field, but the President must name his successor. In the mean time execute his general orders, and in all matters of detail your own good sense must direct.” Neither Sherman nor Slocum knew it yet, but McPherson’s fall would soon lead to Slocum’s return to the front line.⁵⁷

When the time came for a successor to be named, several generals remained hopeful. Foremost among these stood Joe Hooker. As the most senior man, he expected to receive the appointment. When Sherman picked Howard to replace McPherson as commander of the Army of the Tennessee, Hooker flew into a rage.⁵⁸ As Sherman put it, “Hooker, [went] off offended because he was not made McPherson's successor.”⁵⁹ Hooker indignantly offered his resignation, a card that other generals, including Slocum, had successfully played on other occasions. Unfortunately for Fighting Joe, he had apparently worn Sherman and Grant's nerves so thin that they accepted it. In fact, when questioned on the matter by Lincoln, Sherman respectfully stated that “[Hooker] is welcome to my place if the President awards, but I cannot name him to so important a command.” With the Twentieth now without a commander, Thomas suggested that Sherman call Slocum from Vicksburg to take the helm of the corps.⁶⁰

Sherman had told Halleck that “no indignity was offered nor intended,” but Hooker, who already smarted from Howard's appointment, must have been furious to hear that Slocum would receive the command he had just relinquished. No one acquainted with the two men could fail to appreciate its meaning. Less than a year from the time Hooker had lobbied to dispatch his rival to Missouri, Slocum had returned and replaced him at the head of the corps “made up for [Hooker's] special accommodation.” Sherman and Thomas, on the other hand, thought it an excellent and just arrangement. Slocum had lost his position the consolidation process, so it seemed only right to them that he have the opportunity.⁶¹

Slocum arrived in Georgia and took command of his corps on 27 August 1864.⁶² The veterans of the Twelfth received him with loud cheering, as they looked forward to

the prospect of serving under him again. After the Battle of Atlanta, Hood had tried one last time to break Sherman's tightening stranglehold on the city. At Ezra Church to the west of the city, he threw his army at another isolated portion of Sherman's troops. Bloodily repulsed yet again, Hood withdrew into Atlanta's defenses once more, leaving the Yankees to decide exactly how they were going to move the Army of Tennessee from its perch.⁶³

At first, Sherman opted for the wholesale bombardment of the city, as Hood's defenses had been laid out long before and seemed impregnable. When the roar of the cannon failed to bring Hood out of Atlanta, Sherman considered other options. Attacking Atlanta head on would prove suicidal. Instead, Sherman decided to take his army on a great wheeling raid around the entire city in order to cut all of Hood's railroad supply lines. Once Sherman accomplished this, Hood would either have to retreat or starve. Either option would suit Sherman. When the rest of the army moved south unopposed, Slocum remained behind guarding the supply route along the Chattahoochee River. After breaking Hood's lines near Jonesboro, Sherman cut the last rail link supplying the confederates. With nothing left to do but fall back, Hood began preparations to abandon the city.⁶⁴

To the north, Sherman put Slocum on alert. When it became clear that Hood intended to evacuate, the Twentieth Corps stood ready to seize the city at the first practical moment. They could not lose the important Chattahoochee position, which protected the frail supply line from Chattanooga. Slocum would have to be sure of where Hood was before he moved forward.

On the night of 1 September, Slocum heard a huge series of explosions. Hood's ammunition trains had not left the city on schedule. By the time Hood discovered the error Sherman had completed his raid. Rather than let the trains fall into Sherman's hands, Hood ordered them burned. The resulting conflagration caused massive damage to surrounding buildings. It made so much noise that many of the men outside the city thought Sherman had assaulted it. The next morning, Slocum sent forward a strong detachment to probe Confederate lines. They met a small party under a white flag, led by the mayor of the town, James M. Calhoun, who surrendered the city. Slocum arrived sometime around two in the afternoon, establishing his headquarters at the Trout House. Shortly thereafter, he dispatched a courier to Sherman to tell him of the conquest. He also sent a short telegram to Washington, stating simply, "General Sherman has taken Atlanta."⁶⁵

¹ William F. Fox, "Life of General Slocum," In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1904),87-88.

² "Local Affairs," The Daily Journal (Syracuse), (1 September 1863).—OHA

³ Alpheus Williams, From the Cannon's Mouth, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1959), 257.

⁴ Williams, From the Cannon's Mouth, 237-260; Oliver O. Howard, "To the Memory of Henry Slocum: A Eulogy by Oliver O. Howard." Civil War Times Illustrated, Thomas E. Hilton, ed., 21 March 1982, 40.

⁵ Summary of Principle Events, US War Department, The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume XXIX, Part I, (Washington DC: GPO, 1881-1901), 3.

⁶ Slocum to Lincoln, ORs, Series I, Volume XXIX, Part II, 156.

⁷ "Gen. Slocum's Resignation not Accepted," Journal (Syracuse), n.d.—OHA

⁸ Joseph Hooker to Abraham Lincoln, May 13, 1863 (Telegram concerning a meeting with Lincoln), Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois. (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>).

⁹ Abraham Lincoln to Joseph Hooker, May 14, 1863 (Army of Potomac), Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois. (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>).

¹⁰ Abraham Lincoln to William S. Rosecrans, September 28, 1863 (Rosecrans to receive 11th and 12th Corps under Hooker's command) Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois, (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>); Fox, In Memoriam, 89; Slocum to Howland, 22 October 1863.

¹¹ "Gen. Slocum's Recollections," Courier (Syracuse), (2 April 1879), Slocum to Butterfield, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, 223.

¹² William S. Rosecrans to Abraham Lincoln, October 13, 1863 (Consolidation of the XX and XXI Corps) Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois. (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>).

- ¹³ Butterfield to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXX, Part IV, 94.
- ¹⁴ See *Ibid.*, 94 on.
- ¹⁵ “Gen. Slocum in Tennessee,” Journal (Syracuse), 11 March 1864.
- ¹⁶ “Assessing the Secesh,” Journal (Syracuse), 8 March 1864.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ “Gen. Slocum in Tennessee.”
- ¹⁹ “Assessing the Secesh.”
- ²⁰ Hooker to Lincoln, ORs, Series I, Volume XXX, Part IV, 322.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, Abraham Lincoln to Joseph Hooker, May 14, 1863 (Army of Potomac), Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress.
- ²² Dana to Stanton, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXI, Part I, 73.
- ²³ Slocum to Howland, 22 October 1863.
- ²⁴ Henry W. Slocum to William H. Seward, November 14, 1863, (Does not want to serve under Hooker) Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>).—Slocum also states that “the President thought proper to refer this matter to you when my resignation was presented – and the interest which you were kind enough to manifest in it.”
- ²⁵ See Thomas to Slocum and Butterfield to Williams, Series I, Volume XXXI, Part I, 741.
- ²⁶ Steven E. Woodworth, Six Armies in Tennessee, (Lincoln, Nebraska: Bison Books, 1998), 180-218.
- ²⁷ Slocum to Meade, December 1863.; Slocum to Greene, 30 December 1863.—NYHS; Williams, From the Cannon’s Mouth, 279-291, Slocum to Morgan, From the Cannon’s Mouth, 284.
- ²⁸ Slocum to Morgan, From the Cannon’s Mouth, 284.
- ²⁹ Slocum to Meade.
- ³⁰ Meade to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXVII, Part I, 769-770.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² *Ibid.*; Grant to Halleck, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXI, Part I, 740.
- ³³ Dana to Stanton, ORs, 73.
- ³⁴ General Orders No. 5, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 268.
- ³⁵ General Orders No. 3, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 339, Sherman to McPherson, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 400.; “Maj. Gen. Slocum,” Journal (Syracuse), 20 April 1864.—OHA
- ³⁶ “Sherman to McPherson,” ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 276.
- ³⁷ “McPherson to Sherman,” ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 296.
- ³⁸ Grant to Halleck, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIV, Part IV, 527.
- ³⁹ McPherson to Washburn, ORs, 430.
- ⁴⁰ Abstract from returns of the Department of the Tennessee, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 561.
- ⁴¹ Sherman to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIV, Part II, 151.
- ⁴² Sherman to McPherson, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 383.
- ⁴³ See McPherson to Hurlbut, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 415, and McPherson to Washburn, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXII, Part III, 430.
- ⁴⁴ Fox, In Memoriam, 92-93.; Slocum to Sherman, Series I, Part II, Volume XXXIX, 160-161.
- ⁴⁵ Fox, In Memoriam, 94.
- ⁴⁶ “Gen. Slocum on Negro Difficulties,” May, 1864.—OHA
- ⁴⁷ General Orders No. 7, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 38.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ Joseph Stockton, War Diary, (Chicago: John T. Stockton, 1910), entry for July 13.
- ⁵⁰ “Gen. Slocum’s Administration at Vicksburg,” Journal (Syracuse), 28 May 1864.
- ⁵¹ Stephen Davis, Atlanta Will Fall, (Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 2001), 73-91.
- ⁵² Sherman to Slocum, ORs, 151.
- ⁵³ Slocum to Sherman, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIV, Part II, 160-161.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁵ Sherman to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIV, Part II, 202-203.
- ⁵⁶ Davis, Atlanta Will Fall, 129-147.
- ⁵⁷ Sherman to Slocum, 202-203.
- ⁵⁸ Reports of Major General William T. Sherman, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXVIII, Part I 78.
- ⁵⁹ Sherman to Washburn, ORs, Series I, Volume XLI, Part II, 533.

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- ⁶⁰ Sherman to Halleck, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXVIII, Part II, 271.
- ⁶¹ Sherman to Halleck, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXVIII, Part III, 523.
- ⁶² Summary of Principle Events, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXVIII, Part II, 54.
- ⁶³ Davis, Atlanta Will Fall, 148-172.
- ⁶⁴ Fox, In Memoriam, 97; Davis, Atlanta Will Fall, 173-190.
- ⁶⁵ Albert Castel, Decision in the West, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1992), 527-529; Slocum to Halleck, Series I, Volume XXXVIII, Part II, 763.

Chapter VI

The Army of Georgia: The March to the Sea and Through the Carolinas

Upon hearing the long awaited news that Atlanta had finally fallen, Sherman marched in and placed Slocum in command of the city. He left the Twentieth Corps to serve as garrison.¹ He ordered Slocum to hold the city at all hazards while the rest of the army dealt with Hood.² The decrepit Texan had moved his army north towards Tennessee and Alabama, hoping Sherman would follow him away from the heartland of Georgia. Hood intended to embark on a new campaign in which the Confederates would control the initiative. If Sherman wanted to destroy Hood's army as Grant and Lincoln had directed, then he must follow, thereby insuring that the rest of Georgia would remain safe. Also, if all went well, Hood could restore Tennessee to the Confederacy. On his way, Hood assaulted several Union garrisons, specifically hoping to reconquer the territory Sherman had gained in the Atlanta Campaign. Sherman at first obliged, following Hood north. Neither side immediately expected anything else. Grant's plan called for the destruction of the Rebel armies, so Hood could rightfully expect pursuit. It seemed completely contrary to both commonsense and the laws of war to ignore a large enemy force heading into friendly territory.³

Before leaving, Sherman considered Atlanta's safety. Both he and Slocum knew that Hood's army was the only substantial enemy force in the area, but Sherman worried that Hood might slip away and turn south before he could respond. If so, Hood could throw the bulk of his force onto Slocum and the lone Twentieth Corps in Atlanta. Sherman therefore encouraged Slocum to contract his lines, fortify, and guard his supplies with care.⁴ The Twentieth Corps would be occupying a major enemy city

dangling tenuously on the end of a single railroad, deep in the heart of the Confederacy. Like Vicksburg, Sherman had fought hard to capture the city and wanted to be certain that it remained firmly under Union control.

Sherman seemed honestly impressed with Slocum, keeping the promise he made while Slocum commanded Vicksburg by supporting him. Sherman did not hesitate to place Slocum in command of Atlanta, and also possibly recognized an aspect of Slocum's generalship that made him perfectly suited to the job at hand. Slocum, for the bulk of his military career, demonstrated a very defensive mindset. He rarely showed that almost reckless abandon for the attack that Lee and Grant so ably employed. Slocum had no compunction about assaulting his foes when the situation called for it, as evidenced by Crampton's Gap, Chancellorsville, Culp's Hill and, later, Aversboro. Still, Slocum normally chose a much more careful tack, preferring to let his enemies come for him rather than vice versa, such as at Two Taverns before Gettysburg. These issues probably had a hand in convincing Sherman that Slocum would do well in Atlanta.

Slocum's reliance on fieldworks at Gettysburg points to another aspect of the general's style of command that he had developed independently from Sherman. It can be argued that in other battles he simply followed orders when constructing his works, but on Culp's Hill, he acted on his own. Though extensive, impromptu works became common in the western theatre before they did in the east, Slocum did not wait until his transfer west to exploit them. This argument can easily be pushed too far; Slocum's creativity was counter balanced, possibly out-weighted, by his generally strict adherence to orders.

The men of both theaters tended to see a sharp distinction between themselves, and each group thought itself far superior to the other.⁵ Rosecrans, for instance, felt that western soldiers were so biased against their eastern counterparts that they would refuse to serve under an eastern general.⁶ Still, Slocum may be called a ready-made western general, and this likely eased his transition. He had developed western ways before he ever fell under Sherman's discerning eye, most notably in his attitudes towards hard war. This may be one reason why Sherman took a liking to him. Doubtless Slocum did experience a good deal of culture shock during his transition, but overall, his experiences prepared him for the moment. So it should come as no surprise to hear Slocum inviting his friend Joseph Howland to come see him, noting that, "you will not lose any of the good opinion you have always entertained of our noble army by the visit."⁷

When Slocum received Sherman's dispatches in Atlanta, he assured Sherman that there was little to worry about.⁸ Slocum had his troops already working on a new set of contracted entrenchments that would be ready in short order. None of Slocum's patrols had seen the enemy within five miles of Atlanta, and those farther out appeared only in small groups.⁹ Until Slocum finished his works, he ordered his men to hold the ones the rebels built around the city. The plan for deployment arranged for each division of the Twentieth Corps to hold a separate section of the line thinly, the First with only 1/3 of its men, while the remainder assembled near Slocum's headquarters on the city square. Slocum kept these men as a reserve, and if attacked, planned to throw them quickly at the section under assault. Slocum sent his artillery to cover the redoubts above and around his farthest lines. The cannons were positioned throughout the breastworks, and could pour an effective fire into any approaching enemy.¹⁰

Slocum's temporary arrangement was a good one, though he never had the opportunity to prove it. If the Twentieth could not hold the entire front, which was constructed to hold a much bigger army, then Slocum must be able to react quickly to any threat. By spreading out a thin line over the whole length of the works he essentially created a gigantic skirmish line. If Hood attacked in any strength, Slocum hoped that the few men manning the works and supporting artillery would slow his advance enough for the rest of the corps to respond. The remainder of the Twentieth's men camped in the center of town, and could therefore move quickly where they were needed. Still, Slocum would be hard pressed to hold out against a foe that could attack from more than one direction. There, he could only trust that Sherman *would* keep Hood in check; anything less, Slocum could handle tolerably well.

On 9 October 1864, Slocum reported that his men had repaired the bridge over the Chattahoochee and guarded it in force. Trains to and from Chattanooga rumbled in and out again. Though the Twentieth Corps had a good supply of food, Slocum expressed concern over the amount of forage available. By the time Sherman took the city, the armies of both sides had been marching and counter marching in the area for almost half a year. Though each had maintained lines of supply, they often supplemented them with forage from the countryside. If that were not enough, Confederate impressment agents scoured the area for supplies for Lee. These forces proved more than enough to strip the vicinity clean. "I have not a pound for my own private horse," Slocum remarked. In order to secure enough for himself and his men, Slocum wanted to send out a foraging party as soon as possible.¹¹ Sherman had no objection to sending a strong force south of Atlanta, a division at least. He thought one hundred wagons enough.¹² Slocum sent out a

column the same day he received Sherman's reply. It encompassed every available wagon in his command, with John W. Geary leading.¹³

It might seem a little foolhardy to dispatch so many men on the errand, given that Slocum barely had enough to insure that his defenses would work if necessary. But by this time, Sherman knew the location of Hood's army. More importantly, both he and Slocum knew that Sherman's own forces remained between Hood and Atlanta. This would leave only a small force of cavalry to the south to endanger the city, and Slocum's new lines rapidly neared completion. When finished, Atlanta could be defended with a greatly reduced force. Also, necessity forced Slocum's hand. If they had so little forage that Slocum could not even provide for his own horse, then a new supply must be secured immediately before the army's animals suffered greatly. Under the circumstances, both generals thought they could accept the risks.

By 14 October, Slocum had finished his new lines. Having sent out cavalry patrols, he once again reassured Sherman that everything was quiet. His men only encountered small groups of horsemen, and that not often. These would be impotent to do any real damage. Sensing the obvious power vacuum, Slocum also grew more restless or more daring, possibly both. While in Atlanta, Slocum consciously exceeded his orders, something he almost never did. Instead of the *one* hundred wagons Sherman had suggested, Slocum informed Sherman that he expected the return of the *four* hundred he had sent out, well-guarded, that evening. If they came in "sanely" he planned to immediately send them out again.¹⁴ Rather than upbraid his zealous subordinate, Sherman simply ordered him to repeat the process, accumulating all the provisions he could.¹⁵

Meanwhile, Hood had attacked several garrisons, but, had failed to wrench control of North Georgia from the Yankees. Sherman caught up with Hood's army, but could not bring the Confederates to bay. Both generals continued to maneuver for the next month, but neither could gain the advantage. Hood seemed pleased by his progress, and hoped to keep Sherman boxing the air for the next few months at least. An increasingly frustrated Sherman began to turn his mind to other plans, not the least of which was that of a long march through the very center of Georgia itself.¹⁶

Slocum was anxious to do something worthwhile for the war effort. He asked Sherman on several occasions if there was not something he could do to aid the army moving towards Tennessee or even if he could simply send out more foraging parties. The great success of his supply operations convinced Slocum that he could penetrate Georgia's interior. Shrugging off much of the caution he had displayed earlier in the war, he wanted to take full advantage of Georgia's weakness.¹⁷

On 18 October, Slocum requested Sherman's permission to go forward with an idea that he had been considering. Confident that a single division could hold his new position, Slocum wanted to embark on a sort of proto-march to the sea. He planned to leave one division to hold Atlanta and strike out for Milledgeville and Macon with the other two. His aims were simple. "I believe I can go through the State with two good divisions," he wrote,

I can get a new outfit of horses and mules and damage the enemy seriously by destroying the railroad, &c., even if I fail in capturing either Macon or Milledgeville. I am positive they have no force in this section of the State except Iverson's cavalry.¹⁸

Though eager to get underway, Slocum did temper his request. He would only attempt it if Hood chose to remain at Blue Mountain during the winter, with Sherman keeping him

in check. As Slocum said, "Let me try it. I will return if I become satisfied I am hazarding too much."¹⁹

Hood's voluntary removal to Tennessee had laid bare the very heart of Georgia. If Slocum, the very essence of defensive caution itself, felt confident enough to embark on such a brazen raid with only a pair of divisions, then Georgia's weakness must have been plain. Slocum never before displayed this level of daring, and for him to do so now likely required a more than obvious opportunity. Otherwise, given his conservative style of generalship, he probably would not have even begun to act on such a thought, had it crossed his mind at all.

Of course, another possibility is that Slocum had learned well from his raids in Mississippi. He had more men to spare in Atlanta than he did in Vicksburg, and with Hood's army occupied by Sherman, he might actually have faced even less opposition. It could also be that the rough style of generalship he had encountered in the west had loosened him up a bit. His time in Vicksburg and Tullahoma probably contributed to his ability to see an opportunity like this one long before most of his fellow officers. There, he had come to understand what rebel civilians were capable of, and what measures he must take to deal with them. So, Slocum felt freer to chance such large expeditions.

Slocum's plan had as its the immediate goals the capture of Macon and Milledgeville, Georgia's capital. He also intended to wreak havoc on Georgia's railroad lines (to the detriment of Lee) and refit the entire army with fresh horseflesh. Sherman planned more audacious things. For one thing, he had more men, which meant he could risk more. Therefore, he intended to, and actually did, make it all the way to the sea. Whether this thought ever occurred to Slocum is not known, but he would have felt

obliged to stay close enough to his commander to come if Sherman called. Though Slocum does not mention it, he also probably planned to do a good deal of foraging. This can be inferred by the fact that the success of his bummers is likely what brought the idea to mind to begin with. Slocum knew that Georgia had plenty of supplies to support such a raid, and, since no one could stop his men from taking them, that Georgia had no troops to oppose him.

Sherman's plan proved more revolutionary than Slocum's due largely to the philosophy behind it. Sherman specifically intended to strike the morale of the Georgia civilians, and while Slocum's plan would no doubt have accomplished something similar, it was an afterthought. Slocum remained focused on tangible, traditional military goals, such as railroads and horses, displaying no real interest in specifically taking the war to the people. Sherman had been focused on the Confederacy's civilian population for years, at least since his infamous letter to Halleck from Tennessee. There, Sherman had suggested that in order to truly defeat the south, the Federal government must focus on its civilian population. It must exploit the natural divisions within the Confederacy.²⁰ Now Sherman sought to put his theories into practice. Above all, the men and women of the Confederacy must know perfectly well that Sherman could go where he pleased, when he pleased, and do whatever he took a fancy to doing. Though he planned to destroy the rail network, Sherman expected his attack on civilians to play a larger part in actually ending the war.

Both Sherman and Slocum's ideas appear to have evolved nearly simultaneously, but relatively independently of each other. Both observed an opportunity, but only Sherman had the position and genius to exploit it to the full. Each man made plans to take

advantage of Georgia's weakness, and the results were similar. Still, this does not imply that Slocum was directly responsible for the idea of Sherman's march. Sherman's famous dispatch to Grant, in which he promised to "make Georgia howl" was sent on 9 October, over a week before Slocum made his request to attack Macon.²¹ Slocum apparently knew nothing of Sherman's intentions before his suggestion. He seemed to think Sherman would settle down for the winter near Hood. Also, if Slocum had known, he likely would have realized that he had little to gain from bringing up a march of his own. In fact, he had a great deal to lose. It could easily seem to Sherman that Slocum wanted to usurp credit for the action, and knew that he must act quickly before Sherman did so himself. A veteran of the political wars of the Army of the Potomac, Slocum probably would not have put himself in such a compromising position.

It may well be nothing more than an intriguing coincidence that the two men who wanted to march through Georgia had both served as garrison commanders in occupied territories. On the other hand, it could be significant. Slocum and Sherman's time in that capacity likely directly led to the independent development of their hard war philosophies. Both explicitly demonstrate through their orders and letters that it was their interaction with civilians that pushed them down the path to hard war. With such a focus already imbedded, it should come as no surprise both Slocum and Sherman considered Georgia civilians fair game.²²

Sometime between when Slocum sent this dispatch and the arrival of Sherman's reply, Slocum got word of the upcoming march. Sherman reined Slocum in, telling him to focus on preparing for the "grand march." Sherman wanted everything in readiness by 1 November. Defying almost all expectations, Sherman left Hood where he sat and

turned back towards Atlanta. Before leaving, Sherman dispatched Thomas with enough men to deal with the Army of Tennessee. A confused Hood marched north, having grandiose plans of his own to put into action.²³

Sherman kept Slocum abreast of events not only relating to his own immediate command, but also to the larger scope of operations as well. Slocum commanded an important post situated deep in enemy territory, and would need to know as much as he could. This extra intelligence may help account for Slocum's anxiety; he knew that the large armies drifted farther away each day. As they did so, Slocum's own chances for marching through Georgia successfully also grew.

The dispatches also took on an increasingly friendly tone as time went on. Instead of simply issuing orders to Slocum, Sherman started to banter with him. For instance, when he feared that Hood had evaded his army and swung southward towards Atlanta, Sherman told Slocum that, "[y]ou have plenty of grub, and I will turn up somewhere."²⁴ Sherman must have felt that there was some measure of mutual trust between himself and Slocum, otherwise he would have responded more professionally. Overall, Sherman's attitudes indicated what he had in mind for Slocum next.

As Sherman left Hood behind and returned to Atlanta, he sent a flurry of dispatches, all encouraging Slocum to bring in more supplies. Now that Sherman knew for certain that Hood was nowhere near, he emphasized foraging, rather than caution.²⁵ Slocum complied with Sherman's request with gusto, sending out parties in ever increasing numbers.

Slocum in no way held the monopoly on knowledge about the upcoming march.

After the war, he made very clear that Sherman prepared his other commanders for what they were to do beforehand. As he put it,

There was not an intelligent officer in all of Sherman's command who did not know just what his wagons were to carry, just where the materials and tools for destroying the railroads were to go in the column, just where in the column were to be found the bridges for use in crossing streams, just the right amount and kind of rations to be used each day. Everyone knew beforehand, even before we left Atlanta the exact duty of...Sherman's bummers.

Slocum played a very important role in this preparation, if for no other reason than he had remained in Atlanta.²⁶

Though the army would not be ready to leave by Sherman's original 1 November deadline, Slocum prepared to evacuate Atlanta. He ordered all railroad assets, shops, etc., ready to be put to the torch. All supplies not marked for the March or destruction Slocum sent back up the rails to Chattanooga. Slocum set about his duties without delay.²⁷ On 5 November, Sherman ordered Slocum to have his men ready to move as soon as they received their final orders. After making certain the city was safe, Slocum moved his command outside its limits. Slocum always took care to post provost guards over civilian property whenever the opportunity permitted.²⁸ On 7 November, just over a week before he began marching, Sherman ordered the destruction to begin.²⁹

That same day, Slocum wrote to his wife about the conditions in Atlanta and the preparations for the March.

I have been at the R. R. depot for the past three days several times, and have witnessed many sad and some ludicrous scenes. All citizens (white and black) begin to apprehend that something is about to happen.... Hundreds of cars are literally *packed* with them and their dirty bundles, inside and out.... Some are gnawing old bones, some squatted by the cars making hoe-cakes, some crying for food.... I wish for humanity's sake

that this sad war could be brought to a close. While laboring to make it successful, I shall do all in my power to mitigate its horrors.³⁰

This quote, along with other evidence, lends itself to the conclusion that Slocum, if turned loose on the Georgia countryside on his own, would not have allowed his men a free hand. During the March itself, he did what he could to limit the unofficial destruction by posting provost guards in various cities. Even the Atlanta Journal and Constitution acknowledged Slocum's relative restraint after the war. Still, Slocum had full intentions of working a somewhat muted brand of hard war, even if it was not as severe as what Sherman wanted. As Slocum put it with special reference to South Carolina, "It would have been a sin to have had the war brought to a close without bringing upon its original aggressors some of its pains."³¹

On the eve of the departure, Sherman issued his famous Special Field Orders, Number 120. He divided the army into wings, giving Slocum command of the Left Wing, later known as the Army of Georgia. The Fourteenth and Twentieth corps comprised this wing. The armies would carry few supplies aside from a moderate amount of ammunition. Instead, Sherman ordered his men to "forage liberally on the country," paying particular attention to the rich planters. He also entrusted corps commanders with the discretion to destroy mills, houses, and cotton gins. Sherman expected them to exercise this power liberally, especially in regards to industrial assets.³²

Sherman, unknowingly, had recreated Burnside's Grand Divisions. Though in this case called armies, each wing consisted of two corps coordinated by a higher commander who in turn reported directly to Sherman, and exercised relatively little initiative. If either he or Slocum noted this similarity, neither mentioned it. Neither did Slocum complain about this latest incarnation, especially since he now headed one. A

notable difference may also help explain why Slocum now voiced no objections.

Whereas Burnside's divisions had simply blundered around through the mud and into Fredericksburg, Sherman's armies made a real difference.

It is also interesting that though the nomenclature "Army of Georgia" did not officially refer to Slocum's command until well into the Carolinas Campaign, it came into practical use much sooner. As early as 8 September 1864, the name occurs in reports found in the Official Records referring to troops under Sherman's command.³³ By the time the army reached Savannah, Slocum wrote his personal correspondence on official stationery headed with that title.³⁴ Therefore, the official orders naming the two corps an army simply recognized a state of affairs that already existed.

Sherman's plan called for one wing of the army, the left, to advance due east along the Georgia Railroad, heading straight for Augusta. The right wing, under Howard, marched to the south initially before turning southeast towards Macon. Both cities were quite large by southern standards. Augusta housed a large arsenal, while Macon contained some important industrial sites that the production starved Confederacy desperately needed. Sherman's strategy effectively split any meager force mustered to oppose him. Judson Kilpatrick and a large number of cavalry hovered on the flanks, protecting the army and causing all manner of havoc.

The Twentieth Corps, once again under the command of (still) Brigadier General Alpheus Williams, left Atlanta on the morning of 15 November 1864. Sherman, Jefferson C. Davis, and the Fourteenth followed the next day. These took a more direct route to the next assembly point at Milledgeville. Slocum accompanied the Twentieth as it moved east, past the frowning, bald face of Stone Mountain. They passed through the

tiny town of Social Circle, destroying industry and railroad assets as they went. Arriving at Madison on 18 November, Slocum detached Geary's division to tear up the track as far as the Oconee River to the east. While there, Geary destroyed an impressive railroad bridge. The majority of the corps turned south towards Eatonton to meet the rest of the army at Milledgeville. Geary followed as quickly as possible.³⁵

Slocum preferred a particular method of railroad destruction and the Army of Georgia employed it throughout the March.³⁶ First, he detailed a group the night before; the size depended upon the amount of track he hoped to destroy. The next morning, he insisted his men get a full breakfast, consisting, preferably, of "roast turkeys, chickens, fresh eggs, and coffee." He noted that in enemy country these were all readily available and that the men worked better on a full stomach. The officers in charge then divided the group into three smaller ones. The first lined up along a section of track, one man per railroad tie, and turned them over all at once when signaled. Before moving on, they loosened the rails from the ties. The next group reduced the road to piles of about thirty ties each, laid the rails over them, and then set the heaps on fire. The final group arrived and used railroad hooks to bend and twist the soft metal until it had to be rerolled to make it useful. Many miles of track could be destroyed in a single day, all depending on how many men Slocum detailed to the task. Though the soldiers would not seize the hot iron bare handed, Slocum thought it was "the only thing looking toward the destruction of property which I ever knew a man in Sherman's army to decline doing."³⁷

Meanwhile, Howard and the right wing moved south and east towards Macon. His corps passed through the towns of McDonough and Rough and Ready on their way, destroying whatever they could. They came almost to the very edge of Macon before

turning northward to meet the rest of the army. Before Howard could leave the area, he was attacked in what became the only large-scale infantry engagement of the march. At Griswoldville, a division of untrained old men and boys, remnants of a picked clean Georgia militia, charged head on against the entrenched veterans of Howard's army. The slaughter proved to be dreadful, and accomplished nothing.³⁸

Slocum, Sherman, and Howard concentrated near Milledgeville, where they discovered that the Georgia government had made a hasty departure. They entered town in parade formation, bands playing and flags flying. Slocum made his headquarters at the Milledgeville Hotel on the evening of 22 November. The troops treated the town much as they had others along the march. Some raided the state library, leaving it thoroughly disheveled. Others ransacked stores and shops until the provost guard put an end to the looting. Other, more humorous, incidents also took place. A large group of soldiers convened a mock session of the Georgia legislature in the recently evacuated state house. The Union troops elected officers, debated a bit, and, when someone asked what issues they had on the table, they placed a protesting soldier on one. After more debates of this nature, they proceeded to repeal the act of secession, bringing Georgia "officially" back into the Union. Before leaving, Sherman entrusted the destruction of all public buildings to Slocum.³⁹

The fact that Sherman left both the destruction of Atlanta and Milledgeville to Slocum may be enlightening regarding exactly how much damage Sherman really wanted to inflict. Sherman doubtless knew very well that Slocum was one of the more restrained men of his command. Slocum had rarely made any attempts to hide his opinion on other issues. Sherman knew that Slocum would destroy what he must, but no more. If

Sherman had wanted to cause useless collateral damage, he probably would have chosen a man with a temperament like Kilpatrick, who grew famous for his excessive antics.

The Army of Georgia moved swiftly after it left Milledgeville. The two corps reached Saundersville on 26 November and pushed Confederate General Joseph Wheeler's cavalry rapidly through town. Wheeler commanded virtually the only troops opposing Sherman. Burned bridges delayed Sherman shortly at the Ogeechee River and Rocky Comfort Creek.⁴⁰ Slocum pushed two divisions of each corps out to the flanks to watch for attacks and secure the bridges. The armies passed through Habersham, Jacksonborough, and Millen before reaching the enemy's works encircling Savannah on 10 December.⁴¹

Sherman reached Savannah with ease, even though the Confederates did try to stop him. Governor Joseph Brown called out the militia, but only a few, motley, untrained thousands assembled. General P. G. T. Beauregard arrived in the state and tried to rally what troops he could, but his impassioned pleas fell on deaf ears. Calls for a scorched earth policy, which could have destroyed Sherman's army, went unheeded. Georgia civilians, most of whom were not for secession to begin with, seemed to prefer the relatively brief presence of the Yankees to the total destruction of their land and belongings. Joseph Wheeler's cavalry did everything they could to slow the march, doing tremendous damage of his own that Sherman later was blamed for. Yet, grossly outnumbered, there was little Wheeler could do. Sherman's engineers had so refined their art over the years that any obstacle Wheeler left in their path they cleared in almost less time than it took the Rebels construct it. Also, Wheeler had his hands full with Kilpatrick's very aggressive cavalry.

When they arrived outside Savannah, Slocum's men took a position with their left resting on the Savannah River, and their right connecting with the Seventeenth Corps. Slocum commanded the water approaches to Savannah from above the city, while on the right, Hazen's Division from Howard's army stormed Ft. McAlister. There, Sherman finally made contact with the outside world again by signaling the Federal blockading fleet. Reconnected to his supplies, he prepared to lay siege to Confederate General Joseph Hardee, who led the 10,000-man garrison in Savannah.⁴²

At Savannah, Slocum had the opportunity to deal Hardee a killing blow. Slocum's left flank rested on the Savannah River above the city and they had captured several small steamboats trying to break into Savannah from Augusta. With the Union navy blockading the harbor, Hardee had only one road open for a retreat. It lay on the South Carolina side of the river. Seeing an opportunity to cut off Hardee, Slocum threw a brigade across. He also entreated Sherman for permission to place an entire corps there. From that position, Slocum would have commanded Hardee's only remaining escape route and also been able to fire down into the river approaches to the city with his artillery. As he had in Atlanta before the March, Sherman refused to let Slocum act. Sherman later explained his hesitation by pointing out two facts. First, he knew that the Confederates had ironclad gunboats in Savannah and feared they might interrupt any large-scale crossings. Also, Sherman hoped to contact a Union force under John G. Foster near Hilton Head. Sherman thought that Foster could march south and close the gap admirably. Slocum could then stay united on one side of the river. Sherman went to Hilton Head himself by boat to insure Foster's cooperation. Unfortunately, Hardee knew

very well the depth of trouble in which he waded. By the time Sherman had secured Foster's help and returned Hardee had retreated safely.⁴³

As in Atlanta just before the March, Sherman and Slocum seemed to be living out each other's reputations. Slocum, for so long the very picture of a cautious, conservative commander, wanted to push ahead immediately and crush Hardee. He must have known about the gunboats and Foster, but apparently did not care about them. Slocum knew Sherman had Hardee's army in the palm of his hand and wanted to do something quickly. In the face of possible interference from the gunboats, Sherman took no risks, even given the opportunity to achieve decisive results. As a consequence, Sherman lost his chance to destroy the only significant opposition between himself and Grant in Virginia. Whatever the case, Slocum remained vigilant, even if he could only be so from the Georgia side of the river. At three in the morning of 21 December, Slocum discovered Hardee's absence. He immediately pushed his troops forward to occupy the city.⁴⁴

Throughout the entire march, Slocum's men had met no enemy worth mentioning, and only a few burned bridges and felled trees had inconvenienced them.⁴⁵ For all his attempts at restraint, his men had inflicted extensive damage during the march, particularly to the railroad network. They had aimed to remove the possibility of Georgia ever contributing the Confederate war effort again, and, as John W. Geary put it, they had "almost disemboweled the rebellion."⁴⁶ Just in the vicinity of Madison they destroyed all railroad buildings, warehouses, and laid waste to virtually every factory, destroying any cotton they came across, over 200 bales.⁴⁷

Slocum's men also spent a good deal of time carrying off as much corn, sweet potatoes, molasses, forage, etc. and killing as many hogs, chickens, turkeys, and cows as

they could find in the countryside. One woman lost over \$44,000 to Slocum's bummers.⁴⁸ In his report, Slocum counted over 119 miles of track totally destroyed, without a single bridge left in serviceable condition in the line of march. His subordinates estimated that they had burned over 17,000 bales of cotton since the army left Atlanta. They still had nearly 7,000 former slaves following their columns when they reached Savannah. His entire command suffered only 119 casualties for the entire campaign.⁴⁹

Immediately upon entering Savannah, Slocum put Geary temporarily in charge.⁵⁰ Later, Sherman ordered the army group to camp around Savannah with a mind to convenience, rather than defense. He placed Slocum in command of an area from the Savannah River to the canals. Sherman set his men to work turning Savannah into the new "grand depot" from which future army operations would spring.⁵¹

Overall, Slocum thought it had been a very pleasant campaign. He called it "the romance of war," with just enough opposition to keep them interested, but nowhere near enough to actually put them in any danger. Slocum particularly enjoyed the good eating, noting that he had "turkies [sic], chickens, ducks, and sweet potatoes at every meal." The men, he said, looked well and were in higher spirits than they had been when they left Atlanta. He also thought it very amusing to see the "darkies" flocking to the army as they passed through. Slocum said they had "danced and howled, laughed and cried and prayed all at the same time. They 'had spected Massa Linkum for a long time and now bress be Lord he's come.'" The freed slaves brought with them scores of horses, mules and provisions, all of which Slocum ordered turned over to the quartermaster.⁵²

More ominously for the South, even the mild mannered Slocum looked forward to their upcoming advance into South Carolina,

[Sherman] will soon introduce his mud-sills of the north to the cream of southern aristocracy. The original secessionists, those who boast of having been engaged thirty years in efforts to destroy our country. Now they are to taste the fruit of their labors. The meanest private soldier, knows the history of this contest and the part played by South Carolina. She will pay a fearful penalty.⁵³

Sherman would soon loose an entire army of like-minded men into South Carolina. If they had taken off the kid gloves for Georgia, they would throw them entirely away when they left Savannah.

Slocum presented his men with a new, stricter set of field orders issued on Christmas Day, 1864. In general, he wanted to streamline the army before the upcoming campaign. First, he took steps to shave off dead weight. He ordered his corps commanders to recommend for dismissal all, "officers who, by intemperance, inefficiency, or ignorance of their duties, have shown themselves unqualified for the positions they hold." He curtailed furloughs, only allowing them to be issued to men with a surgeon's excuse. Finally, to increase discipline, he required that at least one commissioned officer be present with each company and one field officer with each regiment. Those looking forward to their tour ending soon must have been bitterly disappointed when he added that, "no officer will be mustered out of service in violation of this rule, until the completion of the ensuing campaign."⁵⁴

The efforts Slocum made in Savannah were not nearly as formal or thorough as some of his other disciplinary actions. For instance, when following a similar tack after taking command of the Twelfth, he left most decisions on dismissals to a board of inquiry, which then removed men by court martial. By comparison, his approach after

Savannah discarded many of the trappings and red tape that he had used while in the Army of the Potomac. Some of these orders no doubt seemed quite arbitrary to the men dismissed. Those who were sent packing probably thought that the definition of “intemperance and inefficiency” was synonymous with being on the bad side of Williams, Davis, or Slocum. In fact, a lieutenant went so far as to say that Slocum had been “placed in [a] responsible [position] without the judgment to sustain [himself].... Slocum is about played out. Prosperity has been too much for him.” He concluded his statement by saying that the men had liked Slocum a great deal as a division and corps commander, but much less so when leading the army. Other soldiers, such as those of the 149th New York, seemed to have no trouble with Slocum’s new position. Still, it is safe to say that Slocum garnered his share of defenders and detractors in the army, though which group held a majority is not clear.⁵⁵

There were two likely reasons for Slocum’s change in behavior, neither of which was found in his new “prosperity.” First, Slocum knew he had only a short time in which to work. Sherman planned on moving through the Carolinas very soon and all preparations must be cleared up beforehand. If Slocum had taken the time to go through with boards and court martials, he could not have completed the process. Secondly, Slocum had served directly under Sherman for around six months and in the Western Theatre for over a year. He had clearly adopted the looser style of no-nonsense command that prevailed in the West. For all that he brought with him, Slocum also learned much, and this may be evident here.

Back in Virginia, Grant and the Army of the Potomac stood across the Petersburg trenches from Lee. In the spring of 1864, Grant had moved at the same time Sherman

had marched against Johnston. Grant and Lee fought a series of pitched battles through Virginia at the Wilderness, Spotsylvania Courthouse, and Cold Harbor before finally arriving on the outskirts of Richmond. There, Grant pinned Lee down in the small, but important rail junction of Petersburg, and settled in for a siege. Lee responded by sending a corps of his army under Jubal Early up the Shenandoah Valley in a lightning fast assault that actually reached the perimeter of Washington. Grant had Slocum's old roommate from West Point, Philip Sheridan, chase and destroy Early. Sheridan then laid waste to the Shenandoah Valley, hoping to deny the Confederates use of its fertile fields. Meanwhile, Grant had continued to hammer Lee against Richmond, gradually extending the federal lines whenever reinforcements reached him. Periodically, Grant tested the Confederates with an assault, knowing that eventually, Lee must break.⁵⁶

Sherman's army marched north in January of 1865. Ultimately, he intended to join Grant at Petersburg, where the two planned to overwhelm Lee. Sherman knew he must cover a great distance in order to get to Grant, and he wanted to make the most of it. Instead of loading Slocum and Howard's armies on ships at Savannah and depositing them in Virginia to join Grant, Sherman asked Grant for permission to march straight north from Georgia through the Carolinas, doing as much damage as he could along the way. As Slocum had observed, the army in general looked forward to its trip through South Carolina in particular, most especially to "smashing things," as Sherman put it, within its bounds.⁵⁷

Sherman's basic plan of operations mirrored the March to the Sea. This time, Howard and the right wing advanced as if they intended to attack Charleston. Slocum and the left feinted towards Augusta, which still fell within striking distance of that side

of the army. In the center of the march, between the two wings, lay the state capital of Columbia. Sherman hoped that by threatening Augusta and Charleston, he would prevent the scattered confederate garrisons from uniting against him. Sherman could then split the horns of the Confederate dilemma and take Columbia before Hardee, who remained in the area, could react.⁵⁸

As it left Savannah, the Army of Georgia found its path obstructed in various ways. First, not long after the march began, a huge rainstorm hit, flooding all the rivers and destroying a number of bridges. Most of the Twentieth Corps had already crossed beforehand, ending up stranded on the far bank. Slocum, the Fourteenth, and some of the Twentieth could hear no word of their status. Slocum managed to get across the raging torrent on the twenty-ninth, but still could not find his men. It took him a full day before he could get in touch with Williams, only then after resorting to a small rowboat. Man-made difficulties also hampered their initial progress. The Confederates did their work well, not only burning bridges and felling trees across the path, but also planting a great many torpedoes⁵⁹ in the road. It took Slocum's men five days to remove obstructions left behind in the roads, a process no doubt slowed by their understandable fear of the landmines.⁶⁰

Slocum felt certain that the mines played a distinct role in the enormous destruction the army wrecked during that section of the march. The soldiers had little trouble with the idea of using such hidden explosives to defend a clearly marked position, but they could not agree to hiding them in a road. There, they had no advance warning of danger. Slocum likened it to poisoning a stream, noting that no one thought it fair or legitimate. If the men had looked forward to hurting South Carolina, they now went at it

with vengeance and caused a great deal more unofficial destruction in this section than in any one before or after.⁶¹

Finally, in the beginning of February, Slocum's men got underway. Before the fifteenth of that month, both corps concentrated near Lexington, South Carolina. After tearing up some sixty miles of track, they crossed the Saluda River to head towards the state capital. By the time Slocum reached Columbia, a huge blaze had begun. Working side by side with the civilians, the soldiers contained the fire, but not before it had destroyed much of Columbia. Afterward they followed the retreating Confederates across the Great Pee Dee River and into North Carolina.⁶²

As to the burning of Columbia, "[n]o sadder scene was presented during the war," said Slocum. Though not in the immediate vicinity of the town itself, he noted that he could see the light of the fire from miles distant. He thought Sherman to be completely innocent of this catastrophe, though he did not completely absolve the Union army as some might. Slocum blamed the free distribution of whiskey and other intoxicating drinks to the soldiers by civilians. With an interesting turn of phrase, Slocum observed that a

drunken soldier with a musket in one hand and a match in the other is not a pleasant visitor to have in the house on a dark, windy night, particularly when for a series of years you have urged him to come, so that you might have the opportunity of performing a surgical operation on him.⁶³

Though more than happy to give South Carolina a good thrashing, Slocum reverted to his relatively restrained approach when the armies entered North Carolina. This may once again point to Sherman's influence. Slocum issued an order noting that the state's "action on the question of secession was undoubtedly brought about by the traitorous acts of other states" and a vocal secession minority. Slocum went so far as to

say that the vast majority of North Carolinians had never approved of it. As such, he wanted his men to be careful with the state's property, and be certain not to jump to any conclusions concerning loyalties.⁶⁴

Sherman occupied the town of Fayetteville for several days while planning the next stage of his march, which he hoped would terminate at Goldsboro. Hardee, who up until now retreated before the much more powerful Union armies, took advantage of this time to rest his men. When Sherman next moved, Slocum's wing performed another feinting maneuver, moving towards Averasboro and Bentonville, while Howard proceeded straight to Goldsboro. Hardee planted himself firmly in Slocum's way by occupying the junction of the Raleigh and Goldsboro Roads at Smithville. Hardee needed to buy time for Johnston to assemble whatever army he could in front of Slocum.⁶⁵

On the sixteenth, Slocum found the enemy entrenched near Averasboro and started skirmishing with them about daybreak. The roads were in terrible condition and Slocum could not move the bulk of his troops forward until late morning. The first line of Confederates proved to be abnormally stubborn, given that the men holding it had no combat experience. It took a flanking movement to dislodge them, but they only fell back on a second line. After a brief stand more in keeping with what could be expected of green troops, that line fell back into a third set of entrenchments. Slocum continued to press forward carefully. Finally, vastly out numbered, Hardee retreated, taking the road through town and leaving the junction uncovered. Slocum followed, heading to his intended rendezvous with the Army of the Tennessee at Goldsboro.⁶⁶

Averasboro has been described as Hardee's finest hour, even better than his retreat from Savannah.⁶⁷ He did indeed perform quite well, buying Johnston more time. Yet, more importantly, Hardee had given his inexperienced troops a chance to taste battle before they would make their last real attempt to stop Sherman. Given the shabby state of Johnston's army and its small numbers, that was something that they desperately needed. Slocum seems not to have particularly cared one way or the other about the battle. He gives it only a cursory mention in his description of the March that appears in Battles and Leaders. He performed more along the lines of his old persona: carefully, but not poorly. As far as Slocum seemed to be concerned, Hardee stopped, and the Army of Georgia pushed him right back out of the way: end of story. The battle seems more interesting from Hardee's perspective, but even there cannot be pushed too far.

Another nasty surprise awaited Slocum just outside Bentonville. On Sunday, 19 March, Johnston ambushed Slocum's wing with his newly concentrated army, hoping to destroy it before Howard and the right wing could come to his assistance.⁶⁸ On this occasion, bad intelligence led to Sherman and Slocum's failure to see the trap. Both believed Johnston's army to be forty miles away, towards Raleigh. When Slocum's men reported firing towards the front of his column, they felt certain that it was nothing more than a few cavalry pickets. Sherman ordered Slocum to brush them out of the way and get on with business.⁶⁹

When Jefferson C. Davis' Fourteenth Corps moved forward, particularly Morgan and Carlin's Divisions, they encountered not cavalry but large numbers of entrenched infantry. Johnston had arranged his men in a sickle-like formation across the road and into the woods on one side. When Slocum's men approached, Johnston attacked the left

of the Fourteenth Corps. Though Slocum later maintained that Carlin's division fell back with grace and poise, in reality this attack sent Carlin and his men scampering for safety. Morgan held out, slowing the Confederate advance substantially.⁷⁰

Slocum, still unsure of exactly what size army faced him, got a break when a Union prisoner, forced into Confederate service, deserted and brought him solid intelligence. Unfortunately, not long before, Slocum had sent a message to Sherman stating that the left wing would need no help. He dispatched another messenger immediately, letting Sherman know that the Left Wing actually faced Johnston's entire army. Slocum rapidly moved up the Twentieth Corps and set up a new, more powerful line along a hill a short way behind the wavering front. Johnston's offensive drove through the shattered left and advanced on the second line. Morgan's stubbornness, though, had seen to it that the Confederates could not move in unison. The disorganized, desperate Rebels threw themselves on Slocum's second position, but their attack fizzled out under a withering fire. Slocum, his full army on the field and help also on the way, attacked the next day, regaining all the lost ground. Johnston retreated into his entrenchments.⁷¹

The tattered remnants of what once had been a mighty Confederate army remained on the field while Howard's wing joined Slocum. As a result, when Sherman ordered Howard to attack, one portion easily broke through Johnston's facade of a defense. Only a last minute counter attack saved Johnston from total destruction. Finally realizing that they could accomplish nothing, the Confederates withdrew.⁷²

This would be Slocum's last battle and probably the only major engagement in which he had a free hand for more than half the fight. In the first day's fighting, he

acquitted himself well, if not spectacularly. Johnston had indeed caught Slocum off guard, but he had also surprised Sherman for that matter. Who could have predicted that Joseph E. Johnston, of all people, would act as he had? Johnston certainly had set no precedent for this kind of daring beforehand. When Slocum's predicament had become apparent, he had maintained his composure and put together a defense that brought the Confederates to a halt. The next day, he attacked and took back all he had lost. Still, Slocum must have felt quite embarrassed by the fact that Johnston had caught him flat footed. Slocum remained very defensive about some aspects of the battle even years later, such as his refusal to admit Carlin's outright flight.⁷³

After occupying Goldsboro, Sherman prepared his legions for yet another march, this time to Richmond. As it turned out, events at Petersburg made these plans unnecessary. Grant captured Richmond on 2 April. Lee managed to pull his army out intact, but lost an important rear guard action in the process. Hoping to unite with Johnston, Lee tried to get away from Grant. After a brief chase, Grant caught Lee at Appomattox and Lee surrendered on 9 April. Sherman then changed his objective, pursuing Johnston's army. Sherman pursued the rebels through Raleigh, which he captured on 13 April. The next day he and Johnston entered into surrender negotiations. The process turned out to be prolonged and controversial, but, after two weeks, they reached an agreement. For all intents and purposes, the war had ended.⁷⁴

Slocum remained in command of the Army of Georgia throughout the pursuit and negotiation process. As one of the army commanders, Slocum stood with Sherman at the surrender. He also rode at his army's head in the Grand Review in Washington.⁷⁵ The 149th New York's George K. Collins said that on this occasion the, "conduct of...General

[Slocum]...was typical of the long and uniform kindness manifested by him towards the regiment and its members during the war.”⁷⁶ After the festivities, Slocum returned with his family unobtrusively to Syracuse for a short leave of absence, trying in vain to avoid the hero’s welcome he received.⁷⁷

Slocum seemed a little cynical regarding the celebrations and mustering out that thousands of soldiers waited for anxiously. Alpheus Williams, when trying to find out when he himself could go home, described the general as “an apathetic man in such matters.”⁷⁸ Slocum had risen to near the top of the army, so the idea of reverting to a simple lawyer must have been bittersweet. Like many other generals, he may have already begun to think of how he could turn his wartime popularity into political fortune. At any rate, he did not intend to be mustered out immediately. Instead, he planned on staying a short while longer, though not long enough to consider moving his family away from New York.⁷⁹

The Army of Georgia officially disbanded on 17 June 1865.⁸⁰ Slocum issued his farewell address on 6 June 1865. He praised his men, stating simply that,

While I cannot repress a feeling of sadness at parting with you, I congratulate you upon the grand results achieved by your valor, fidelity, and patriotism. No generation has ever done more for the permanent establishment of a just and liberal form of government, more for the honor of their nation, than has been done during the past four years by the armies of the United States and the patriotic people at home who have poured out their wealth in support of these armies with a liberality never before witnessed in any country. Do not forget the parting advice of that great chieftain who led you through your recent brilliant campaign: “As in war you have been good soldiers, so in peace be good citizens.”⁸¹

Though he would never again command them, Slocum remained in contact with some of these men for the rest of his life. For the moment though, he had other matters on hand. Only ten days after the army dissolved, President Andrew Johnson assigned

him to command the Department of Mississippi, headquartered once again at Vicksburg.⁸²

¹ Special Field Orders, No.245, US War Department, The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, (Washington DC: GPO, 1881-1901), 805.

² Special Field Orders No. 83, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 43.

³ Anne J. Bailey, The Chessboard of War, (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 13-47.

⁴ Sherman to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 69.

⁵ The western armies tended to think eastern men arrogant and ineffective, while the eastern armies thought the western dirty and uncultured.

⁶ William S. Rosecrans to Abraham Lincoln, October 13, 1863 (Consolidation of the XX and XXI Corps) Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College. Galesburg, Illinois. (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>).

⁷ Slocum to Howland, 22 October 1863.—NYHS

⁸ Slocum to Sherman, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 69.

⁹ Signal from Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 69.

¹⁰ Circular, Headquarters, Twentieth Corps, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 69.

¹¹ Slocum to Sherman, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 163.

¹² Sherman to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 178.

¹³ Circular, Headquarters, Twentieth Corps, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 179.

¹⁴ Slocum to Sherman, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 242.

¹⁵ Dayton to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 270.

¹⁶ Anne Bailey, The Chessboard of War, 13-47.

¹⁷ See Slocum to Sherman, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 106, and Slocum to Sherman, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 125.

¹⁸ Slocum to Sherman, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 348.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 347-348.

²⁰ William T. Sherman, Memoirs of General William T. Sherman. (New York: Library of America, 1990) 286.

²¹ Sherman to Grant, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 162.

²² Those wishing to explore the concept of hard war should read The Hard Hand of War by Mark Grimsley.

²³ Sherman to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 370; Anne Bailey, The Chessboard of War.

²⁴ Sherman to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 306.

²⁵ See various dispatches to Slocum, around page 494, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II.

²⁶ A. Noel Blakeman, ed., Personal Recollections of the War of the Rebellion, Second Series, (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot, 1992, Reprint), 61.

²⁷ Sherman to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 578.

²⁸ See various dispatches to and from Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 643-644.

²⁹ Sherman to Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 681.

³⁰ William F. Fox, "Life of General Slocum," In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum, (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1904), 98.

³¹ "Gen. Slocum at Atlanta," Journal (Syracuse), 4 April 1978—OHA; Slocum to Howland, 6 January 1865.—NYHS

³² Special Field Orders No. 120, ORs, Series I, Volume XXXIX, Part II, 713-714.

³³ Report of Major Lewis D. Warner, One hundred and fifty-fourth New York Infantry, ORs. Series I, Volume XXXVIII, Part II, 246.

³⁴ Slocum to Howland, January 6, 1865, Savannah, GA.—NYHS

³⁵ Report of Major General Henry W. Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XLIV, Part I, 157.

³⁶ After the war, Slocum made certain to include a footnote description of it in an article in the hopes that the country would not forget the process should it prove necessary once again.

³⁷ Henry W. Slocum, "Sherman's March From Savannah to Bentonville," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. 4, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), 685-686n.

- ³⁸ Lee Kennett, Marching Through Georgia, 254-255, Burke Davis, Sherman's March, (New York: Random House, 1980), 53-57.
- ³⁹ George K. Collins, Memoirs of the 149th Regiment N. Y. Volunteer Infantry, (Hamilton, NY: Edmonston, 1995, reprint), 293-294.
- ⁴⁰ Here, Jefferson C. Davis made a name for himself he did not want. Hundreds of freed slaves drown trying to swim the Ogeechee when he took up his pontoon bridge without allowing them to pass.
- ⁴¹ Report of Major General Henry W. Slocum, 158.
- ⁴² Bailey, The Chessboard of War, 112-131.
- ⁴³ Alexander R. Chisolm, "The Failure to Capture Hardee," Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. 4, (New York: Thomas Yoseloff, 1956), 679, William T. Sherman, The Memoirs of William T. Sherman, Vol. 2 (New York: Da Capo Press, 1984), 204.
- ⁴⁴ Glatthaar, The March to the Sea and Beyond, 9-10; Alexander R. Chisolm, "The Failure to Capture Hardee," 204.
- ⁴⁵ Alexander R. Chisolm, "The Failure to Capture Hardee," 204.
- ⁴⁶ John W. Geary, A Politician Goes to War: The Civil War Letters of John White Geary, William A. Blair, ed. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1995), 217.
- ⁴⁷ See George K. Collins, Memoirs of the 149th New York, 289; and David P. Conyngham, Sherman's March Through the South. (New York: Sheldon and Company, 1865), 246.
- ⁴⁸ Superior Court of the Ocmulgee Circuit, Execution of Isaac L. Watson's estate, Sherman Folder.—MCA
- ⁴⁹ Report of Major General Henry W. Slocum, 159.
- ⁵⁰ Perkins to Geary, ORs, Series I, Volume XLIV, Part II, 780.
- ⁵¹ Field Orders No. 139, ORs, Series I, Volume XLIV, Part III, 793-794.
- ⁵² Slocum to Howland, 6 January 1865.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁴ General Orders No. 3, ORs, Series I, Volume XLIV, Part III, 808.
- ⁵⁵ Joseph T. Glatthaar, The March to the Sea and Beyond, (New York: New York University Press, 1985), 22-23.
- ⁵⁶ Maurice Matloff, ed. American Military History, (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1988), 266-270.
- ⁵⁷ Sherman to Porter, ORs, Series I, Volume XLIV, Part I, 843; Slocum to Howland, January 6, 1865.
- ⁵⁸ Glatthaar, The March to the Sea and Beyond, 100-118.
- ⁵⁹ Torpedoes, in this case, referred to a sort of rudimentary landmine.
- ⁶⁰ Report of Major General Henry W. Slocum, ORs, Series I, Volume XLVII, Part I, 419-420.
- ⁶¹ Slocum, "Sherman's March From Savannah to Bentonville," 684. It is notable that there were torpedoes defending Ft. McAlister, but few of Sherman's troops, if any, regarded them as illegitimate.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 421.
- ⁶³ Slocum, "Sherman's March From Savannah to Bentonville," 686.
- ⁶⁴ General Order Number 8, Army of Georgia, ORs, Series I, Volume XLVII, Part 2, 719; No title, Journal (Syracuse), 20 March 1865.
- ⁶⁵ Mark L. Bradley, "Old Reliable's Finest Hour," Blue and Gray, October 1998, 9-10.
- ⁶⁶ Report of Major General Henry W. Slocum, ORs, 422-423; *ibid.*; Nathaniel C. Hughes, Jr. Bentonville, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1996), 32-35.
- ⁶⁷ Mark L. Bradley, "Old Reliable's Finest Hour."
- ⁶⁸ Fox, In Memoriam, 100.
- ⁶⁹ Hughes, Bentonville, 68.
- ⁷⁰ Slocum, "Sherman's March from Savannah to Bentonville," 695; Report of Major General Henry W. Slocum, ORs, 424-425; Hughes, Bentonville, 89-94.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁷² Hughes, Bentonville, 150-211.
- ⁷³ Slocum, "Sherman's March from Savannah to Bentonville," 695.
- ⁷⁴ Hughes, Bentonville, 220-221.
- ⁷⁵ Fox, In Memoriam, 101.
- ⁷⁶ Collins, History of the 149th New York, 336.
- ⁷⁷ "Gen. Slocum's Arrival at Home," Journal (Syracuse), 15 June 1865.—OHA
- ⁷⁸ Alpheus Williams, From the Cannon's Mouth, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1959).

⁷⁹ Fox, In Memoriam, 105.

⁸⁰ Summary of the Principle Events, ORs, Series I, Volume XLVII, Part I, I.

⁸¹ General Orders No. 15, ORs, Series I, Volume XLVII, Part III, 630-631.

⁸² General Orders No. 118, ORs, Series I, Volume XLVI, Part III, 1299.

Chapter VII

Postwar Life: Politics, Business, and Obscurity

Slocum's second tour in Vicksburg proved to be relatively short and uneventful, but he issued a few orders that caught the notice of the press in the North. Most notably, he made good his word to protect the black troops by countermanding an act of Mississippi provisional governor William L. Sharkey. Sharkey had invited all the young men of the state to join the militia, under the auspices of giving them something constructive to do with their time. Slocum thought this idea ludicrous. He quickly pointed out that this was the same class of men who until so recently had filled the ranks of the rebel army, adding,

to allow them to operate in counties now garrisoned by colored troops, filled, as many of them are, not only with prejudice against these troops, and against the execution of orders relative to the freedmen, but even against our government itself, would bring about a collision at once, and increase tenfold degree the difficulties that now beset the people....¹

This order conflicted with Slocum's personal philosophy, but not because of the protection it afforded black troops. Slocum thought that the government should minimize military interference with civil affairs, and preferably bring occupation to an end quickly. In a letter to Sherman dated 27 August, he stated that, "I hope the U. S. Military will soon be removed from the State, but until this is done it would certainly be bad policy to arm the militia."²

Whether or not the military stayed on, Slocum planned on getting out of the army and back to civilian life before long. "I came here without my family and with the intention of only remaining until the surplus generals were mustered out," he wrote to Sherman, "I did not like to go out with a crowd of worthless officers who should have

been mustered out long ago....” Slocum also promised to pass through St. Louis and pay Sherman a visit when he finally left. He did not say whether he intended to live quietly or follow the well-trod path of successful generals into politics.³

Initially, Slocum claimed that he did not intend to restart his political career immediately. While still in Vicksburg, he received a letter from Syracuse offering him the Republican nomination as candidate for New York Secretary of State. Given the fact that Slocum was a member of the Republican Party before the war and considering his military fame, he seemed the perfect choice. Slocum politely refused, and “replied at once that I could not become a candidate for civil office, while in my present position.... I do not wish to enter politics at present. I can afford to wait.”⁴ He did not say that he would never enter politics, nor even that he would refuse all such offers, merely that he planned to wait for the proper time. Only ten days later, he apparently thought he saw his chance.

Slocum received a letter from John A. Green, Jr., dated 22 August 1865, offering him the Democratic nomination for the same position the Republicans wanted him to run for: Secretary of State. Greene seemed very confident that the Democrats would sweep the state that year. He said they planned to endorse the reconstruction policy of President Johnson, and promised that, if Slocum accepted the offer and was elected, he would get the nomination for governor the following year. Greene added that, “you will pardon me when I express my belief that everything now indicates the speedy dissolution of the Republican party and the return of the Democracy to power....”⁵ Slocum apparently agreed with him. He replied that he would accept the nomination conditionally,

assuming that the party's platform conformed to his personal standards, and, most importantly, that it supported Johnson's policy. In his letter, he stated,

In a few words, I am in favor of returning at the earliest practicable period to a government of civil law.... If these views are such as will be endorsed by your convention, and if the convention should nominate me for Secretary of State, I shall accept the nomination.... If this convention should not adopt the platform you anticipate, I trust you will not press my name.⁶

Sometime between Slocum's reply on 14 September and his departure for home, Green convinced him the platform was a worthy one. His home town of Syracuse was a bastion of Republicanism, so it came as no surprise that on 16 September, the Syracuse Journal reported Slocum's acceptance with shock and dismay: "Heartily endorsing the platform, I cheerfully accept the nomination. I hope to be at home before the close of the month."⁷

Slocum's resignation was dated 28 September 1865.⁸

What made Slocum defect to the Democrats? Slocum himself offered this reply to that question:

I have studied the question carefully, and I believe the policy of the President is the only true one that can be adopted.... Upon my return here, I find two parties in the field, one endorsing a policy without a single dissenting voice; the other divided, and in my opinion, the majority of them opposing his policy. I ask, now, as I advocated his measures, what could have been my course except for uniting with the party that united with him?⁹

The root causes likely ran deeper than such a politically expedient reply. Slocum, from all indications, had always been a Republican. Republicanism dominated Syracuse, so it would only be natural for him to link his fortunes with them. He, like so many others, joined the party for two overwhelming reasons, the two pillars upon which the party was based. First, he wanted to deal decisively with the issue of slavery, and secondly, he wanted to preserve the Union. It was obvious to everyone that over the past few years,

the United States had accomplished both of those goals. What then, Slocum asked, was the purpose of the continuing existence of the Republican Party? It had served its useful and noble purpose, and now should relinquish the political stage to groups concerned with long-term goals. As he himself observed, "Read all their platforms and you will not find in them a single resolution that is pertinent to the issues now before the people."¹⁰ And so, Slocum threw his lot in with the Democrats.

Slocum's defection provoked howls of outrage from the Republican dominated press, particularly in Syracuse. At first, they refused to believe that he would ever do such a horrific thing, and stated as much in editorials.¹¹ When it became clear that he had, they set about minimizing the political damage by attacking Slocum's character. One editor slipped up, indirectly pointing to his true motivations in a 23 October article.

But General Slocum has made his choice, as he had a right to do, whatever we may think of the discretion that has guided him in his opinion. If we certainly knew he had had [shady] dealings...we should be less at a loss in divining his motives than we confess now to be.¹²

After all, they might have said, only men of the most questionable nature could ever leave the Republican Party.

Slocum himself had inadvertently given his opponents some of their best ammunition. Back in October of 1861, he had given a monetary contribution to the Republican Party in Syracuse. With his gift he had also included a very complimentary letter, portions of which they reprinted in a number of different newspapers:

If I were at home, I should join with you most cordially in support of the Republican State and County tickets, for I have yet to learn what good reason any Republican can have for deserting either his party or his principles.

Some papers even titled the short piece “True as Steel.” Slocum could not have damned himself more thoroughly if the entire affair had been specifically scripted for the purpose. In one fell swoop, Slocum had not only condemned what he himself would later do, but he seemed to explicitly tie his principles to the party. Republican editors rejoiced to reprint this excerpt, no doubt expecting their readers to agree that in abandoning his party, he must also have repudiated his principles, whether or not he actually had.¹³

A barrage of other articles appeared, charging him with any number of crimes. Some papers accused him of smuggling whiskey and stealing over one thousand dollars worth of gold during the March to the Sea. Another blamed his resignations on his dislike of the Lincoln Administration. Slocum’s old opponent, Thomas Alvord, claimed that “so violent was his opposition to the Administration that he openly declared if President Lincoln was reelected he would resign, convert his effects into money and leave the country.”¹⁴ The same accused him of trying to prevent soldiers from voting, knowing they favored Lincoln. Whatever one may think of Slocum’s decision, there is little evidence to suggest that these charges had any validity.¹⁵

The two most popular accusations came in the form of the supposed robbery of the Onondaga County Treasurer’s office and the “Vicksburg Cotton Frauds.” In the former, Slocum’s enemies seized upon a clerical error that occurred back in 1861 when he departed for Elmira to take command of his regiment. Slocum had recorded a transaction twice by accident, but his replacement caught it. He and Slocum had repaired the error on one of Slocum’s early visits to Syracuse. Though the account had been corrected long ago, the newspapers accused him of stealing over \$9,000 from the county. When the current treasurer, who incidentally opposed Slocum’s switch, wrote to the

papers to insist on the general's innocence, the editors heaped scorn on his explanation. Worried by the fact that the current treasurer had manifestly cleared Slocum of any wrongdoing, the staff writers at the paper knew that something must be done. They applied themselves heartily to belittling the current treasurer's account and attacking Slocum again on the same points, as if the rejoinder had never existed.¹⁶

The most vicious assault came via the "Vicksburg Cotton Frauds." It originated, not surprisingly, from the Chicago Republican. Supposedly, during Slocum's initial tenure in Vicksburg, a man named Joseph Noland tried to obtain over 600 bales of cotton by arguing he was a Unionist. Part of this lot he burned as the armies approached his plantation, part of it General Grant took and used as armor on his "cotton clads." Slocum refused Noland, but a cotton speculator by the name of W. S. Grant convinced a panel of officers to honor the claim, thereby robbing the government of over \$400,000 dollars.¹⁷ The Albany Evening Journal called Slocum out for a response, claiming his honor would be forever tarnished if he refused. They were also polite enough to point to their political motivations, stating that "no disinterested party or candid person can read this testimony and report, without coming to the conclusion that the Democratic party have drawn an elephant in their candidate for Secretary of State."¹⁸

Slocum replied, against the better judgement of his more politically minded friends. He sent a letter stating that he never decided on any case of private property, and that he had no association whatsoever with this Grant fellow. Slocum included the report of the commission that found Noland's claim valid, which convened sometime after Slocum's initial refusal. He also sent along a letter from his adjutant at the time, Col. F. A. Starring, attesting to his integrity while in Vicksburg. Slocum entertained no illusions

about the Journal's purpose: "It has been whispered to me by politicians that you are much more anxious to defeat my election as Secretary of State than you are to protect my honor. However, as reputation is more valuable than office, I shall disregard these suggestions and answer you."¹⁹

As his friends feared, the press went wild with his response. The Albany Evening Journal printed Slocum's letter, but only summed up the accompanying material, calling it, "utterly worthless, weak, and insufficient."²⁰ The Syracuse Journal reprinted the entire response, but did not print the reports with Slocum's letter, placing them elsewhere in the paper, away from the main article on the subject. With his supporting evidence thus divorced from his letter, they tried to dilute the effectiveness of his defense by adding two critical words for each of Slocum's positive ones.²¹

In reality, it appears that Slocum had actually tried to bring the corruption under control. O. H. Burbridge, a Treasury agent and brother of a brigadier-general stationed in Kentucky, wrote Lincoln in 1864 of the Vicksburg frauds. He told of his and Starring's arrest by General Dana, who confiscated their cotton by military proceedings and refused to turn the bales over to the Treasury Department, exactly the crime of which the papers accused Slocum. He mentions Slocum in the letter, but only in the context of Slocum having sent some corrupt detectives packing. As such, it seems that, at least from Burbridge's perspective, the criminals lay elsewhere.²²

Slocum's supporters also unintentionally provided another weakness. Early in October, the Syracuse Journal reported that Slocum had received the "very beautiful and euphonious title of 'The Hunkey Boy.'" Signs began to appear in his support using that name, and the Democratic papers also began using it frequently. The Journal later

offered this definition to its readers for the title: “a man [in the army] who always claimed a whole loaf of bread, and never divided his rations.”²³

The name, in particular reference to Slocum, does not seem to mean anything of the sort. It did originate during the war, though. Not long after Chancellorsville, the Twelfth Corps had camped in the vicinity of Raccoon Ford on the Rapidan River. While there, a drunken lieutenant of artillery rode up to Slocum, threw his arms around the general’s neck, and declared, “O! Sloky! You’re a hunkey boy!” Slocum immediately threw the man into prison, leaving him there until he apologized. Still, his headquarters’ guard in particular found the incident quite amusing and began to quietly call the general by the name, “for the completeness with which it expressed their feeling toward the General.” Apparently Slocum thought the name beneath his dignity, for their historian also notes that they did so “at a little distance.”²⁴

As to exactly what the term meant, there can obviously be some leeway. The first definition offered in the Dictionary of American Slang for the word “hunky” refers to an immigrant Central European laborer. It is doubtful that this is the sense in which the word is used here. First, Slocum’s family came from English stock, and he bore no resemblance to the type. Also, his men generally used the term in a complimentary fashion, whereas this is more of an ethnic slur. More likely, it means simply “satisfactory, fine, or first rate,” as in “hunky-dory.” The term was used in that manner at the time. For instance, in John Poole’s “Song of all Songs,” he mentions one titled “A Hunkey Boy Is Yankee Doodle.”²⁵ At any rate, the appellation did, and still does, sound silly. To peg Slocum with it at a time when he should be focusing on his maturity, intelligence, and military accomplishments did him no favors, however good the intent.²⁶

Whether any of the charges leveled at him were accurate or not, they produced their intended effects. Slocum lost the election badly. The Democratic bid to pull in the soldier vote by running him failed, largely due to the Republican choice of Francis C. Barlow, who also had a respectable war record. Slocum finished several hundred votes behind other Syracuse Democrats.²⁷ Upon hearing of his defeat, Sherman wrote that, "I think I was more disappointed at your non-election than you could have been...But you are young, and can stand it; and I know that, sometime later, your State will recognize and reward, if you need it, military services such as you rendered your country."²⁸

Sherman's vote of confidence likely reassured Slocum, and he needed it, in the increasingly unfriendly atmosphere around Syracuse. Less than a year before, the city hailed him as a hero, but now they decried him as a traitor and mocked him. To add insult to injury, Slocum and his family returned home one night during the height of the pre-election assaults to find their house robbed.²⁹ Then, Slocum's mother died in the last days of October.³⁰ Afterward, Slocum put his house up for sale, and, on the afternoon of 30 April 1866, moved his family to Brooklyn, a Democratic town.³¹

Slocum remained politically active in his new home, though he also slipped back into his role as a businessman. Just after his family's move, he wrote a letter in support of Republican John W. Geary's campaign for governor of Pennsylvania, crediting him with the victory at Wauhatchie, Tennessee.³² In 1868, he served as a presidential elector from New York, and was appointed president of the Electoral College.³³ Also in that year, he successfully ran for Congress from the Third District, remaining there until 1873. He returned in 1883 as a Congressman from New York.³⁴

Slocum's post-war political career is filled with might-have-beens. At one time or another, he saw his name considered for secretary of state of New York, governor of New York, mayor of Brooklyn, even president of the United States. In each case, his switch to the Democrats in 1865 proved to be the millstone around his neck. He remained a favorite target of the press, and it would be many years before they would let anyone forget his "crime." As late as 1878, over ten years since his defection, they still pointed to him as a prime example of "[t]he fate of traitors to the Republican party."³⁵

Very likely, this also led to his wartime accomplishments being overlooked and belittled as well. For instance, all that a newspaper clipping from 1865 admitted about his military service was that "[w]e believe his name is somewhat honorably associated with the military operations around Atlanta." They seemed determined to convince both themselves and their readers that he only performed worthwhile duty in the vicinity of Atlanta, and even that assertion remained open to question. This prejudice likely spilled over onto some of the historians of the day, such as Samuel Bates. It also may have played a role in shaping the accounts of some of his comrades, as evidenced in the drastic change in Joseph J. Bartlett's report and later recollection of Crampton's Gap. Whatever else may be, it is certain that Slocum did not have a good head for politics.³⁶

While holding his various offices, Slocum rendered good service, especially in regards to the military. Some of his motions in Congress were basic and plain, such as his proposal to renovate Willard's Hotel in Washington, D.C. for use by the State Department.³⁷ By 1884, he definitely had his opinions of congress and politics as a whole. Of Congress he thought, "There's been too much talk.... We don't get to work until after 1 o'clock every afternoon.... This leaves very little time for debate during the

afternoon." He also lamented the fact that so few voters had any real interest in maintaining the economy, as few, if any, owned any land.³⁸

One of his most ambitious moves came in the 1880's when he introduced a bill that bore his name. He proposed to the Congress that they revolutionize the decrepit militia organizations. Sherman, when consulted on the matter by the New York Tribune, called it "a great advance in the right direction." The bill hoped to improve the National Guard by requiring that it conform, in every way possible, to the standards of the professional service. To implement this, Slocum called for \$600,000 set aside for distribution to the various congressional districts to pay for uniforms and equipment. It also provided for annual inspections and pay for the companies.³⁹

Slocum's uncompromising standards continued to drag him down politically. He switched parties in 1865 on principle, and doubtless some Democrats wished he had not. Slocum displayed an annoying tendency to support whatever candidate he thought best for the job, despite party affiliation. He had written letters in support of Republican Geary in 1866, and later, in 1875, became much more explicit in his criticisms of the Democratic status quo. While declaring his fidelity to the Democratic Party in national and state affairs, he "repudiated the good old Democratic doctrine that to be a Democrat he must vote for all the regular democratic candidates, no matter how unfitted they were."⁴⁰ When threatened with being read out of the party for non-compliance, he replied,

Well, gentlemen...if this is the pill I am to swallow it will be well to let the reading process begin at once, for I here and now solemnly pledge myself to be governed hereafter in the selection of local agents to do the business of this great city solely by their qualities for the positions to which they are nominated.⁴¹

If that were not enough, in the same speech he denounced “Boss” McLaughlin and William M. Tweed as representing the evils of one-man government.⁴²

Slocum’s protests accomplished little. McLaughlin gave a lame response that “the General has always been an office seeker...and that he (the Boss) has done a good deal of political dirty work for General Slocum, but found he could not carry it as far as the General wanted to go.”⁴³ It is doubtful that this generic and predictable accusation carried much weight even with Slocum’s enemies. Later, though, when Slocum protested against the recognition of the McLaughlin Ring Democratic delegates at the Albany Convention, he and his cabal of upstarts were thrown out “without ceremony.”⁴⁴

Slocum also remained active in veterans’ affairs and kept in contact with friends he made during the war. He maintained an association with Sherman, and even ran into his old nemesis, Joe Hooker. Slocum mentioned to Sherman that he found Hooker to be “very cordial in his manner towards me.” The topic of conversation was Sherman’s recent memoirs. Hooker was “Not pleased with it, but less bitter than [Slocum] anticipated he would be.”⁴⁵ In 1877, veterans elected Slocum President of the Society of the Army of the Potomac at its meeting in Providence, Rhode Island. The next year, while declining the position of Major General of the New York Militia, he accepted the post of President of the Board of Trustees of the Old Soldier’s and Sailor’s Home in Bath, New York.⁴⁶ He participated in numerous events as a speaker or patron, served as a member of the New York Gettysburg Monument Committee, and of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion.⁴⁷

“Spec” Slocum did better in the way of business in post-war America than he did in politics. In 1868, the IRS valued Slocum at \$5,029.⁴⁸ By the time ten years passed, his

fortunes had skyrocketed to around \$150,000.⁴⁹ He served as the president of the Brooklyn Crosstown Railroad and held a large amount of stock in that company.⁵⁰ The Crosstown line started service in 1872. Nearly four hundred horses pulled seventy-two cars over its sixteen miles of track.⁵¹ He also served as the president of the Brooklyn Board of City Works from 1876 until early 1878, when he retired and traveled for a while in Florida. In addition, he was a member of the East River (Brooklyn) Bridge Commission.⁵²

By 1893, Slocum felt the effects of his age, but overall seemed to be in good health. That year he retired as president of the Brooklyn and Coney Island Railroad Company. In February of 1894, he and his son-in-law, Capt. H. B. Kingsbury, formerly of Howard's staff, left Brooklyn and traveled about the country. In a month, they visited Colorado, California, and Texas. He returned on 23 March, looking and feeling well. About 11 April, he went to Tarrytown with his son, Clarence, to look into purchasing a summer home. While there, he complained of pains in his chest, and insisted on going inside to rest. He returned to Brooklyn that day, and only went out briefly.⁵³

At six o'clock p.m. on 14 April, he began to sink rapidly. His doctors arrived and managed to arrest his descent, but by eight it was clear that he would not recover. The doctors informed the family, who kept vigil while the general slept. Just before midnight, he awoke. He knew he was dying, and spoke briefly with his family before passing on in the early hours of the morning. Present with him were his wife, his daughter, and his two sons, Henry Jr. and Clarence.⁵⁴ He was buried in Brooklyn with military pomp. Daniel E. Sickles, Oliver O. Howard, Daniel E. Butterfield, Fitz-John Porter, and John M. Schofield acted as pallbearers.⁵⁵

If the media reviled Slocum while he lived, they forgot all about his foibles after his death. Forgiveness had taken time, the various papers growing less and less antagonistic as the years passed, but his sudden death completed the process in 1894. After the memorial service, a series of articles appeared, all praising the general as a man of skill and integrity. The same papers that had earlier referred to him as, “the tempter...in our fold [who] did not receive the indignant rebuke, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan!’” now sought to call attention to his “long and brilliant war career.”⁵⁶ Syracuse quickly re-exerted its claim to him, and some people even wanted to mount a campaign to bring his body back to be buried in Oakwood Cemetery.⁵⁷

The state of New York fulfilled Sherman’s prophecy by expressing its thanks to Slocum in the form of a bronze statue. Its unveiling took place as the highlight of the Thirty-third reunion of the Society of the Army of the Potomac. On 19 September 1902, a great crowd of people assembled on Culp’s Hill at the Gettysburg battlefield. A parade led the way to the veiled monument. The Seventh New York Regiment served as an escort for the procession, which featured General Sickles and his family, several governors and other persons of import. After several speeches, they pulled back the cloth as artillery fired a major general’s salute in the background. His place in history already assured, Slocum took his place among his brethren on the field.⁵⁸

¹ “General Slocum at Vicksburg and Syracuse,” *Harper’s Weekly*, 21 October 1865.—OHA

² William F. Fox, “Life of General Slocum,” *In Memoriam: Henry Warner Slocum*, (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, 1904), 105.

³ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁴ “General Slocum and the Copperheads,” n.d.—OHA

⁵ Fox, *In Memoriam*, 104.

⁶ “General Slocum’s Letter,” *Journal* (Syracuse), 13 September 13, 1865.

⁷ “General Slocum Accepts,” *Journal* (Syracuse), 16 September 1865.

⁸ Fox, *In Memoriam*, 106.

⁹ “The Position of General Slocum,” *Daily Journal* (Syracuse), 3 October 1865.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ “General Slocum’s Letter.”

- ¹² "General Slocum's Implications," Journal (Syracuse), 23 October 1865.—OHA
- ¹³ "General Slocum's Position," Journal (Syracuse), 29 October 1862; "True as Steel," Syracuse Standard, 6 November 1861; "General Slocum in 1861," Journal (Syracuse), 10 October 1865.—OHA
- ¹⁴ Apparently Alvord had converted to Republicanism, otherwise, he insensibly chose to attack his own party. After having switched himself, to attack Slocum for the same "sin" must have required a great deal of cynicism.
- ¹⁵ See "Slocum Whisky," Journal (Syracuse), 23 October 1865; "Slocum's Thousand Dollars in Gold," Journal (Syracuse), 11 November 1865; "Political," Journal (Syracuse), 6 November 1865.—OHA
- ¹⁶ "General Slocum as County Treasurer," Journal (Syracuse), 23 October 1865.—OHA
- ¹⁷ "Cotton Fraud—General Slocum Implicated," Journal (Syracuse), 5 October 1865.—OHA
- ¹⁸ "The Vicksburg Cotton Frauds," Evening Journal (Albany), October 1865.—OHA
- ¹⁹ "The Vicksburg Cotton Frauds," Evening Journal (Albany), Near 17 October 1865.—OHA
- ²⁰ "The Vicksburg Cotton Frauds," Journal (Syracuse), 21 October 1865.—OHA
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² O. H. Burbridge to Abraham Lincoln, November 7, 1864 (Seizure of cotton at Vicksburg) Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress. Transcribed and Annotated by the Lincoln Studies Center, Knox College, Galesburg, Illinois, (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/alhtml/malhome.html>).
- ²³ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 6 October 1865; "What it means," Journal (Syracuse), 18 October 1865.
- ²⁴ John M. Gould with Leonard G. Jordan, History of the First-Tenth-Twenty-ninth Maine Regiment, (Portland, Stephen Berry, 1871), 358-359.
- ²⁵ John Poole, "The Song of All Songs," (available from <http://www.acronet.net/~robokopp/usa/songofal.htm>).
- ²⁶ "hunkie, hunky," and "hunky-dory," Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner, Dictionary of American Slang, (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1960).
- ²⁷ "Slocum's Votes Compared," Journal (Syracuse), 8 November 1865.—OHA
- ²⁸ Fox, In Memoriam, 106-107.
- ²⁹ "General Slocum's House Robbed," 13 October 1865.—OHA
- ³⁰ "Death of Mrs. Slocum," New York Tribune, 1 November, 1865.
- ³¹ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 30 April 1866.
- ³² No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 26 April 1866.
- ³³ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 2 December 1868.
- ³⁴ Fox, In Memoriam, 108.
- ³⁵ See S. Gurney Lapham, "Officer who Reached Highest Rank of Any Syracusan in the Civil War" Herald (Syracuse), 11 June 1911, Fox, In Memoriam, 105, No title, Journal (Syracuse), 10 October 1881, "Washington Gossip," Journal (Syracuse), 15 April 1867, for titles not yet discussed. No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 7 November 1878.
- ³⁶ "General Slocum's Position," 27 October 1865.—OHA
- ³⁷ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 15 December 1871.
- ³⁸ "A Talk With Gen. Slocum," Standard (Syracuse), 17 March 1884.
- ³⁹ "General Sherman on the Slocum Bill," New York Tribune, 16 December 1884.
- ⁴⁰ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 25 October 1875.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁴² *Ibid.*
- ⁴³ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 26 October 1875.
- ⁴⁴ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 5 October 1877.
- ⁴⁵ Fox, In Memoriam, 111.
- ⁴⁶ See "The Army of the Potomac," Journal (Syracuse), 28 June 1877, No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 25 April 1879. —OHA
- ⁴⁷ Fox, In Memoriam, 115.
- ⁴⁸ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 8 April 1868.—OHA
- ⁴⁹ No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 19 February 1878.—OHA: It is interesting that neither figure can account for the gigantic sums of money Slocum supposedly absconded with during the war. Either he was innocent, or learned to hide it well.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Douglas Cummins, "Stories and Lore of the Horse Car Lines," (available from <http://www.pagehost.com/rrstuff/hcarlore.htm>)

⁵² See "Slocum, Henry W.," Encyclopedia of Biography, (n.p., n.d.) 14, No Title, Journal (Syracuse), 14 January 1878.—OHA

⁵³ "Gen. H. W. Slocum: Death of the Well-Known Veteran of the War," [there is no listed title or date, but it was likely found in the Journal (Syracuse), April, 1894].—OHA

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ "The Late General Slocum," (n.p., n.d.).

⁵⁶ See "The Nomination of Gen. Slocum by the Copperheads," Journal (Syracuse), 8 September 1865,

"Gen. Henry W. Slocum Dead," New York Tribune, 17 April 1894.

⁵⁷ "Slocum and Onondaga," Journal (Syracuse), 1894.

⁵⁸ "Onondaga Hero Honored In Bronze," Standard (Syracuse), 20 September 1902.

Conclusion

So, what are we to make of Henry Slocum? Without a doubt, he must occupy an important place in the history of the war, and therefore of these United States. He served for the entire conflict, in both theaters, through high and low points. Rising to the rank of major general by July of 1862, he remained in a position of prominence from then until the end of the war. He commanded large numbers of men in every major battle in the east from the Peninsula campaign through Gettysburg and from Atlanta until the end of the war in the West. He shaped and implemented Federal policies in several major cities, most notably Vicksburg and Atlanta.

The picture presented through available documents shows a usually competent, able leader, with a defensive mindset. Slocum was not an aggressive commander, like Jackson or Grant. Neither did he prove himself to be a creative tactician like Lee or Sherman. Instead, he did exactly what his superiors told him to do, how they told him to do it, though not entirely without question. In the search for great men, historians often pass over Slocum.

Yet, every great commander needs men like Slocum. He must have competent leaders to take the field and see that orders are carried out. These leaders need to be intelligent enough to advise their superiors when necessary, but willing to follow orders they disagree with. Though more of a loose cannon in the Army of the Potomac, Slocum provided Sherman with just such a man. He also was an able administrator and garrison commander, and Sherman trusted him with some of his most hard-earned prizes.

At the same time, Slocum had his definite failings. He did not possess the killer instinct of Grant or the restless mind of Sherman. He could hesitate at critical moments if

the situation called for energetic actions. He demonstrated this on the first day at Gettysburg. Once a commander truly earned his enmity, his deeply ingrained sense of honor prevented him from working smoothly with that man again, no matter what greater good was at stake.

After the war, Slocum proved to be a terrible judge of politics. Whatever his ultimate reason for defecting to the Democrats, his choice to switch parties proved to be the worst possible decision he could have made at the worst possible time. With that albatross inextricably tied to his neck, public opinion turned so strongly against him in his home of Syracuse that he was compelled to move. Even in Democrat-dominated Brooklyn, he could boast of a scant few accomplishments when compared with what could have been. His tendency to challenge the powers that controlled the party, whether out of moral obligation or an attempt at simple maneuvering, hurt his chances in politics. He met with greater success in business, however, and managed to die a wealthy man.

Overall, historians owe Slocum a good deal more attention. No study of a campaign or battle he served in is complete without his presence. Yet, in the more than 70,000 books written on the war since its end, only two have chosen Slocum as their focus. I hope that others will find this small contribution to be a worthwhile step in filling this gap.

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VITA

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- Grading Assistantship, Texas Christian University, 1999-2002
 - Adjunct Instructor, Toccoa Falls College, 2001
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 - Teaching Assistant, Texas Christian University, 2002-2003
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 - Professional presentations at Society for Military History, Southwest Social Sciences Convention, Fort Worth Civil War Round Table
- Professional Memberships**
- Historians of the Western Theatre
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ABSTRACT

"STAY AND FIGHT IT OUT": HENRY W. SLOCUM AND THE CIVIL WAR

By Brian Christopher Melton, Ph.D., 2003
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Dissertation Advisor: Steven E. Woodworth, Associate Professor of
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This dissertation examines the life of Henry W. Slocum, focusing particularly on his time as a commander in the Civil War. Born in Onondaga County, New York on September 24, 1827, Slocum initially followed a military tack, but later left the army to engage in law and business. When war broke out in 1861, he tendered his services to the government as colonel of the 27th New York regiment. He commanded these men at Bull Run, where he was wounded in the leg. Receiving a promotion to brigadier general, he took command of a brigade, and later a division during McClellan's Peninsula Campaign in 1862. At the end of the campaign, he was promoted to Major General, but continued to command a division until Joseph Mansfield's death at Antietam where he took over the helm of the Twelfth Corps.

Slocum led the Twelfth through the battles of Chancellorsville and Gettysburg. In the Fall of 1863, the War Department transferred him west with his corps. Forced to serve under Joseph Hooker, a commander he hated, Slocum threatened to resign several times. As such, Ulysses S. Grant sent Slocum to command the District of Vicksburg. When Hooker resigned outside Atlanta, William T. Sherman called Slocum back to take command of the Twentieth Corps, which he led through the remainder of the Atlanta

Campaign. Slocum watched over the city while Sherman chased Hood into Alabama and Tennessee, and then commanded the left wing of Sherman's infamous marches to the sea and through the Carolinas. For a brief time after the war, he commanded again at Vicksburg, but soon resigned to return to business and politics.

After the war, Slocum excelled in his business ventures, but failed in politics. Immediately after his resignation from the army, he became a Democrat, without fully understanding the consequences. The Republican press attacked him with a vengeance, but he was able to achieve some success after moving to heavily democratic Brooklyn, New York. Slocum died on 14 April 1894 of pneumonia in his home in Brooklyn. In 1902, the nation officially remembered him in bronze by placing a statue on Culp's Hill on the Gettysburg battlefield.