

**A NARRATIVE OF THE  
CAMPAIGN IN THE  
VALLEY OF THE  
SHENANDOAH, IN 1861**

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A Narrative of the Campaign in the Valley of the Shenandoah, in 1861 by Robert Patterson

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**ROBERT PATTERSON**

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SHENANDOAH, IN 1861**



A N A R R A T I V E

OF THE

C A M P A I G N

IN THE

Valley of the Shenandoah,

IN

1861.

BY ROBERT PATTERSON,

LATE MAJOR-GENERAL OF VOLUNTEERS.

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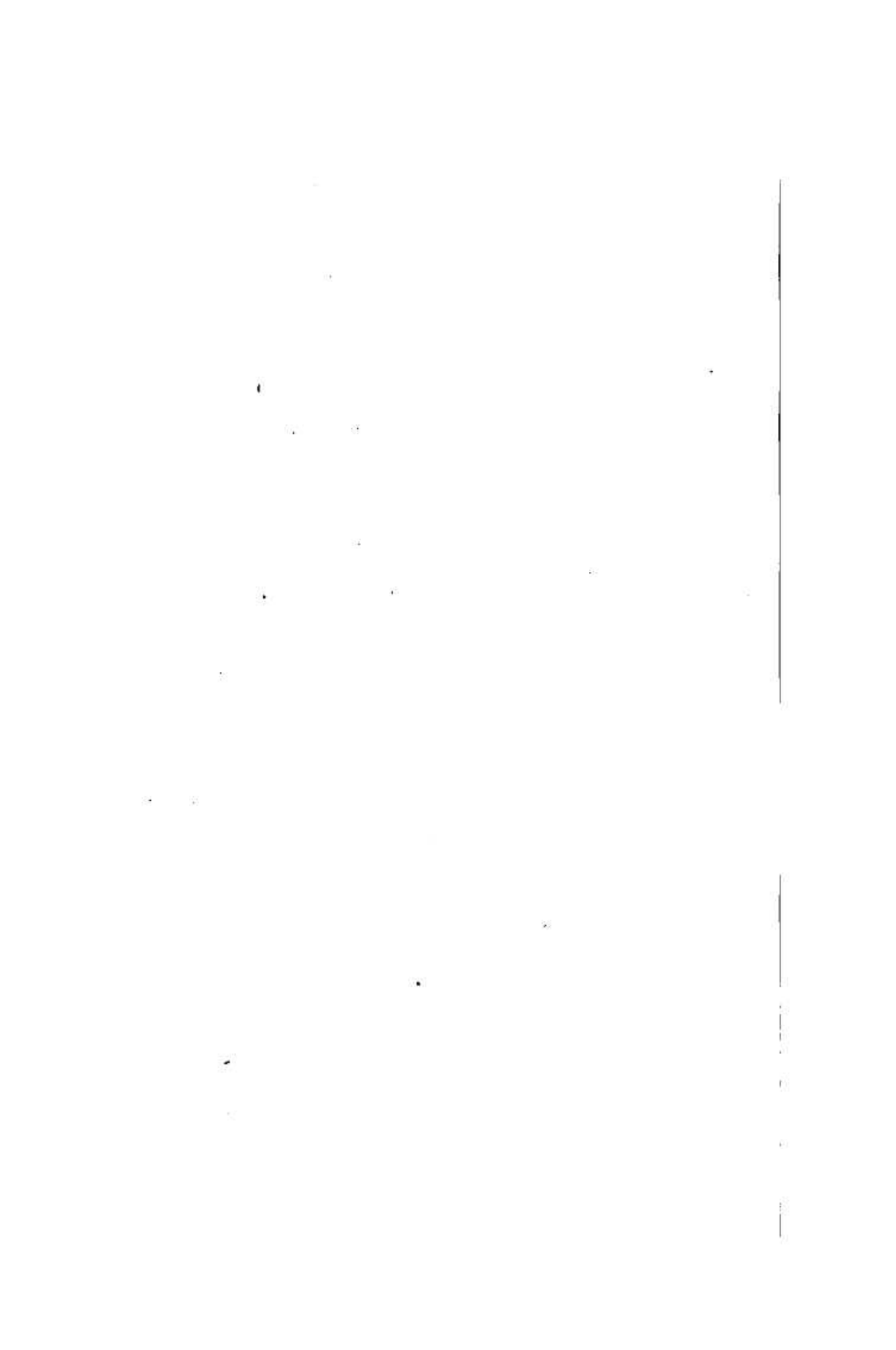
TO THE

GALLANT MEN

WHO SERVED UNDER MY COMMAND,  
AND WHO WERE THE FIRST TO TAKE UP ARMS  
AT THE CALL OF THEIR COUNTRY,

I Dedicate

THE FOLLOWING NARRATIVE OF THE  
CAMPAIGN OF 1861.



## NARRATIVE.

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It has long been my desire to lay before the public the facts and documents which explain the operations of the forces under my command in the campaign of 1861. The misapprehensions, the misrepresentations which obtained currency in the absence of correct information on the subject, strongly prompted me to supply it, in justice to myself and to those who served with me. I have, however, been delayed in doing so by public considerations to which I will presently advert; but as they have, by lapse of time, lost the force that was attributed to them, I now feel myself at liberty to make a brief but well-attested contribution to the earlier history of the war.

On the 25th of July, 1861, the term of the three months' troops from Pennsylvania, whom I commanded, having expired, I was relieved from the command of my Department in Virginia, and, having been honorably discharged from the military service of the United States, returned to civil life.

The arms of the country had recently met with a severe disaster at Bull Run, and the public, whose ex-



pectation of success had been of the most sanguine character, were correspondingly depressed. Although conscious that I had executed, as far as lay in my power, every order that I had received, and was in no degree responsible for a disaster that I could not prevent, I was not surprised that I, as well as every other officer holding any command of importance at the time, should be the object of popular clamor. I was quite satisfied, however, to await the returning sense of the people, and to abide by their decision, when the natural passion and disappointment of the hour should pass away, and a full knowledge of the facts should enable them to form an intelligent and dispassionate judgment. \* This would very surely and certainly have come about, had it not been the interest of a great many persons in authority that the truth should not be known, and that no fair judgment of the cause of the disaster should be arrived at by the public.

It was of course desirable for those who had directed the movements at Bull Run to refer their defeat, if possible, to an occurrence for which they were not responsible, and not allow it to be attributed to any want of foresight or military skill on their part. The theory, therefore, that it was Johnston's unexpected arrival with reinforcements that lost them the battle, for which I was entirely responsible, answered the purpose exactly, was most ingenious, and highly gratifying to the wounded self-love of the army and the country.

The only drawback to the theory was that it was untrue. The truth is, I could not hold Johnston in the

position where they had placed me, and they knew it. His arrival was not unexpected, for I had apprised them of it; and his coming did not cause the loss of the battle, as I can show by the testimony of the most distinguished soldiers who were present at it.

In determining upon the best mode of repelling these charges, bearing a semi-official character, I deemed it wise to consult with some of the regular officers of high distinction, who had served under me, and in whose judgment I had always placed great reliance. Major-General George H. Thomas, who had held a command under me, and whose subsequent brilliant career has justified the high opinion I was then led to entertain of him, writes to a mutual friend as follows :

"CAMP NEAR HYATTSTOWN, MD.,  
August 26, 1861.

"DEAR COLONEL :

"Your note has just been handed me. I had a conversation with Newton yesterday on the subject of General Patterson's campaign. He was on the eve of writing to the General, and asked me what he should state was my opinion as to the General's course. I told him that he could say that, if I were situated as he was, I would make a statement of all the facts to the General-in-chief, or the Secretary of War, fortifying it with copies of the orders, &c., and demand justice at their hands, and, if they were not disposed to give it, I would then demand a court of inquiry.

"Yours truly,

"GEO. H. THOMAS.

"P. S. I think, however, that time will set the General all right, as I see the papers are much more favorable to him than at first."

General John Newton and General Fitz-John Porter both concurring that the course indicated by General Thomas was the true one, and that a newspaper controversy was both an improper and unsoldierly way of setting myself right, I addressed the following letter to the Secretary of War, after I supposed that a sufficient time had elapsed to prevent any information derived from an investigation being of detriment to the public service (*Report Committee on Conduct of the War*, vol. ii, p. 114).

“PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA.  
November 1, 1861.

“SIR :

“Believing to the present moment that, on account of other persons, a public examination into the manner in which the affairs of the Department of Pennsylvania, while under my command, were conducted, and the publication of the correspondence with, and orders to me of the General-in-chief, especially connected with the late campaign in Maryland and Virginia, might be detrimental to the interests of the service, I have refrained from asking for an investigation or permission to publish the orders by which I was controlled.

“The same reason has caused me studiously to avoid verbal statements on the subject, in reply to numerous inquiries.

“Charges have been made publicly through the press, and the impression created, that the design of the campaign was not carried out by me, but rather deranged by my neglect or violation of orders.

“Intimations against my loyalty have been insidiously circulated.

“From the silence of my immediate commander, I infer he does not design to relieve me from the odium attached to these reports and rumors.

“While I am willing, if the general good demand it, to suffer personally, and am desirous that no course on my part