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General Henry J. Hunt.

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IN MEMORIAM.

Gen. Henry J. Hunt.

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BY

David Fitz Gerald.

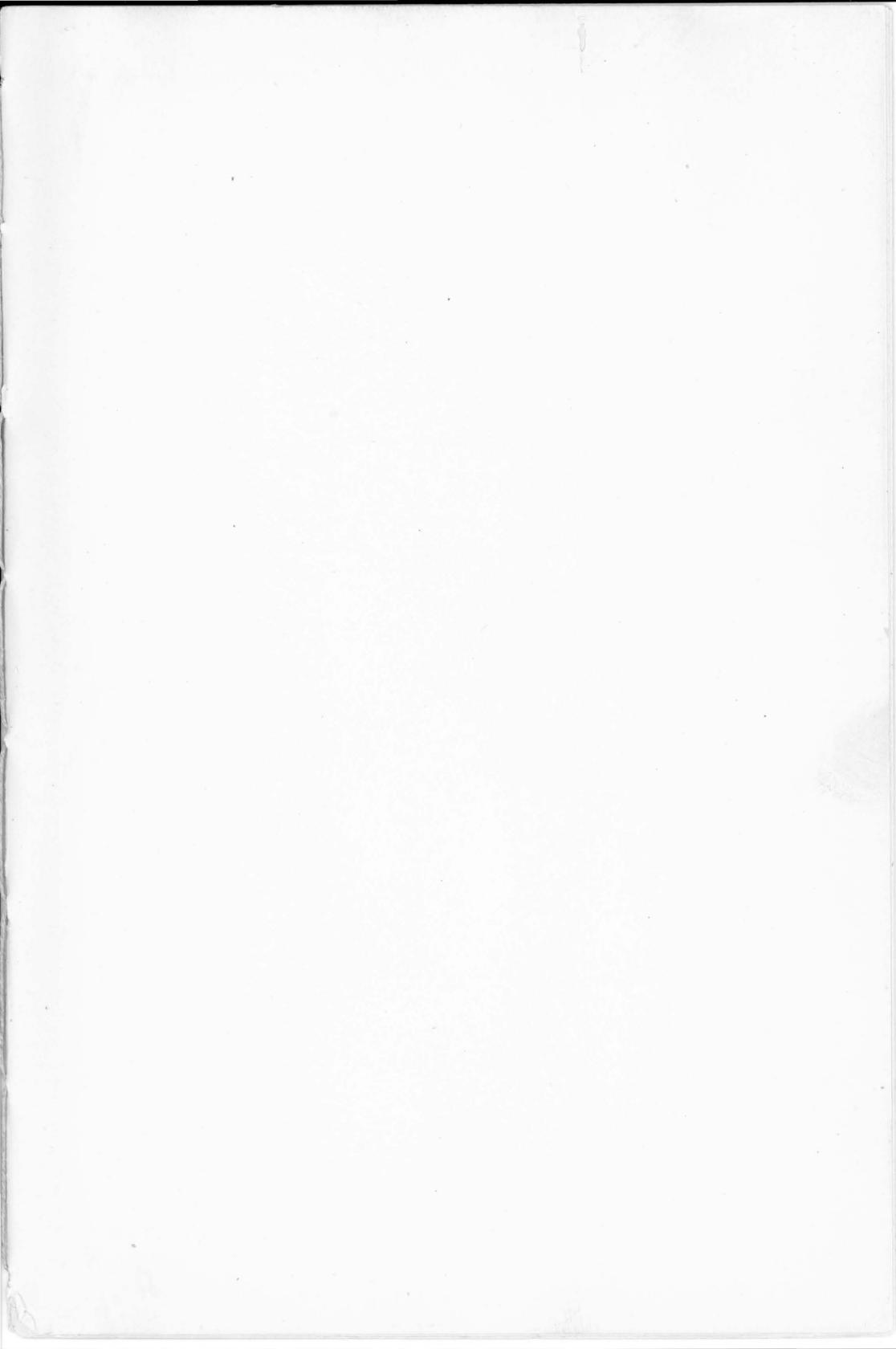
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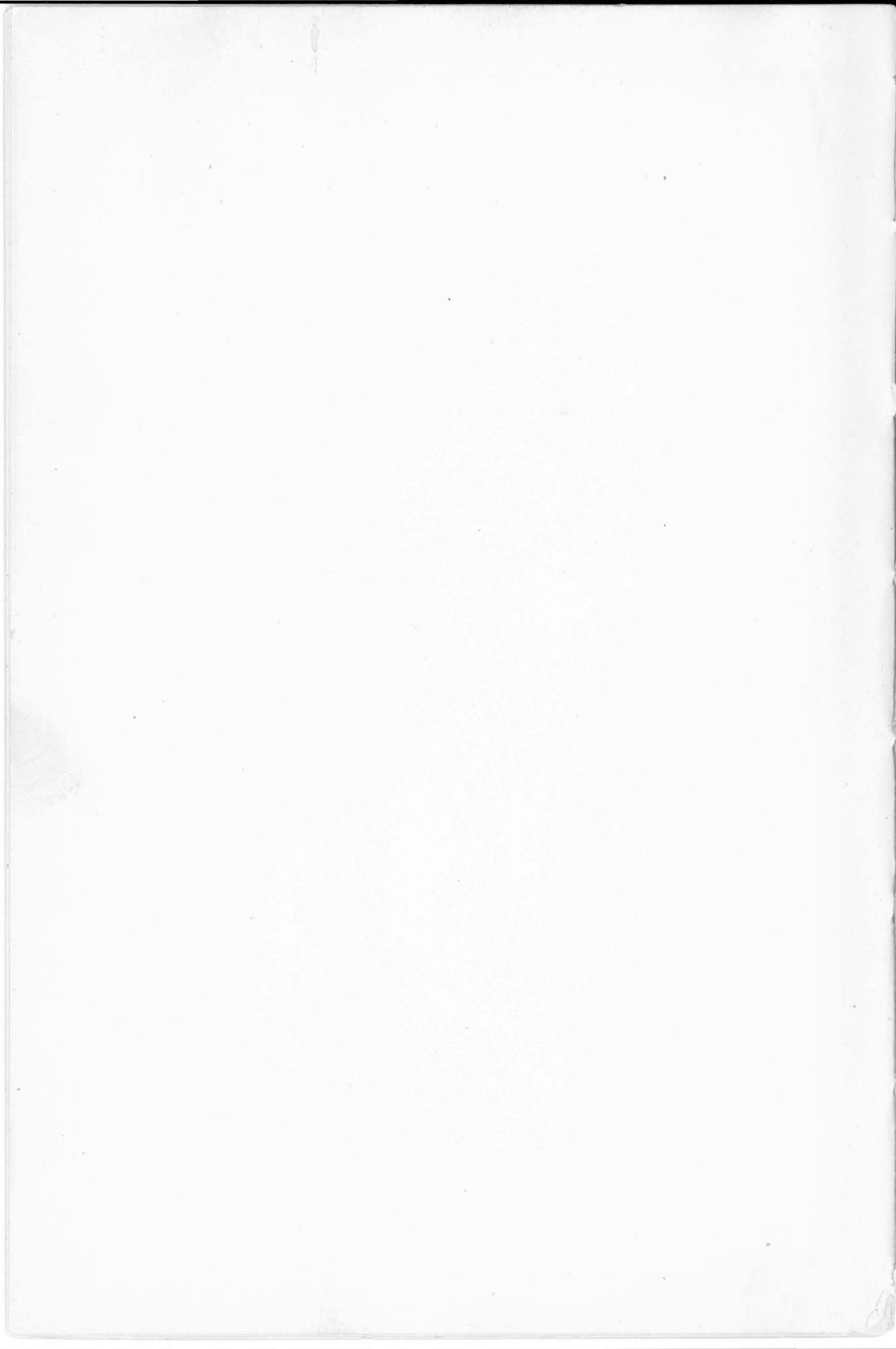
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General Henry J. Hunt.

The Companion whose name heads this memoir, whose lamented death leaves a vacancy in the ranks of this Commandery which can never be filled, and whose loss we most deeply deplore, was a man of no ordinary cast of character. He had seen much and varied service, and can be pointed to with pride as the beau ideal of the true American soldier, faithful to his country and her interests. He leaves behind him a name of which his family may be proud, and which future generations must admire.

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HENRY JACKSON HUNT was born at Detroit, Sept. 14, 1819, of good old New England stock. He was a son of Lieut. Samuel Wellington Hunt, of the 3d Infantry, and a grandson of Capt. Thomas Hunt, of the Massachusetts Artillery, who served during the Revolutionary War, and was severely wounded in a storming party at the siege of Yorktown. He subsequently became Colonel of the 1st Infantry, and from him Gen. Hunt inherited the Order of the Cincinnati, which inheritance he very dearly prized.

Gen. HUNT entered the U. S. Military Academy as a September "plebe" in 1835, being then a few days less than sixteen years old, and found himself among a class of youthful associates, some of whom were afterwards to serve with him on the bloody fields of Mexico, and others who were to serve both with him and against him on the still bloodier battle-fields of their own native land. Among his classmates were the heroic Stevens, who gave his life for his country at Chantilly; Halleck, who afterwards, for a period, commanded the Union Army; Ricketts and Ord, tried veterans both; and the noble Canby.

Graduating, in 1839, number 19 in a class of 31, he was appointed Second Lieutenant in the 2d Artillery, and served on the northern frontier during the Canadian border disturbances, and in various forts on our eastern coast and New York Harbor during the succeeding years, when, in 1846, the call to arms sounded and war with Mexico began. Being promoted First Lieutenant June 18, 1846, he was assigned to duty with Duncan's famous Light Battery, with which he participated in the siege of Vera Cruz, and the battles of Cerro Gordo, Cherubusco, Molino del Rey, the storming of Chapultepec, assault on the Garita San Cosme, and the capture of the City of Mexico.

In this campaign Lieut. HUNT gained much credit, and was twice wounded.

Gen. Worth, in his report of Sept. 16, 1847, states: * * *
 "Finally, at five o'clock, both columns had reached their positions, and it then became necessary, at all hazards, to advance a piece of artillery to the evacuated battery of the enemy, intermediate between us and the Garita (San Cosme). Lieut. HUNT was ordered to execute this duty, which he did in the highest possible style of gallantry, equally sustained by his veteran troops, with the loss of one killed and four wounded out of nine men, although the piece moved at full speed over a distance of only one hundred and fifty yards; reaching the breastwork he became muzzle to muzzle with the enemy. It has never been my fortune to witness a more brilliant exhibition of courage and conduct."

Noble praise this from a commanding general, honorable alike to him who bestowed it and to him who merited it.

For his services in the Mexican War Gen. HUNT was twice brevetted: Captain U. S. Army, Aug. 20, 1847, "for gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Contreras and Cherubusco," and Major U. S. Army, Sept. 13, 1847, "for gallant

and meritorious conduct in the battle of Chapultepec." Promoted to Captain 2d Artillery, Sept. 28, 1852, he served on the eastern coast and on the Indian frontier, his battery being attached in 1858 to the body of troops forming the Utah Expedition, which was organized for the relief of Gen. A. S. Johnston's command, then at Salt Lake City. Before reaching the Mormon settlements the battery was detached and went to Fort Brown, Texas.

From the close of the war with Mexico until the outbreak of the War of the Rebellion Gen. HUNT was assiduously endeavoring to improve the arm of the service to which he belonged, especially the light artillery. From 1856 to 1860 he was a member of the "Board to revise the system of Light Artillery Tactics," which submitted its report in 1859, the recommendations contained therein being adopted by the War Department in March, 1860. An able writer of his own profession, says: "The appearance, on the eve of war, of this system of instruction, was a most opportune circumstance; it was no mere work of the scissors. Major HUNT and his worthy coadjutors, Barry and French, here gave to the Army that which was both original and practically useful. The occasion almost instantly arose when theory was to be put to the rude test of experience on an extensive field. Never has the maxim 'in peace prepare for war' been more clearly demonstrated. But whatever emergency called him to action Major HUNT rose superior to it."

From another writer we learn that—"The system adopted by the Board was originated and presented by him. It was a new and simplified system, having the great advantage of being applicable to all arms of the service, and enabling new levies to be put in the field in efficient condition in much shorter time than formerly. This system has since been extended to the infantry and cavalry, and is the basis of the present system of tactics for all arms. It was prepared with a special view to the

wants of volunteer artillery, and appeared JUST IN TIME to meet the wants of the Civil War. All the new artillery force was, by President Lincoln's order, organized according to its direction, and after the war the regular artillery regiments were reorganized on the same model."

In the winter of 1860-'61, being then in Washington on leave of absence, Gen. HUNT was sent for by the Secretary of War and asked if he would give up the unexpired portion of his leave and take command of the Arsenal at Harper's Ferry. The State of Virginia had threatened to seize that important depot; officers of the Army and Navy were daily sending in their resignations from the United States service, and it was hard, indeed, to tell who in those days could be trusted. But it was known that full reliance could be placed on the modest Captain of Artillery who had never failed to do his whole duty on all occasions. He willingly relinquished his holiday and assumed command at once, making full preparations for the destruction of the place should the Virginians attempt its capture. Its after-fate is well known, but it is not equally well known that Gen. HUNT had carefully planned what another officer afterwards executed. In April, 1861, Gen. HUNT was sent with his battery on the secret expedition to Fort Pickens, which secured that place to the National Government. Here he remained until ordered to join the Army under McDowell in its advance against the enemy's position at Manassas. Major HUNT landed with his battery at New York on the 13th of July, without horses, reached Washington next day, Sunday, the 14th, and immediately set himself to work to prepare his battery for the field. On Friday, the 19th, equipped for active service, he pushed through without stopping eighteen miles to the position assigned to him on the extreme left front of the Army. The next day he devoted to drilling his recruit-cannoneers, and on Sunday the battle was fought. In it Gen. HUNT displayed the

qualities he eminently possessed as a commander of artillery in particular, and as a soldier in general. Seeing a large force of the enemy unexpectedly approaching the left of his battery, which was unsupported, he had the battery hurriedly brought round by hand, and opened on the charging foe with spherical case and canister, giving, at the same time, the order to load *without sponging the pieces*, for, as he naively remarks in his report of the battle, "minutes were now of more value than arms." We are glad to know that although this order was strictly carried out no casualties arose therefrom. His battery opened such a destructive fire on the advancing troops that they could not stand before it, but broke and fled in every direction, and in less than fifteen minutes not a living man could be seen on the ground which so recently had swarmed with them. The infantry regiments had not found it necessary to fire a single shot. Gen. J. E. Johnston, Commander-in-Chief of the rebel forces in this battle, referring to Gen. HUNT's participation therein, says: "In that action he commanded the artillery of the left, with which he repulsed the attack on that wing unaided by other troops." Lieut. Presley O. Craig, a young officer of much merit, brother-in-law of Gen. HUNT, serving as a volunteer under him, was killed in this action.

After vainly protesting against a retreat, the order for which came from superior authority and could not be questioned, Gen. HUNT brought his battery off the field with no loss *save that of a single bridle*, and, efficiently seconded by his officers, prevented a panic and general stampede which threatened to demoralize the left wing as it did the right. But these officers did prevent it, and thus secured an orderly retreat for that wing of the Army. It is known that Gen. Scott sent for Major HUNT after the battle, and told him that his conduct was "noble, noble," but that he had fully expected it of him.

Having been promoted to the rank of Major of the 5th

Artillery, to date from May 14, 1861, Gen. HUNT was appointed Chief of Artillery for the defences of Washington south of the Potomac, and upon the organization of the Army of the Potomac by Gen. McClellan, he was selected by that officer to organize and command its artillery reserve, being commissioned Colonel by President Lincoln, Sept. 28, 1861, in order to give him the proper rank.

During the winter of 1861-'62 he was also President of the Board to Test Rifled Guns and Projectiles, and member of the Board for the Armament of Sea-coast Fortifications to meet the changes in modern ships and artillery.

During the Peninsular Campaign Gen. HUNT commanded the artillery reserve of the Army, and was present at the siege of Yorktown, the battles of Gaines' Mill, Garnett's Farm, Turkey Bend, and Malvern Hill. At this latter battle every gun went into action, and the efficiency of the artillery organization of the Union Army, effected by Barry and HUNT, was demonstrated to the world.

At the close of the Peninsular Campaign, Gen. Barry retired from the command of the artillery of the Army of the Potomac, and Gen. HUNT was appointed thereto, Sept. 5, 1862, and that position he retained until the final surrender of Lee's army. During the advance of Gen. McClellan in the Maryland Campaign he was indefatigable in refitting the sadly depleted batteries, wanting in almost everything in the shape of supplies and equipment after the rude experience sustained in the only just-concluded Peninsular and Second Bull Run Campaigns. Well might McClellan say of him, "The services of this distinguished officer in reorganizing and refitting the batteries prior to and after the battle of Antietam, and his gallant and skilful conduct on that field, merit the highest encomiums in my power to bestow."

Apropos of the Antietam Campaign, it may not be deemed

out of place to give the following anecdote, as told by Col. Owen in his "History of the Washington Artillery." He says: "During the second day at Sharpsburg some of the cannoneers saw a body of mounted officers of the enemy riding about, and from time to time halting and surveying our lines through their glasses. One officer was distinguished from the others on account of his white horse. 'Let's give them a shot,' said one. 'No,' said the gunner, 'that's the chief of artillery; whenever you see him on his white horse look out for a battery. He is a brave man and I wont fire at him. Wait until the battery comes and we will fire at that.'"

In the Fredericksburg Campaign Gen. HUNT rendered invaluable assistance, and perhaps nothing better can be said of his services therein than is conveyed in the concise statement of Gen. J. E. Johnston, wherein he says: "In Burnside's operations at Fredericksburg, his (Gen. HUNT's) consummate skill in the disposition and handling of the artillery made the passage of the Rappahannock by the Union forces practicable, both in their advance and their retreat." It was at the suggestion of Gen. HUNT that a force of infantry was sent across the river in pontoons to drive the enemy out of the lower streets of Fredericksburg. This action was rendered imperatively necessary, the deadliness of their fire rendering the completion of the upper and middle bridges impossible, causing Gen. Burnside to remark to Gen. HUNT, "The Army is held by the throat by a few sharpshooters," which it really was until HUNT's brilliant conception was carried out.

In the abortive "mud march" Gen. HUNT had one hundred and eighty-four guns in position to facilitate the crossing of the Rappahannock by the Army, but the state of the weather precluded any active operations until spring.

When Gen. Hooker assumed command of the Army of the Potomac, among many admirable changes for the better he made

therein, one was undoubtedly for the worse, and that was the curtailing of the powers of the chief of the artillery, and this was done, too, in a rather ungracious manner, but it speedily brought about its own revenge. At the battle of Chancellorsville, Capt. Birkhimer informs us: "The artillery generally in that battle was miserably mismanaged, the very woods being alive with batteries not knowing what to do or whither to go. On the field, amidst dire confusion, the Chief of Artillery was sent for and given *carte blanche* to avert, if possible, impending disaster. That was his vindication."

A new era dawned with the appointment of Meade to the command of the Army, and at the Battle of Gettysburg the artillery and its chief played a conspicuously noble part. After two days of hard fighting Lee sought, by what was up to that time undoubtedly the most severe artillery fire ever concentrated on troops, to so "macadamize" the Union line that a strong infantry attack afterwards would disperse it easily. The temptation to reply in kind was very great, but Gen. HUNT foreseeing what was to follow, and aware of what was massing behind that belching volcano, quietly silenced the fire of his own guns gradually, husbanded the ammunition, replaced the defective batteries, and when Pickett's charging columns came within range the fire of eighty guns was concentrated upon it, and at the supreme moment it failed. In his "History of the 33d Mass. Regiment," Col. Underwood states, speaking of the culminating point of the charge: "Colors are thrown forward to rally men and all the tried old regiments along the line there go together and fight most pluckily, Massachusetts and Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, side by side, without order or organization, officers and rank and file, each on their own hook. They close on the Virginians, shoot and bayonet, club with muskets, fight with pistols, the Chief of Artillery, Gen. HUNT, among the rest, take hold of hands even, and form a chain to keep

back the mingled mass of friend and foe." One thinks with Byron :

"By heaven it was a splendid sight to see,
By one who had no friend, no brother there."

And the subject of this memoir showed that the same high-spirited gallantry displayed at the San Cosme Garita by the young Lieutenant of Artillery was alive and fully developed in the more matured Chief of a great organization on a much more momentous occasion.

Having been promoted Brigadier-General U. S. Volunteers, Sept. 15, 1862, Gen. HUNT received the brevet of Colonel U. S. Army, July 3, 1863, "for gallant and meritorious services at the battle of Gettysburg, Pa.," and was further brevetted Major-General U. S. Volunteers, July 6, 1864, "for gallantry and distinguished conduct at the battle of Gettysburg, and for faithful and highly meritorious services in the campaign from the Rapidan to Petersburg, Va."

In the pursuit of the enemy upon his retreat from Gettysburg, and in the operations from that field to the Rapidan, including the Mine Run Campaign, Gen. HUNT distinguished himself by his activity and zeal, though the indecisive result afforded but little glory to be reaped by any one engaged.

In the Wilderness Campaign of 1864, Gen. HUNT as Chief of Artillery participated in the battles of the Wilderness, Spottsylvania, North Anna, Cold Harbor, and the first assault upon Petersburg. He was also, on occasions, the adviser of the General Commanding the Armies of the United States, who, when the Army settled down to the investment of Petersburg, assigned him to the command of the siege operations by the following special order of June 27, 1864:

"In all siege operations about Petersburg, south of the Appomattox, Brig. Gen. H. J. HUNT, Chief of Artillery of the Army

of the Potomac, will have general charge and be obeyed and respected accordingly. Col. H. L. Abbot, in charge of the siege trains, will report to Gen. HUNT for orders."

In the discharge of these duties for the next weary ten months, he was unceasing in his labors to have everything pertaining to his command effective and active; nothing seemed to weary him provided the cause was being helped onward, and when the spring of 1865 allowed active operations to be resumed, it is well known that he bore a most distinguished and soldierly part in the active operations of that brief campaign which terminated with the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia.

Having been promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel of the Third Artillery, Aug. 1, 1863, Gen. HUNT was brevetted Brigadier-General U. S. Army, March 13, 1865, "for gallant and meritorious services during the siege of Petersburg, and in the campaign terminating with the surrender of the insurgent army under Gen. R. E. Lee." And on the same date he was brevetted Major-General U. S. Army, "for gallant and meritorious services in the field during the Rebellion."

And this was all! Nothing more was done. His lineal rank remained, and he was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the regular Army. We are told by his old antagonist at Bull Run, who knew him well in the Mexican War still earlier, and who always appreciated his merits and ability, Gen. J. E. Johnston: "Two brevets for each of the grades of general officer proved that he earned each promotion twice, and that although his brilliant services were recognized they were never rewarded, for when the war ended he was but a Lieutenant-Colonel, after serving in it with high distinction three years in the command of a Major-General (a corps), and was retired in the grade of Colonel eighteen years later. In any properly organized army his command after August, 1862, would have carried with it the rank of Major-General at least. In the battle of Gettysburg a number

of his juniors in the service were Major-Generals, while he, in a more important command, was but a Major."

Further comment on this subject is useless, but after having quoted from an enemy (in the field only), let the impression made by Gen. HUNT on a neutral be given, one, too, whose opinion as a professional soldier of renown, counts for much in this connection. Mr. Hurlburt, in his book entitled "Coercion in Ireland," says: "Among the guests in the house is a distinguished officer, Col. Talbot, who saw hard service in Egypt. * * * I find he was in America in 1864-'65, with Grant and Meade and HUNT before Petersburg, being in fact the only foreign officer then present. He there formed what seemed to me very sound and just views as to the abilities of the Federal commanders in that closing campaign of the Civil War, and spoke of HUNT, particularly, with much admiration."

And, in this connection, we cannot refrain from showing the high estimation in which Gen. HUNT was held by his former commander, Gen. George B. McClellan, for whose friendship Gen. HUNT felt a great regard, and who took occasion, in urging Gen. HUNT's promotion upon President Arthur, to say of his old Chief of Artillery: * * * "The command he thus exercised was quite equal in importance to that of an army corps, and frequently called for more hard work and far greater administrative ability. His work was not confined to administrative duties, but on every battle-field of any importance he displayed not only the habitual gallantry of the soldier but the highest military qualities of a general of artillery. My opinion was that he was as good a Chief of Artillery as it was possible to have, and I doubt whether he had his superior in the field in any European army." * * *

We all know now that it is very doubtful whether Gen. HUNT ever had an *equal* as a Chief of Artillery in any European army, certainly the army upon whose organization our own was then

largely modelled did not produce his counterpart, neither did the German army, excellent as was its artillery organization in general. After the war closed Gen. HUNT served in 1865-'66 in command of the Frontier District, with headquarters at Fort Smith, Arkansas; was President of the Permanent Artillery Board and member of the Board for the Armament of Fortifications.

He was mustered out of the volunteer service April 30, 1866, and promoted Colonel of the 5th Artillery, April 4, 1869. In 1870 he was placed in command of the Canadian frontier from Lake Ontario to Lake Champlain during the border disturbances arising out of the futile Fenian invasion. He there succeeded in collecting, disarming, and, without expense to the Government, sending to their homes the disbanded Fenians who were roaming about the country in a state of destitution, a terror to the inhabitants. A few months after completing this service he was assigned to the command of the newly-created district of North Carolina, Gen. McDowell, the Department Commander, telling him that his assignment to this "delicate duty" was "a compliment and intended as such." He was assigned to this command at the suggestion of Gen. Meade, who knew his worth and highly appreciated him.

In 1871-'72 he was a member of the Board to compile the new Army regulations, and at the same time, by special request of the Chief of Engineers, he was made President of the mixed Board of Engineer, Artillery, and Ordnance Officers, ordered to test King's depressing gun-carriage for 15-inch barbette guns.

He was in command of his regiment with headquarters at Charleston, South Carolina, and at Atlanta, Georgia, from December, 1875, to December, 1880, when he was assigned to duty according to his brevet rank, and placed in command of the Department of the South, headquarters at Newport, Kentucky, which position he occupied at the date of his retirement,

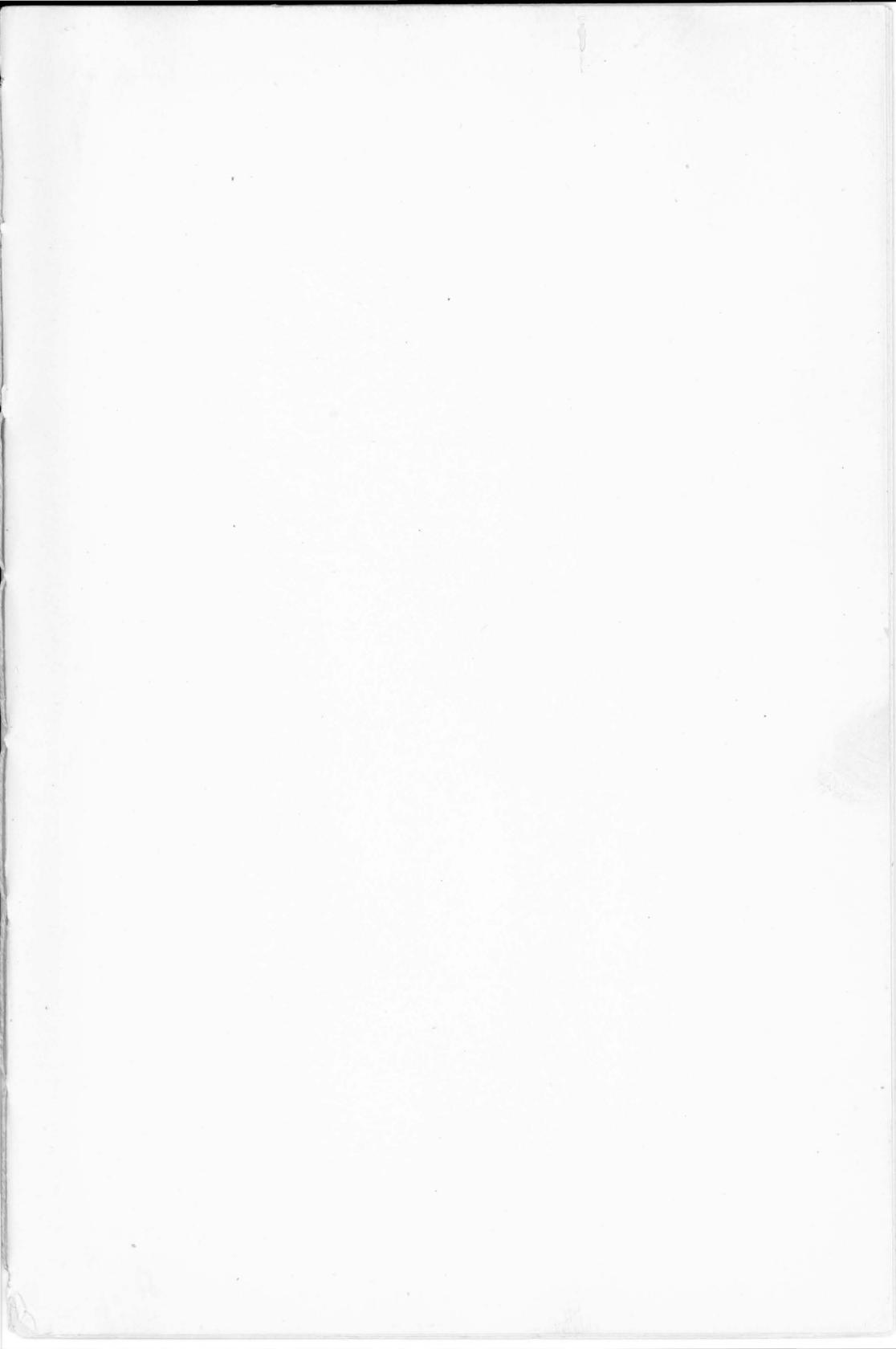
Sept. 14, 1883, when he completed the sixty-fourth year of his age, and the forty-fourth year of his service as a commissioned officer.

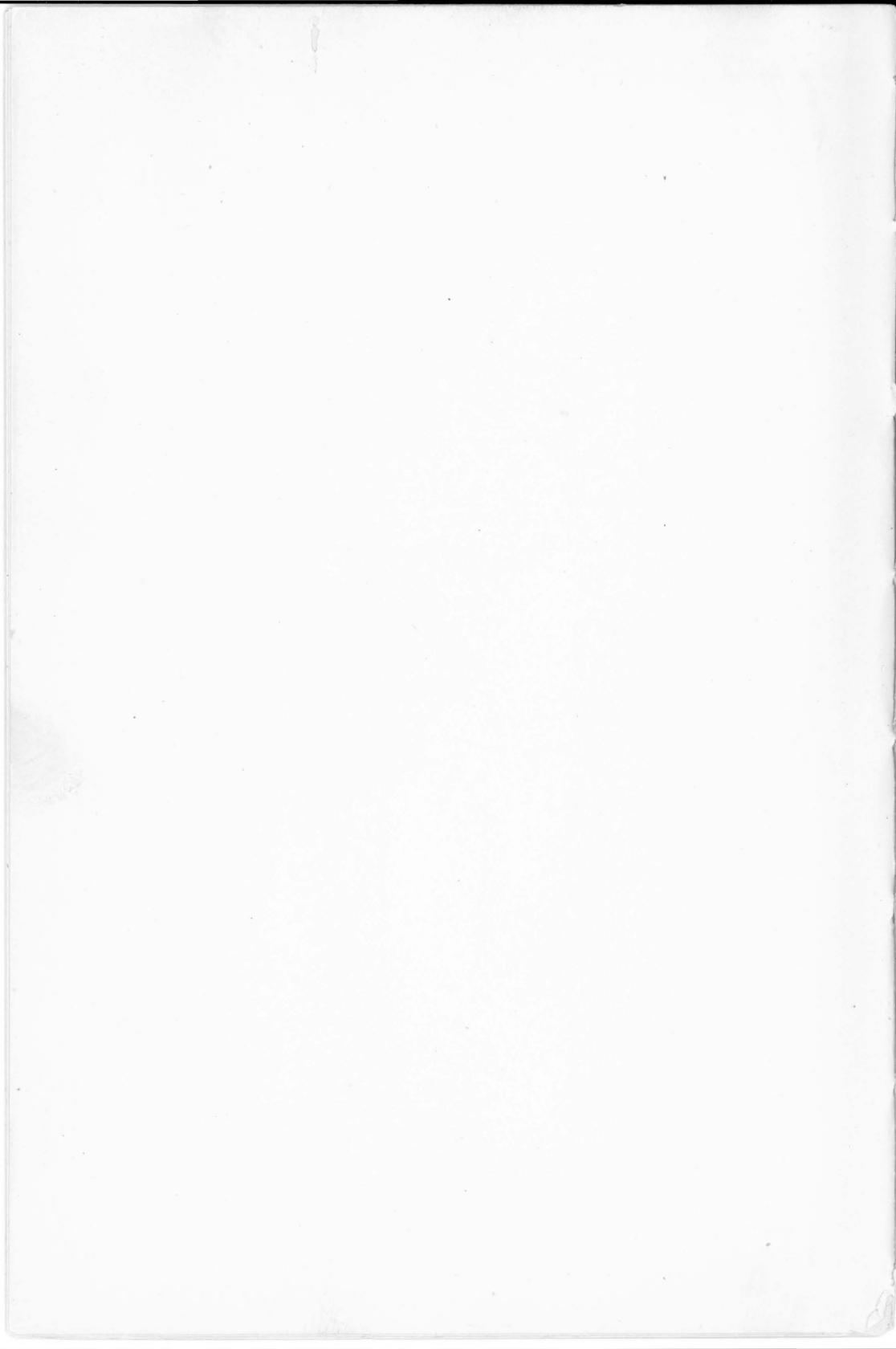
After his retirement Gen. HUNT settled in Washington, and in 1885 was made Governor of the Soldiers' Home at that city. He was as thorough in performing the duties attached to that office as he was in every duty throughout his useful and honorable life, and was ever solicitous of the care and comfort of the old soldiers under his charge. He was fully satisfied with his position, and it was the hope of all that he would yet have before him many years of life. But it was otherwise decreed, and on the 11th of February, 1889, with the love and regret of all who knew him, he passed into infinite rest.

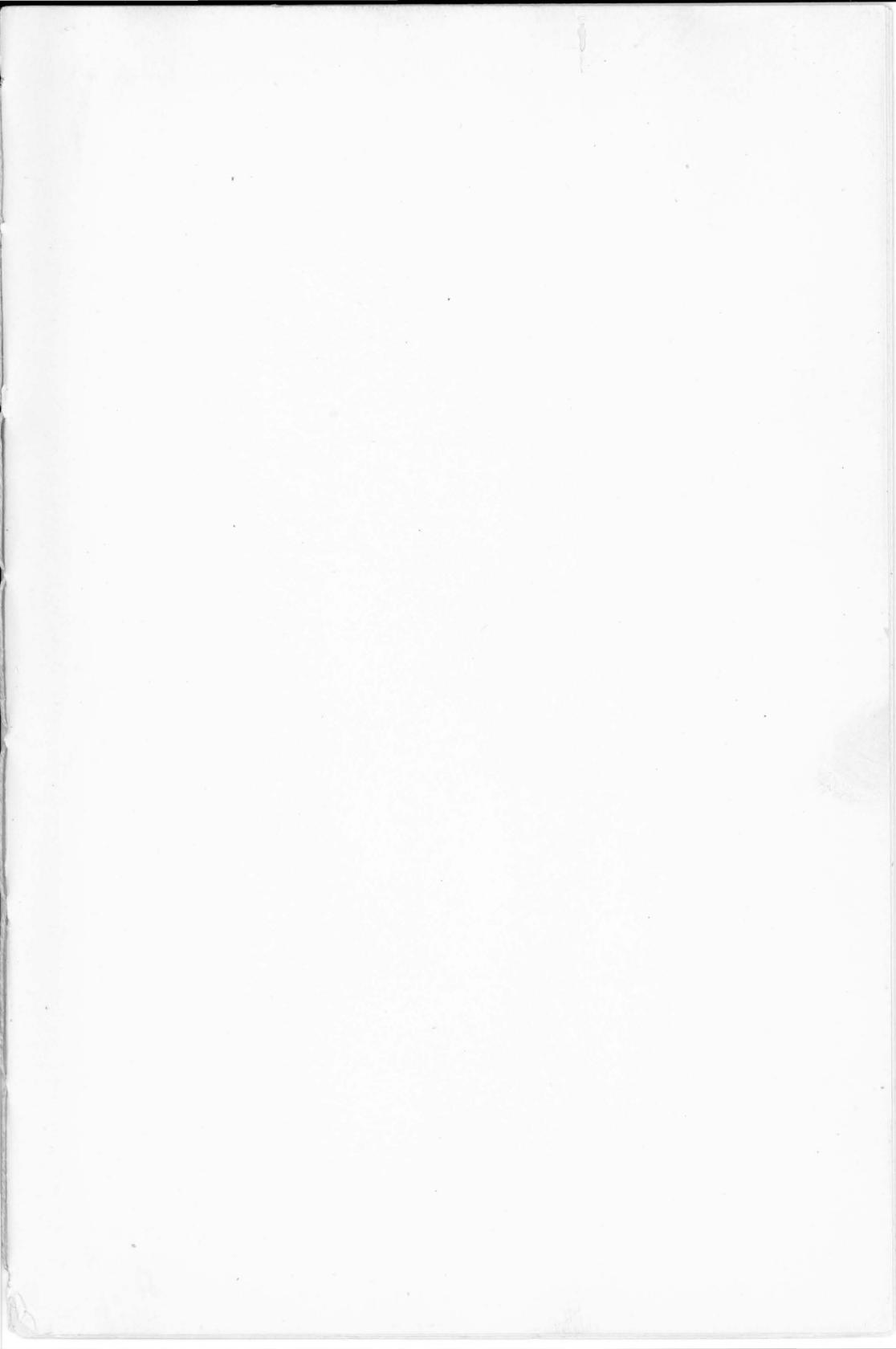
One who honored and revered him has beautifully said, and nothing further can be said: "Thus has gone from our midst the courageous and skilful soldier, kind and thoughtful commander, considerate gentleman, and steadfast friend. Who can fill the void thus made! His example will ever inspire to heroic achievements. His memory will be cherished by the heart-broken family which ever received his first and fostering care; by the Army, one of whose brightest ornaments he was; by the Nation in whose service he passed his life, whose honor he shed his blood in foreign lands to maintain, and, when Rebellion reared its defiant form, whose integrity he rendered conspicuous service to preserve unimpaired."

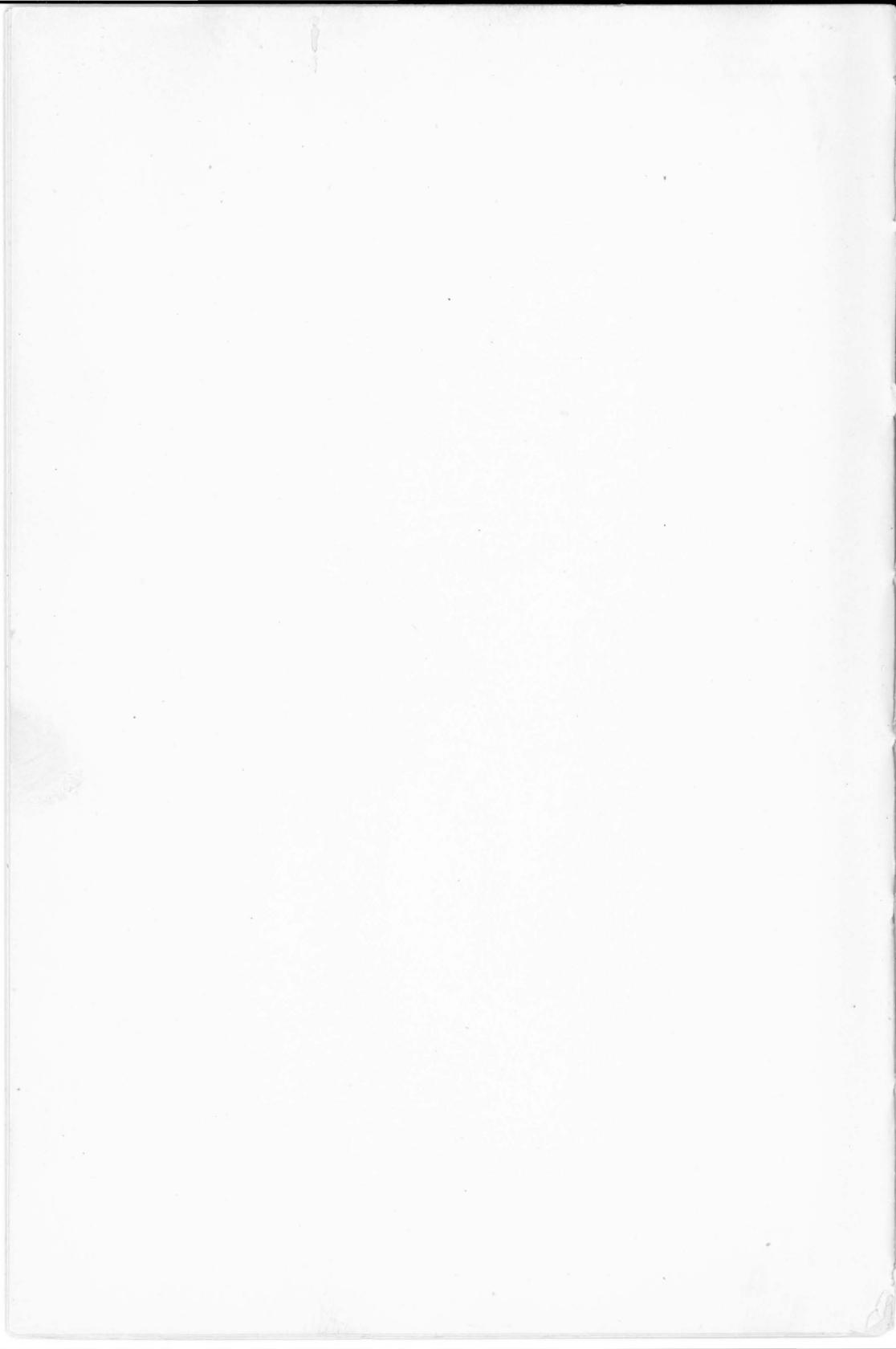
May the earth lie lightly on his grave.

DAVID FITZ GERALD.









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