



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*  
LINCOLN AND McCLELLAN AT ANTIETAM

# LITTLE MAC

The Life of

**GENERAL GEORGE B. McCLELLAN**

*By*

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HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF THE CIVIL WAR  
LINCOLN AND HIS GENERALS, ETC.  
THE BONAPARTES IN AMERICA  
(With Gordon Dorrance)



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*History - American  
War  
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## AUTHORITIES

During the now thirty years of my studies in the period of the War between the States, some of the fruits of which have gone into the making of this book, I have traversed much of the territory of the literature pertaining to the great conflict. The principal authorities are indicated in the footnotes. Among unpublished documents, the chief source is the great collection of McClellan Papers in the Library of Congress.

My studies in the immense literature of the War have been supplemented by journeys over the battlefields, East and West. This has helped me to have a clear understanding of the strategy and tactics of these battles. One of the pleasant features of my labors, and the opportunity for which is now practically at an end—for the youngest soldier of the War is now a nonagenarian—has been to converse with the living survivors of the great conflict. In these studies, and on these travels by land and by river, I have laid myself under obligation to a great company of scholars, librarians, custodians of documents, possessors of private letters and photographs, veterans of the War, and their descendants. To all of them it is now a pleasure to own and acknowledge my debt.

For the clear and easily understandable maps illustrating the campaigns of McClellan, I am indebted to Mr. Richard Gibson and Miss Stella Jane Seiferth.

## FOREWORD

### AFTER SEVENTY-EIGHT YEARS

**“McClellan is to me one of the mysteries of the war.”**

So said General Grant as he sat on the deck of a steamer in the Indian Ocean on his journey around the world.

Seventy-eight years have passed since that snowy November day in 1862, when General George B. McClellan rode for the last time through the encampment of the Army of the Potomac, and, with the cheers of his adoring soldiers ringing in his ears, boarded the train at Warrenton, Virginia, and started for Trenton, New Jersey, there to “await further orders” which never came.

Around the name of McClellan the fiercest controversies of the Civil War have raged. There was no middle ground when men spoke of McClellan. To some he was the Organizer of Victory, the great drillmaster who gave to the nation the splendid army with which the rebellion was finally conquered; the general who, had he been loyally supported by his government, would have ended the war in 1862 and saved the nation three years of waste and carnage; who, although thwarted and persecuted by malicious politicians and hampered by a hostile Secretary of War and an interfering President, for seven days on the Peninsula fought and repulsed and fearfully damaged the army of Lee when that army was at a strength of man power never again approached during the war; the general who, after his army had been taken away from him and given to the incompetent Pope, only to suffer defeat and disaster on the field of Second Bull Run, was a second time called upon by the President to save the cause, and reorganizing the beaten and demoralized Army of the Potomac on the march, in less than three weeks brought the invading Confederate army to bay on the banks of the Antietam, where he fought and won a great battle, only to receive as his reward from the government a curt dismissal, just as he was starting on a new campaign with every promise of a great and final victory.

But to others McClellan was the master of inactivity, the "incubus of the Potomac," the military engineer whose specialty was a stationary engine; the leader who led backwards, and called a seven days' retreat a "change of base"; the general to whose frightened imagination the enemy always had twice as many men, and who, as Stanton sneered, "if a million reinforcements were sent him," would "sit down in the mud and holler for another million"; the general who could have crushed Lee's army and ended the war after the bloody September day on the banks of the Antietam in 1862, but waited and debated and hesitated until Lee was safe across the Potomac in Virginia; and last, but not least, the general who wanted to fight the war without hurting the South or freeing the slave, and who, while Commander-in-Chief of the army, permitted disloyal and scheming politicians to whisper to him about the imbecility of the government and the President and the need for a dictator.

Confronted by these fiercely clashing opinions, the historian at first despairs of arriving at any satisfactory estimate of McClellan. But seventy-eight years are seventy-eight years, and in these three score and eighteen years all the chief figures and actors in the great drama of the Civil War, whether soldier or civilian, have long since passed away. Perhaps here and there a bent old man can be found who followed McClellan through the swamps of the Peninsula or over South Mountain to the Antietam. But of all that great host who flung their caps into the air and cheered madly when McClellan rode by on his dark bay horse, only a few are left. The youngest boy of that army is now a nonagenarian. In these years passions have subsided, animosities have cooled, and reconciliations then unthinkable have taken place. The statues of Lee and Davis adorn the halls of the Capitol of the nation whose very existence their armies once threatened; and in two foreign wars the sons and grandsons of the men who followed Lee and McClellan have marched and fought side by side under the old flag. It is possible now to take a calmer view of McClellan.

McClellan labored under the heavy handicap of occupying the highest and most responsible military position in a time of war without having passed through the

hard school of actual conflict and battle. "The test," said General Grant, "which was applied to him would be terrible to any man. If McClellan had gone into the war as Sherman, Thomas, or Meade; had fought his way along and up, I have no reason to suppose that he would not have won as high distinction as any of us."

McClellan himself was conscious of this handicap, and said that it would have been better for him personally had his promotion been delayed for a year or more. Yet someone untried in the handling of great armies had to take the post that was assigned to McClellan; and terrible test though it was for him, it was fortunate that the man selected was not someone of less capacity. Some are of the opinion that even without the organizing mind and touch of McClellan, the Army of the Potomac through its own battle experience would have been shaped into the formidable weapon it became, as was the case, to a degree, with the western armies. Yet, when we consider the disorganization and chaos after the Battle of Bull Run, and how much depended upon the army which McClellan organized, his work seems indispensable.

Another heavy handicap under which McClellan worked was the fact that almost from the beginning he was involved in the political controversies of the day and his name was linked with the Presidency. This was not through his own activity or ambition, although he had a very high estimate of his political as well as his military talent, but because of the division in the sentiment of the North as to the relationship of the war to slavery. There was the so-called Radical group which wanted to preserve the Union and also destroy slavery, and which welcomed the war because it gave an opportunity for the destruction of slavery. There was another group, strongly Union in sentiment, both among the Republicans and the Democrats, whose chief desire was to see the Union preserved with the least possible disturbance of political and social institutions. McClellan, a Democrat, and who had voted for Douglas, was regarded as a representative of this second group. The more this group praised him, the more the Radical group opposed and denounced him.

McClellan was never able to dissociate himself from the political maelstrom. Grant, through his wife's fam-

ily, had slave-holding connections; and the sentiments of General Sherman concerning slavery, had they been generally known, would have enraged the Radical anti-slavery group in the North. But, in contrast with McClellan, neither Grant nor Sherman suffered in the least from their political opinions or associations; Sherman, chiefly because he detested all politicians, and wanted to keep as far away from Washington as possible; Grant because of a saving common sense, and also the chance of events which kept him remote from Washington and its influence until he was named commander-in-chief of the Federal armies. But with or without his consent, the prominence which McClellan took as a political possibility was a serious obstacle to his success as a military leader. Yet, despite these disadvantages, had McClellan, in addition to his many remarkable military talents, possessed more dash and daring, somewhat of the traits of Napoleon, whose campaigns he had studied so thoroughly, a willingness to take a chance and stake all upon a single throw, he might have won a great victory for the North early in the war and conquered a peace.

But we must deal, not with what might have been, but with what has been; not with what McClellan might have done, had his environment and his temperament been different, but with what he actually accomplished in two great crises of the Civil War: first, in the organization of the Army of the Potomac after the Battle of Bull Run; and second, after the second battle of Bull Run, when he pursued Lee through Maryland to the banks of the Antietam and drove him back into Virginia.

One of the difficulties in the way of a true appraisal of McClellan is the fact that of necessity we see him in conflict with the great figure of the war, indeed of American history, Abraham Lincoln. The national apotheosis of Lincoln casts a heavy shadow over those who differed with him. In this respect, McClellan is under a heavier shadow because his story has been told, almost exclusively, by the biographers of Lincoln, and as a part of the story of Lincoln. This being the case, McClellan has had to stand the test of singular literary and historical condemnation. That he has survived that test there can be little doubt. No account of the war can omit him or ignore him.



## FOREWORD

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As the war drew to a victorious conclusion, the figures of Grant, Sherman and Sheridan stood out in a blaze of glory which seemed to leave no place for other actors in the great struggle. But today the figure of McClellan, sitting his horse with incomparable grace and authority, his fine face reflecting all the greater mental power and calm as the excitement of the battle grows more intense, has once again emerged into view and refuses to suffer eclipse.

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**“General, you have saved the country. You must remain in command and carry us through to the end.”**  
**—Lincoln to McClellan on the battlefield of Antietam.**

Book One  
THE MAN IN THE MAKING

## I

### WEST POINT AND MEXICO

On the night of September 2, 1862, a regiment of the Fifth Corps of General Pope's Army, defeated in the bloody second battle of Bull Run, was retreating along the road which led towards Washington. Beyond the tranquil Potomac the great dome of the Capitol was plainly visible in the starlight. The weary, footsore, and depressed men sank down to rest by the roadside. In the dim light a Captain saw two officers riding up the road from the direction of Washington. The Captain looked closely at the two horsemen, and then said to his Colonel, "Colonel, if I did not know that General McClellan had been relieved, I should say that he was one of that party." "Nonsense," said the Colonel; "what would General McClellan be doing out in this lonely place at this time of night, without an escort?" The Captain then dismissed the idea from his mind, and the two horsemen passed on in the night. But in a few minutes another Captain came running up and cried out, "General McClellan is here!"

At the sound of that magic name, the soldiers lifted themselves on their elbows, rubbed their eyes, and aroused their sleeping comrades. When the weary and dejected men realized that McClellan was actually with the army again, they sprang to their feet, and the night air was rent with a roar of cheering such as the army had never heard before. Like a tidal wave it rolled on from regiment to regiment, brigade to brigade, division to division, corps to corps. From every direction the cheering soldiers could hear the answering cheers as the glad tidings ran through the army. The man who aroused this tremendous ovation rode quietly through the ranks, without any gesture at all, except to acknowledge the cheering with a little twirl of his cap. Military regulations and rules were forgotten, as the soldiers rushed from the ranks, and crowding around McClellan, embraced the

legs and neck of his horse, shouting, shedding tears, and crying out, "George, don't leave us again! They shan't take you away from us again!"

Lincoln was right. When members of his Cabinet had bitterly opposed the restoration of McClellan to the command of the Army after Second Bull Run, Lincoln answered, "McClellan has the Army with him." There was no doubt about that.

Only the actual trial decides who can or who cannot play the part of a dictator. In American history the trial has never been made. In the crisis of the Revolution Washington might have assumed the powers of a dictator with good chances of success. The only other occasion was in the alarming and exciting first year and a half of the Civil War, when men's hearts were failing them and Lincoln's leadership was still feeble and uncertain. The idea of a dictatorship was at that time frequently proposed to General George B. McClellan. With the hold he had on the affections of the Army of the Potomac, none can say that McClellan, had he tried to do so, could not have supplanted the Federal government with a military dictatorship. But this temptation he put behind him, and when he was removed from command after one of the most sanguinary and decisive battles of the war, bowed to the decree of his government and rode into retirement, leaving behind him the tears and cheers of his devoted army.

On a summer day in 1842, this man who once might have become a dictator, but then a youth of fifteen, appeared at the gates of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He was under the required age for entrance to the Academy; but a good physique and a fine record at the University of Pennsylvania, where he had already spent two years, moved the authorities to make an exception in his case. Even at that early age, he was noticeable for his well-molded head and the broad shoulders which carried it. Among the youths from all parts of the Union who entered the Academy in 1842, this is the one upon whom destiny has set her mark. Twenty years from that summer day, when the chief army of the nation was reeling back to the defenses of Washington after the second battle of Bull Run, and the victorious army of the South, having crossed the Potomac, was



marching through Maryland, and European intervention seemed imminent, the President of the United States will turn to this same youth, with the fine head set upon those broad shoulders, and ask him to lead the army and save the Capital.

Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma had been fought and won by "Rough and Ready" Zachary Taylor in May, 1846, and every member of the graduating class that year at West Point was anxious for the order that would send him to the front, perhaps to fame and glory. Even modest and reticent Sam Grant confesses that when he saw General Scott ride by in all his splendor in a review of the cadets at West Point, he had a moment's premonition that he would one day occupy Scott's place in the parade. If Grant, hating the army and military life as he did, let such a thought come into his mind, we shall not doubt that McClellan and his companions entertained similar ambitions.

McClellan was sent to the front as a Second Lieutenant of engineers, assigned to a company of sappers and miners. With the same company was Lieutenant G. W. Smith, a graduate of the class of 1842, and afterwards one of McClellan's chief friends, known by the nickname of "Legs." Sixteen years later, "Legs" Smith commanded the Confederate Army for a brief day against his old friend McClellan, after Joseph E. Johnston had been wounded at Seven Pines, and before Lee took command, Lee magnanimously standing aside for a day to give Smith his chance to win a victory.

McClellan sailed for Mexico with his company in the end of September, 1846. His War Diary preserves the comments he made on the conditions on the transport which carried him and his company to Mexico, and what he says shows how the Second Lieutenant of 1846 was father to the Major-General of 1861 who took such care of his troops. "The result of my experience," he writes, "with respect to the transportation of troops by sea is, in the first place see that the part of the vessel destined to receive them is thoroughly policed, washed and well scraped out before the vessel sails; then let a strong police party be detailed every day, so that the part between decks may always be well washed out and smell well. . . . Care should be taken that good cooking arrange-

ments are provided. Mush appeared to be a favorable and agreeable food for the men at sea."

McClellan arrived at Brazos on the 10th of October, 1846, just too late for the battle of Monterey. It was in this battle that Second Lieutenant Grant made his famous ride through streets blazing with musketry fire to bring up ammunition for his brigade. McClellan was disappointed at missing his chance at Monterey. "I came down here with high hopes, with pleasing anticipations of distinction, of being in hard fought battles and acquiring a name and reputation as a stepping stone to a still greater eminence in some future and greater war. I felt that if I could have a chance I could do *something*. But what has been the result—the real state of the case? The first thing that greeted my ears upon arriving off Brazos was the news of the battle of Monterey—the place of all others where this Company and its officers would have had an ample field for distinction. There was a grand miss, but, thank Heaven it could not possibly have been avoided by us." Disappointed as to Monterey, McClellan, nevertheless, in common with many another young officer for whom the Mexican War was a great school of training, was to find it "a stepping stone to a still greater eminence in some future and greater war," although neither he nor anyone else in the army at that time could have foreseen what that "future and greater war" was to be.

McClellan frequently expresses his scorn for the volunteer militia, its officers and its lack of discipline. The volunteers he accuses with being always drunk, stealing, gambling, and disgracing themselves and their respective states. He describes their officers as utterly incapable of controlling or commanding the volunteers. As an example of this lack of discipline, he tells how the Lieutenant Colonel of the 3rd Illinois was marching his regiment by the flank and gave the command, "'By file left march'—to bring it on the color line. The leading file turned at about an angle of 30 degrees. 'Holloa there' says the Colonel 'you man there, you don't know how to file.' 'The h—l I don't,' yells the man, 'd—n you, I've been marching all day, and I guess I'm tired.'"

McClellan's commander for a time was General Robert Patterson, who had served in the War of 1812,

and who afterwards commanded an army in the Shenandoah Valley at the beginning of the Civil War, and permitted Joseph E. Johnston, the Confederate commander opposing him, to slip away from his front and unite his force with that of Beauregard at the critical moment at Bull Run. McClellan holds up Patterson to ridicule and quotes with evident approval what a lieutenant of volunteers, who was "most gloriously and uproariously corned," said of Patterson: "Just imagine old Patt being attacked by the Mexicans, and running over here in his shirt tail—breaking through the pond with old Abercrombie after him. The d—d old fox put us here where he thought the enemy would get us. Suppose they should come in on the other side? D—n him, we'd see him streaking over here, with old McCall and Abercrombie after, their shirt tails flying."

On February 24, 1847, McClellan and his company sailed from Tampico for the Island of Lobos, where Scott was organizing his army for the campaign against Vera Cruz and the City of Mexico. In the siege of Vera Cruz McClellan showed his engineering capacity in the placing of batteries and the laying out of parallels for the mortars. He played a courageous and energetic part in the victory of Cerro Gordo. There his immediate superior was General Gideon Pillow, a prominent Tennessee politician, who commanded the Tennessee volunteers. Pillow became a brigadier-general in the Confederate Army and was at Fort Donelson when it was invested by General Grant in February, 1862. The commander of the garrison at Fort Donelson, John Buchanan Floyd, who had been Secretary of War under Buchanan, and who had particular reasons for not wanting to fall into the hands of the United States authorities, turned over the command to Pillow, who in turn gave it to Simon Bolivar Buckner, by whom the surrender was made. In the thick of the fight at Cerro Gordo some of the men of Haskell's Regiment began to break and take cover behind the rocks. McClellan had received no orders for his detachment, and went to General Pillow for directions. He says he found the general "squatting down with his back to the work, wounded in the arm." When his aide appeared, the two together "went off to the rear, on the run."\*

\* George B. McClellan, *Mexican War Diary*, 8, 29, 33. Edited by William S. Myers, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1919.

In the battles of Churubusco and Chapultepec McClellan played an honorable part and was mentioned in the report of General Scott, together with Captain Robert E. Lee, Lieutenants Beauregard and G. W. Smith, as having distinguished himself in action. For gallant and meritorious conduct in the battles of Contrera and Churubusco, McClellan was brevetted first lieutenant, and captain after Chapultepec. He was also brevetted for his conduct at Molino del Rey, but declined the honor on the ground that he had not participated in that action, and that the brevet would cause him to rank his commanding officer and friend, Lieutenant G. W. Smith, who had commanded him in every action in which he was present.

Too much weight is not to be given to the commendations and promotions which McClellan received in the Mexican War, for nearly every other West Pointer received the same. Jackson, of McClellan's class, received a higher promotion than McClellan or any other of his classmates, being brevetted major for courageous conduct at Chapultepec. The one notable exception in this wholesale bestowal of honors was Grant. Grant, who graduated from West Point three years before McClellan, and had served with conspicuous gallantry under both Taylor and Scott, emerged from the Mexican War with nothing better than the grade of first lieutenant. "I had gone," he says, "into the battle of Palo Alto in May, 1846, a second lieutenant, and I entered the city of Mexico sixteen months later with the same rank, after having been in all the engagements possible for any one man and in a regiment that lost more officers during the war than it ever had present at any one engagement."\* In the fighting when the American troops entered the City of Mexico, Lieutenant Sidney Smith of the 4th Infantry was mortally wounded, and by his death Grant was promoted to the grade of First Lieutenant. His ill success in the Mexican War, so far as official recognition was concerned, was in a way a prophecy of what was to be his fate as an officer in the regular army up to the time of his resignation in 1854.

\* U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs*, I, 163. New York, Charles L. Webster, 1885.

McClellan's war diary gives us no inkling of what he thought about the politics of the Mexican War, or whether it was a just war or not. But Grant regarded the war as unjust and unnecessary, a national sin, the punishment upon which was the suffering of the Civil War. "The Southern rebellion was largely the outgrowth of the Mexican war. Nations, like individuals, are punished for their transgressions. We got our punishment in the most sanguinary and expensive war of modern times."\* Although the men who, for the sake of extending the dominion of slavery, manœvered the United States into war with Mexico in 1846, could not then see it or understand it, the guns of Taylor's army at Monterey and Buena Vista and of Scott's army around the halls of Montezuma were sounding the death knell of slavery and the slave power, for the fierce dispute which arose in Congress and in all the states over the question of the introduction of slavery into the territories taken from Mexico was finally settled in the blood and carnage of the Civil War.

On the 22nd of June, 1848, the youthful veteran of Cerro Gordo and Chapultepec appeared once more at the gates of West Point, this time as an instructor in military engineering. In answer to a congratulatory address sent him in honor of his conduct in the battles in Mexico by his Philadelphia friends, McClellan answered: "I thank you for your kind wishes in reference to the future, and I trust that in the event of the occurrence of the contingency to which you allude (a future war) you may never regret the honor you have conferred upon an obscure subaltern."

\* Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 56.

## II

### EXPLORATION AND THE CRIMEA

At West Point, McClellan, in addition to teaching his classes, translated a French work on bayonet exercises and studied the campaigns of Napoleon as a member of the Napoleon Club. After three years as an instructor, he left West Point to engage in engineering work on the construction of Fort Delaware. From this unpleasant task he was relieved by an order to join the expedition of Captain Randolph B. Marcy in the exploration of the sources of the Red River of Arkansas. It was on this expedition that McClellan made the acquaintance of Marcy, his future father-in-law, and Chief of Staff during the Peninsula Campaign. His next assignment was the superintending of surveys for the improvement of harbors on the coast of Texas.

On March 30, 1853, Major Peter G. T. Beauregard, then stationed at New Orleans, received the following telegram from Isaac G. Stevens: "Will McClellan serve under my orders and explore the passes through the Cascade Range? The exploration arduous and will bring reputation. I take charge as Governor of Washington territory. Am no longer in the army. Telegraph back."\* Beauregard at once communicated with McClellan, who was stationed at Corpus Christi, Texas, advising him by all means to accept this new commission which would "bring reputation." McClellan was glad of the chance, and at once set out for the Pacific Coast. The purpose of this exploration in Washington territory was to ascertain the most practical route for a railroad from the Mississippi Valley to the Pacific Ocean.

McClellan stopped at San Francisco and was struck with the wonders of that fabulous town. "My first thought," he writes, "was of Aladdin's lamp, and how completely the wonders of the Oriental romance have been outdone by the utilitarianism of the sober American wor-

\* "McClellan Papers," Library of Congress.

shippers of mammon." From San Francisco, he proceeded northward to Fort Vancouver, on the Columbia River, where he arrived at the end of June and spent a number of weeks. The regimental quartermaster at the fort was Captain U. S. Grant. McClellan was his guest at the fort, and it was at this time that Grant was beginning to drink heavily, a habit which soon resulted in his resignation. Debt, loneliness, and homesickness for his wife and babies were driving Grant to dissipation and he was sick and tired of army life. The paths of these two men, Grant and McClellan, did not cross again until Grant appeared at McClellan's headquarters at Cincinnati, at the beginning of the Civil War, and asked for an appointment on his staff.

In his explorations in the Cascade Range McClellan did not discover the two passes which are now in use by the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern Railroads, but reported that the pass at the Columbia River was the only one worth considering. From the snow drifts of Snoqualme McClellan was dispatched to the West Indies by the then Secretary of War, Jefferson Davis, to report on a suitable naval station in San Domingo.

By the act of Congress, March 3, 1855, four new regiments of the regular army were organized. Jefferson Davis selected the officers with the greatest care. When the first list was made out and submitted to the President, it was pointed out that the officers, who had been selected purely on their military record, were not sufficiently distributed among the different states to satisfy the political feelings of the day, the number of officers of Southern birth being disproportionately great. This was a difficulty which had not occurred to Davis, and at the President's direction, he revised his list. Davis says of this incident: "This, as I am happy to remember, was the only occasion in which the current of my official actions, while Secretary of War, was disturbed in any way by sectional or political considerations."\* Among the captains selected for the First Cavalry Regiment was McClellan, who at once resigned his commission as a Lieutenant of Engineers and took this new post in the Cavalry. The roster of the two cavalry regiments reads

\* Varina J. Davis, *Jefferson Davis. A Memoir by His Wife*, I, 520. New York, Bilford Company, 1890.

like a roll-call of the famous officers of the Civil War. The Colonel of the First Regiment was Colonel Edwin Sumner, who was to command a corps under McClellan in the Peninsula and at Antietam. The Lieutenant Colonel was Joseph E. Johnston, McClellan's first adversary on the Peninsula. Among the Majors was John Sedgwick, afterwards a famous corps commander in the Union Army, and killed at Spottsylvania. Anderson and Garnett, who rose to fame in the Confederate ranks, were captains, and "Jeb" Stuart a lieutenant. The Colonel of the Second Regiment was Albert Sidney Johnston, considered the ablest general in the South until his death in the battle of Shiloh. The Lieutenant Colonel was Robert E. Lee, and George Thomas, the Rock of Chickamauga, was a field officer. Two Union Army commanders, five generals of the Confederacy, and more than thirty corps, division and brigade commanders were officers in these two cavalry regiments. The judgment of Davis displayed in the selection of the officers for these two regiments was a prediction of the skill he was to show when, from many of these same officers, he chose the leaders of the Confederate armies. In this respect, Davis, as President of the Confederacy, had an immense advantage over Lincoln, whose sole military experience was a somewhat farcical campaign in the Blackhawk War.

McClellan did not serve with this famous First Cavalry Regiment, for soon after his appointment he was named by Jefferson Davis as one of a commission to study the military systems of Europe and observe the war then raging in the Crimea. The other officers on the commission were Major Richard Delafield and Major Alfred Mordecai, both accomplished soldiers. Jefferson Davis' wife describes McClellan as he was at that time: "Captain McClellan was quite young, and looked younger than he really was from an inveterate habit of blushing when suddenly addressed; his modesty, his gentle manner, and the appositeness of the few remarks he made, gave us a most favorable impression of him."

McClellan and his companions sailed for Europe on April 11, 1855. At London the British authorities showed them great courtesy and gave instructions to the British commanders in the Crimea to give them every opportunity for the study of the military movements and the fortifi-



cations. In Paris, however, it was different. The French government would permit them to visit the French lines only upon condition that they would not afterwards visit any Russian post. To this they could not consent, and therefore, when they did reach the Crimea, they saw nothing of the French military establishments.

After visits in Berlin and in St. Petersburg, the Commission finally reached the Crimea early in October, and were assigned quarters with the British troops. By that time the great engagements of the Crimean War had already taken place. Lord Raglan had died, and General Simpson was now the British commander. Alma and Inkerman had been fought and Sebastopol had fallen. Just a year had passed since Nolan had led the "noble six hundred" on their glorious, but foolish, charge "into the valley of death." Commenting on that already famous episode, McClellan said in his report to his government: "With regard to the ground over which the English Light Cavalry charged, if the eye were not raised from the soil under foot, no more favorable place could be selected for a charge of cavalry—it was on the smooth turf of the flat and level bottom of a wide valley; but upon turning the glance to the ground to the north and the east, imagining the Russians in the positions which they occupied on the 25th of October, 1854, it is difficult to divine how any officer could direct such a charge to be made; destruction was inevitable, and nothing could be gained."

The report made by McClellan when he returned in 1856 shows the power of observation and analysis which characterized his career as a commander during the Civil War. In his report he recommends careful military training and preparation: "Mere individual courage cannot suffice to overcome the forces that would be brought against us, were we invaded in a European War. But such courage must be rendered manageable by discipline, and directed by that consummate and mechanical military skill which can only be acquired by a course of education, instituted for the special purpose and by long habit." Here we see the working of the mind of the future organizer of the Army of the Potomac.

McClellan's visit to Europe resulted in a permanent contribution to the American Army in the shape of a new

model for a saddle, which was an adaptation of the Hungarian saddle then in use by the Prussian Cavalry. The War Department adopted his recommendation and the "McClellan saddle" has been in use ever since. The special branch of the service which McClellan was directed to study on this European expedition was the Cavalry and the Engineer troops. He made a careful study of the European cavalry, and when he returned made a report upon the condition of the United States Cavalry and what was necessary to place it upon a war footing. But when he became commander of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan was not conspicuous for his use of that arm of the service, and it was not until General Hooker took command of the Army of the Potomac, in the spring of 1863, that the Union Cavalry began to contend successfully with the Confederate. Up to that time the army jest had been, "Whoever saw a dead cavalryman?"

### III

#### ENGINEER AND LOVER

In the autumn of 1856, the construction of the Illinois Central Railroad was finished, and the company offered Captain McClellan the post of Chief Constructing Engineer, which had just been vacated by Colonel Roswell E. Mason. The offer was made at the instance of two directors of the Illinois Central, Abram S. Hewitt, partner of Peter Cooper, and John F. A. Sanford. It was against this John F. A. Sanford that Dred Scott brought his famous suit in the United States Circuit Court, which, in 1856, was carried to the Supreme Court of the United States.

McClellan assumed his post as Chief Engineer of the Illinois Central on January 1, 1857, when he was just thirty years of age. In the summer of that year the disastrous panic of 1857 broke over the country. The President of the railroad, William H. Osborn, had to spend most of his time in New York, and heavy responsibilities, both in the financing and operating of the railroad, fell upon McClellan. In a short time, according to the promise made him by the company, he was advanced to the position of Vice-President and was in general charge of the affairs of the company in Illinois. In February, 1858, the railroad was in a critical financial situation, and an assignment of the property was made for the benefit of creditors in Illinois and New York. But on January 1, 1859, McClellan was able to report that the railroad, which at the beginning of 1858 owed \$328,000, was now free from debt. This quick re-establishment of the affairs of the company was in no small measure due to the energy and organizing ability of the young army Captain. It was while he was Vice-President of the Illinois Central that McClellan first came to know and employ the detective, Allan Pinkerton, who had established a detective agency at Chicago in 1852. Because of his Illinois experience with Pinkerton, McClellan employed

him as head of his secret service when he became commander of the Army of the Potomac. In this service Pinkerton passed under the name of "Major Allan," and few associated him in any way with the Pinkerton of the detective agency. McClellan's exaggerated estimates of the numbers in the Confederate armies opposing him were based upon information supplied him by the head of his secret service, "Major Allan," or Pinkerton.

When McClellan was with the Illinois Central, his old friend, Burnside, who had failed as a manufacturer of firearms at Bristol, Rhode Island, now out of a position and without funds, wrote to McClellan from St. Paul, saying, "I am now thrown upon the world with absolutely nothing." McClellan got him a job as cashier of the Illinois Central Land Office, and in 1860 Burnside became the treasurer of the Illinois Central with his office in New York. McClellan, not then married, established Mrs. Burnside in his home at Chicago, where she dispensed his hospitality to old army officers and Chicago friends. Little could either of these young officers have foreseen the bleak November day in 1862 when Burnside would succeed McClellan as Commander of the Army of the Potomac. McClellan never lost his affection for his old friend. On one occasion, when shown a false and slanderous article, which has been published on the authority of Burnside, McClellan, after reading it, put down the magazine and said with a quiet laugh, "Poor Burn; he don't know what he was saying"; and, then, after some kind references to his old friend and comrade, turned to another subject.

Another down-and-out West Pointer who appealed to the successful railroad executive was William Tecumseh Sherman. In the summer of 1858, after the failure of his banking project in San Francisco, Sherman, without employment, and greatly depressed, was hanging around the home of his father-in-law, Judge Thomas Ewing, at Lancaster, Ohio. In his distress he thought of his old West Point friend, Simon Bolivar Buckner, the same who in 1862 would surrender Fort Donelson to Grant. Sherman wrote to Buckner, then a lawyer at Louisville, Kentucky, asking him if he could help him to secure employment. Buckner commended him to McClellan, thinking that the latter might have some railroad position which Sherman

could fill. But nothing came of it. Sherman, too, had been a Vice-President and stockholder of a railroad, the Central Pacific, which in 1855 was constructed for twenty miles out of Folsom, California, and was in reality the beginning of the first transcontinental line.

While in the service of the Illinois Central, McClellan saw much of Abraham Lincoln, then one of its attorneys. During the trial of a case at Clinton, in DeWitt County, in 1858, Lincoln requested a postponement of the trial, saying to the Court, "We are not ready for trial." Judge Davis asked, "Why is not the company ready to go to trial?" Lincoln replied, "We are embarrassed by the absence or rather want of information from Captain McClellan." The Judge then said, "Who is Captain McClellan, and why is he not here?" To this Lincoln responded, "All I know of him is that he is the engineer of the railroad, and why he is not here this deponent saith not." \* Within three years Lincoln was to know much more of Captain McClellan, and to be still more embarrassed by "want of information" from him.

Looking back to those Illinois days, McClellan said: "Long before the war, when Vice-President of the Illinois Central Railroad Company, I knew Mr. Lincoln, for he was one of the counsel for the company. More than once I have been with him in out-of-the-way county-seats where some important case was being tried, and, in the lack of sleeping accommodations, have spent the night in front of a stove listening to the unceasing flow of anecdotes from his lips. He was never at a loss, and I could never quite make up my mind how many of them he had really heard before, and how many he invented on the spur of the moment. His stories were seldom refined but were always to the point."

McClellan's father had been a Whig and a friend and ardent admirer of Daniel Webster, after whom McClellan named the dark bay horse which carried him through his campaigns in the Civil War. But in Illinois McClellan came under the spell of the eloquence of Douglas, and it was the influence of Douglas which made him a Democrat.

During the celebrated campaign of the Lincoln-Douglas debates in 1858, McClellan was often with Douglas

\* Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln*, I, 595. Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1928.

and not infrequently put him to bed in a state of intoxication. At the time of the debate at Bloomington, he asked Douglas to travel with him in his private car. Douglas had a number of his cronies and henchmen with him, and was up all night. About a half an hour before they reached Bloomington, early in the afternoon, McClellan, fearing that Douglas would make a failure in the debate, took occasion to warn him and remind him of his appointment, for, he says: "The Little Giant certainly had had no opportunity of thinking of the subject of the debate, and did not seem to be in fit condition to carry it on. Not that he was intoxicated, but looking unkempt and sleepy. He, however, retired to my private cabin, and soon emerged, perfectly fresh and ready for the work before him; so much so that I thought his speech of that day his best during the campaign."

During those long nights when he sat before the stove in the country taverns listening to Lincoln's grotesque tales, McClellan was thinking about something else. In the flame of the glowing stove, he saw the features of pretty Nellie Marcy. Some of McClellan's army friends wondered why a young officer, with an apparently brilliant future before him, should have left the army. Captain J. K. Duncan, who as General Duncan, on February 28, 1862, surrendered the forts below New Orleans to Admiral Farragut, wrote: "We are wondering here what induced you to take off the harness. A young Captain, cock-full of big war science, the Secretary for a patron, and the chance of dying gloriously among the Siwash on the frontier, were supposed to be glory enough to reconcile anyone to inspecting horse blankets through the short period of our human existence, three score and ten." A year afterwards, a letter from McClellan to Nellie hints at his reason for resigning from the army; namely, that a civil career would supply him with a financial standing, so that he might give Marcy's daughter the social background which she deserved. "One of these days," he says, "I shall have to tell you in strict confidence, if you care to listen, why I left the service. I fear you will laugh heartily at me."

The young railroad executive and erstwhile army officer was not the only man who saw in the glowing flame of his reveries the features of lovely Nellie Marcy, for

she was the object of affection and devotion on the part of young army officers all the way from New York to San Francisco, and her suitors were as numerous as Penelope's. Among these suitors is one who signs himself "G. G." This was none other than Gordon Granger, the hard-hitting and hard-fighting Granger who at Chickamauga, when almost the entire Confederate Army was being hurled against Thomas, without waiting for orders marched to the sound of the cannon and flung his reserves into battle just at the critical moment. Granger was as impetuous a suitor as he was a soldier. Writing from Topeka, Kansas, in August, 1859, he says:

"My own sweet Miss Nellie: Before marching, I project this distant missile at your devoted head. Oh, that it would reach your heart and make it mine forever! But, alas, I fear some wanton wretch will rob me of that cherished treasure ere we meet again. What say you? Will it be even so, or can you, like my constant self, be faithful until our return? Should you desert me while in this exile, please give me timely notice by gradually preparing my mind and nerves for so momentous an event, which would forever blight our last and fondest hope of matrimonial felicity."

Granger then warns Nellie of "making conquest after conquest, until a vast desolate waste opens to your view on every side of broken hearts and disappointed hopes." \*

All this time, while others were endeavoring to "catch the sunbeam," as one ardent suitor described Nellie, the young Captain McClellan seems to have had the inside track. As early as June, 1856, he was being considered as a possible son-in-law by Nellie's father, Colonel Marcy, and not with particular favor, for Marcy preferred a man with a heavier bank account. Writing from his remote post, Laredo, Texas, Marcy tells his daughter:

"You know how proud I am of you, and how much I idolize you, and I cannot think of you marrying any man that is not occupying a permanent position in society. This is my dearest wish, to see

\* "McClellan Papers."

you in a situation where you can shine, and be admired as you are perfectly able to do. As for wealth, it enables us when all friends are gone to gratify our tastes and whims in many respects, and it is an important consideration in the world, as without it we cannot be happy. I received a letter from Mr. Hill (another suitor) in which he says he is worth about \$10,000. This is something, but not much. Although I should have no objection to Captain McClellan, yet I have no great desire for it after he went into the line of the army, as the same hard fate would have awaited you as with other officers."

But the next year, McClellan, now resigned from the army, is more pleasing as a suitor to Marcy, for the latter wrote to him in April, 1857: "I was greatly pleased to learn that you had made the wise resolve to leave the army, as I am satisfied you can make yourself much more distinguished in civil life as an engineer than by doing garrison duty or in hunting Indians in time of peace. You are young, and with your talents, acquirements, and application, you cannot fail to succeed; and, without any friendly bias, I should venture to predict for you a brilliant career."

Nellie seems to have suggested some suitable substitute for herself. McClellan thanks her for "that splendid young lady"; but says, "I don't care to try any new experiment just at present. I hope to go east next month, and if you will faithfully promise me not to trade me off in that unjustifiable style to any splendid young woman, I will come up and see you all."

Running trains over the black mud of Illinois evidently has not come quite up to the expectations of the ex-army officer, nor has it satisfied his ambitions, and in a moment of doubt as to his future he writes: "I hate to think of the future now. It seems so blank. No goal to reach, no object to strive for. Yet, foolish fellow that I am, there are many much worse off than I am in this world, and who no doubt envy me my position. Was mortal man or woman ever contented? So life passes—we work and dream, build castles in the air, struggle for the unattainable, fret that fate does not throw roses along our path, and when too late, at last awaken to the





*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

McCLELLAN AND HIS WIFE

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realization of the fact that we have been grasping at shadows all our lives." But even at that time, the then melancholy young railroad executive was about to grasp something more substantial than a shadow, for in September, 1859, McClellan and Nellie became engaged. McClellan consults her about the advisability of his re-entering the army, and writes to his sister wondering what his mother will think about so very old and incorrigible a bachelor at length being "brought to reason."

McClellan had won his first, and, in some respects, most important campaign; a campaign which left the land from San Francisco to New York strewn with chagrined and disappointed army officers. Looking back over the battle and the victory, McClellan now writes to Nellie: "You are my empire. I know that I have won it; but I must keep it; it must be extended. I must make you feel that we are nothing more than nothing without each other." Nellie talks about going east to prepare an elaborate trousseau; but McClellan beseeches her not to do that, telling her the "blue dress or any other" will be good enough for him.

The "sunbeam" was finally captured on the 22nd of May, 1860, when Ellen Mary Marcy, daughter of Colonel Randolph B. Marcy, McClellan's old commander in the Red River expedition, became Mrs. George B. McClellan. In the too brief period before the storm of war broke over the country, less than a year, Nellie Marcy, after all her romantic adventures, apparently deeply satisfied with the final issue, devoted herself to her brilliant and accomplished husband, of whom she was so justly proud, and made their home a refuge from the strife of tongues. This marriage, powerful in its influence upon McClellan, a sunlit chamber to which he could retire in the darkest and bitterest days of his army service, had more than a merely domestic significance, for when McClellan died, in October, 1885, leaving the manuscript of his story of the war unfinished, his literary executor, W. C. Prime, published, with McClellan's "Own Story," the series of letters written from Washington and the battlefields to his wife. Some have greatly regretted the publication of these letters. But this is without reason. We are glad to know how McClellan actually felt, and what he said in the confidence of marital correspondence about the

men and issues of his day. To his beautiful and devoted wife McClellan opened his whole soul, and these letters, although they gave his enemies much to rejoice over, are a most valuable contribution to the literature of the Civil War. If McClellan thought that most of the public officials at Washington were "wretches," and if he was of the opinion that he had "saved the country three times," the historian is glad to know it, and can thank the much maligned publisher of these letters.

In September, 1860, everything was bright and prosperous for McClellan. He had married the charming Nellie Marcy, had won high regard in his service in the army, and as a railroad executive had been so successful that the eastern division of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad Company thought him worth a salary of \$10,000 a year and offered him the presidency of the road.

When McClellan sat down to his desk in Cincinnati to run the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad, where were the other men who were to rise to high distinction during the Civil War? McClellan's first opponent on the Peninsula, Joseph E. Johnston, was Quartermaster General of the United States Army, with the rank of Brigadier General. The other Johnston, Albert Sidney, who was killed at the battle of Shiloh, was Colonel of the Second Cavalry, in command of the department of the Pacific. Braxton Bragg, the Confederate Commander in the West after the death of Johnston at Shiloh, was one of the few officers who rose to high rank in the Confederate Army who had resigned from the United States service before the War. When the war broke out he was cultivating his plantation in Louisiana. Thomas Jonathan (Stonewall) Jackson was instructing the cadets at the Virginia Military Institute in Artillery Tactics and Natural Philosophy, and rising at six in the morning to pray and read the Bible and take a cold bath. Peter G. T. Beauregard, who started the mighty conflict at Charleston and Fort Sumter, had been selected by President Buchanan as Superintendent of West Point. James Longstreet, the bulldog of the Confederacy, was a paymaster in the army with the rank of Major. Daniel H. Hill, Stonewall Jackson's brother-in-law, was a professor of mathematics at Davidson College, North Carolina. "Jeb" Stuart, "Beauty" Stuart, as his West Point chums called him, was a lieutenant in the First

Cavalry. A. P. Hill was a Captain of the First Artillery. Leonidas Polk was wearing the bishop's surplice in Louisiana. Robert E. Lee was Lieutenant Colonel of the First Cavalry, and promoted to Colonel just before the war broke out.

On the Union side, Meade was a Captain of topographical engineers, engaged in a survey of the Great Lakes. Burnside was in the Treasurer's office of the Illinois Central Railroad, a position to which he had risen through the friendship and influence of McClellan. Hooker was ranching it in California. Sherman was the head of the State Military College of Louisiana, drilling boys who in a short time were to lead soldiers against his own army. Phil Sheridan was chasing Indians at Fort Yamhill in Washington territory. George Thomas, the Rock of Chickamauga, was a Major in the Second Cavalry. William S. Rosecrans, Bragg's opponent in the West, was running a little oil refinery in Cincinnati. Henry W. Halleck, destined to be the grand marshal of the armies, was practicing law in San Francisco, writing books, directing silver mines, and managing a railway. Sam Grant, in four years to wear the stars of a Lieutenant General, was in the lowest estate of all. After successive failures, he had taken a job at \$800 a year in his brothers' country store at Galena, Illinois; and there, in the dim recesses of the country store, the dashing hero of Monterey and Molino, with stooped shoulders and long shaggy hair, might have been seen pulling down bales of calico from the shelves, or piling hides in the cellar. Looking them all over, these army officers, in and out of the Army, Grant is the last one of whom we shall expect great things.

## IV

### THEY THAT TAKE THE SWORD

When the polls closed on November 6, 1860, the Civil War had commenced. Five months were to pass before a hostile shot was fired; but the election of Abraham Lincoln made war inevitable, because his election was followed by secession. The chief cause of the war was slavery, but the occasion of it was secession. There was cheering when the news came in of Lincoln's election, not only in Chicago and New York and Boston, but in Charleston, South Carolina.

In the election of Lincoln the Southern leaders read the handwriting on the wall. Lincoln's platform and party carried no actual threat against slavery where it was already established, but only against the extension of slavery to other territories under the flag. This would hardly seem to have been cause for secession. Yet from the Southern point of view there was a certain logic in the course they followed. If the North thought that slavery was wrong, and new territories ought not to be defiled by its presence, it was an easy and correct inference that slavery was wrong everywhere, and ought to be destroyed wherever it existed. This was why the South took the election of Lincoln as a direct threat to her cherished "institution" of slavery. Hence, secession by South Carolina on December 20, 1860, and soon followed by ten other states.

The rush to secede from the Union in the South was not without a warning voice here and there. As far back as June, 1860, Alexander H. Stephens of Georgia, afterwards the Vice-President of the Confederacy, when he left the Democratic Convention at Baltimore which nominated Douglas for the presidency, said, "Mark me, when I repeat that in less than twelve months we shall be in the midst of a bloody war. The Union will certainly be disrupted." In his famous speech delivered before the Georgia legislature, November 14, 1860, a week after Lin-

coln's election, pleading for Georgia to remain in the Union, Stephens pointed out that the election, however unsatisfactory to the South, had been constitutional. If the Constitution was now to be broken, they should "let the fanatics of the North break it. Wait until Lincoln violated the Constitution, and then would be the time to act. Even if Lincoln wished to do anything against the Constitution, it was unlikely that Congress would permit him to do so. The Union had not been a curse; with all its defects it came nearer the objects of all good government than any other on the face of the earth. Both North and South had grown great and prosperous under it. This prosperity would vanish the moment the South seceded from the Union. If the Southern states yielded to the temptation to leave the Union, their fate would not be otherwise than that of the progenitors of the human race in the Garden of Eden, who, thinking they could better their condition and become as gods, in an evil hour yielded and saw only their own nakedness. The motto of the state of Georgia was, "Wisdom, Justice, Moderation." These were the principles by which Georgia and all the South ought to be guided, and which they ought to maintain.

Stephens was a prophet, not without honor, but without a following in his own country. Within four years, as Stephens foresaw, the armies of General Sherman were laying waste with sword and flame the Empire State of the South. But Stephens and men like him were arguing with a whirlwind. Passion, prejudice, misunderstanding, and devotion to what was regarded as a precious political and constitutional right were carrying the South towards the cataract of war.

There were two elements which contributed to the extreme bitterness and intensity of feeling in the South. One was the moral element. Two men engage in a controversy, and the controversy may terminate in a physical conflict. But that conflict is the more bitter and fierce if, on one side, there is the accusation of wrong, and on the other side the angry resentment of such a charge. That was the situation with regard to slavery. The North thought that slavery was wrong. The South thought it was right; ordained of God, countenanced by the Bible, and confirmed by experience. Therefore, the South

fiercely resented the imputation against its moral conduct and conceptions. The enthusiastic reception given in the North to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852, and the salutation of John Brown after his raid at Harper's Ferry in October, 1859, as a prophet and a martyr, had an extraordinary repercussion in the South. Those who think that clever statesmanship, or a strong-handed policy on the part of the Federal Government, or more men like Alexander Stephens in the South, might have averted the conflict, fail to do justice to the moral element. In the letter which he wrote to Stephens after his speech in the Georgia Legislature, Lincoln, after assuring Stephens that the South need entertain no fears that his administration would interfere, directly or indirectly with slavery, added, "I suppose, however, that this does not meet the case. You think slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while we think it is wrong and ought to be restricted. That, I suppose, is the rub."

There was Lincoln at his best, with his marvelous insight into political questions. Yes, that was the "rub." The North thought slavery was wrong; the South thought it was right.

The other element which created so extraordinary a bitterness was the question of property. The people of the North gave not given sufficient weight to the fact that the institution which they thought to be wrong, and which most of them hoped and prayed would be abolished, was to the South its property. The South looked upon the North as determined to lay unlawful hands on its property. With these two elements present, morals and property, right and wrong, mine and thine, the conflict was not only irrepressible, but bound to be fierce and bitter.

If anyone imagines that the Civil War was brought on by a few irresponsible political firebrands, North and South, let him read two sermons preached after Lincoln's election by the two most eminent clergymen, North and South, Henry Ward Beecher, of Brooklyn, and Benjamin Morgan Palmer, of New Orleans. Both sermons were delivered on Thanksgiving Day, November 29, 1860. In his sermon Beecher, preaching against the spirit of compromise and saying that there were just three courses open to the people of the North—to go over to the South, to compromise principles, or to maintain principles upon

just and constitutional grounds and abide the issue,—cried out:

There is a divine impulsion in this. Those who resist and those who strive are carried along by a stream mightier than mere human volition. Whether men have acted well or ill, is not now the question, but simply this: on which side will you be found? Shall we then compromise? We are told that Satan appears under two forms—that when he has a good fair field, he goes out like a lion, roaring and seeking whom he may devour; but that when he can do nothing more in that way, he is a serpent, and sneaks in the grass. And so it is slavery open, bold, roaring and wrecking, or it is slavery sneaking in the grass and calling itself compromise. It is the same devil under another name.

At the same hour in his Presbyterian church at New Orleans, Dr. Palmer was identifying the cause of the North with anarchy and infidelity:

This demon, availing itself of the morbid and misdirected sympathies of men, has seated its high priest (Lincoln) upon the throne, clad in the black garments of discord and schism. . . . This spirit of atheism which knows no God Who tolerates evil, no Bible which sanctions law, and no conscience which can be bound by oaths and covenants, has selected us for its victims and slavery for its issue.

In spite of the voices which were speaking on every wind that blew, in spite of the political action taken by many of the Southern states, and in spite of his own sagacious understanding that the root of the difficulty, the "rub," as he put it, was the rightness or the wrongness of slavery, Abraham Lincoln took the oath of the President of the United States under a strange and powerful delusion. In the speeches which he delivered on his journey from Springfield to Washington in the chief cities of the North, he sought to create the impression that there was no real crisis confronting the nation. There was no occasion for excitement, and, as he said at Pittsburgh,



speaking on a hotel balcony on the banks of the Monongahela River, "the condition of affairs presented by our friends over the river" was no occasion for alarm.

To the same tune spoke Lincoln's chief adviser, and Secretary of State to be, William H. Seward. The man who won fame by declaring in his Rochester speech, 1858, that the "conflict was irrepressible," now was telling the country that secession was only "humbug," and that New York would go to the defense of Charleston in case that city were attacked by a foreign nation. Lincoln's delusion found beautiful expression in the closing sentences of his inaugural address, sentences which had been written for him by Seward, but touched and altered into life and beauty by Lincoln: "The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

It was not until Ward Lamon, Lincoln's special messenger, returned from Charleston with the sad intelligence that there was no love for the Union in South Carolina, and that that state was now as eager to leave the Union as it had once been to establish it and to enter it, that Lincoln began to have doubts about the power of "the mystic chords of memory" to solve the problem.

There was no lack of delusions, both North and South. The North could not take seriously the South's threats of secession, not even the accomplished fact of secession in several of the Southern states. The South had made so many threats about breaking up the Union that present words and present actions could not bring the North to consider that a serious attempt would be made to destroy the unity of the nation. The South, on the other hand, as its love for the Union waxed cold, was utterly unable to comprehend the power and depth of the North's veneration for the Union and the determination that it must be preserved.

If the North was under the delusion that the South would not actually go to war for the sake of secession, the South was under an even greater delusion as to the willingness of the North to go to war in behalf of the Union. The North was divided in sentiment, thought the South;

and not without reason. If the radical and Republican part of the North sought to coerce the South, they would be attacked themselves by Northern Democrats and others who differed with them. Talking with Jacob Cox of the Ohio Legislature, and afterwards commander of a division under McClellan, David Todd, a leading Ohio Democrat, and afterwards a loyal war governor of that state, said that the Republicans would find 200,000 Ohio Democrats in front of them if they attempted to cross the Ohio River. This delusion was warmly and generally entertained by the people of the South. "They had treasured all the extreme sayings of Northern Democrats about resisting the march of a Black Republican Army towards the South, and offering their dead bodies as obstructions to its progress."

Members of the Democratic National Committee of the Breckenridge-Baltimore Convention, talking with Benjamin Butler after the election of Lincoln, told him that the South would secede and form a government whose cornerstone would be slavery. There might be reunion with Pennsylvania and a few Western states, but New England would be left out forever. When Butler denounced this proposal, and said that the North would fight to prevent it, he was asked:

"Who will fight?"

"Well, I will for one, and I shall be joined by a great many."

"The North can't fight. We have friends enough at the North to prevent it."

"You have friends at the North, as long as you remain true to the Constitution. But let me tell you that the moment it is seen that you mean to overthrow the government, the North will be a unit against you. I can answer at least for Massachusetts. She is good for 10,000 men to march at once against armed secession."

"Massachusetts is not such a fool. If your state has 10,000 men to preserve the Union against Southern secession, she will have to fight twice 10,000 of her own citizens at home who will oppose the policy."

"No, sir; when we come from Massachusetts on this errand, we shall not leave a single traitor behind, unless he is hanging on a tree."

"Well, we shall see."

“You will see. I know something of the North, and a good deal about New England, where I was born and have lived for forty-two years. We are pretty quiet there now, because we don’t believe you mean to carry out your threat. We have heard the same story at every election these twenty years. Our people don’t believe you are in earnest. But let me tell you, as sure as you attempt to destroy this Union, the North will resist the attempt to its last man and its last dollar.”

There were delusions on both sides. But, as Sherman, observing the gathering clouds from his post at the military academy in far off Louisiana, wrote to his daughter, “When people believe a delusion, they believe it harder than a real fact; and these people in the South are going, for this delusion, to break up the government under which we live.”

At half past four on the morning of the 12th of April, 1861, a shell from one of Beauregard’s batteries on Sullivan’s Island described an arc in the morning sky and fell with a hiss into the sea close to the walls of Sumter. The delusions of the North and the delusions of the South were scattered by that shot.

All those who lived through the great day of the North’s resurrection, confess that what happened was beyond all efforts of the human mind to describe. It was a miracle; something supernatural; unlike anything that had happened before in the history of any nation on the face of the earth. Gruff Stanton, watching the progress of events and reporting to Buchanan in his retreat at Wheatland, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, wrote, “The uprising of the people of the United States to maintain and crush the Rebellion has been so grand, so mighty in every element, that I feel it a blessing to be alive and witness it.”

The manifestation of the soul of the nation amazed not only the South, but anti-slavery leaders in the North, who had feared that the North was morally incapable of what had now happened. Wendell Phillips, giving a welcome “hearty and hot” to the war said, “The only mistake I made was in supposing Massachusetts wholly choked with cotton dust and cankered with gold. The South thought our patience and willingness for peace were cowardice. Today shows the mistake.”

Where were now those thousands of Democrats, who, according to the firm expectation of the South and of many in the North, were going to stand in the way of Black Republicans who might march to keep the Southern states from breaking up the Union? Where were they? They were rushing by the thousands to the recruiting stations to answer Lincoln's call for troops. Yes; all delusions had been scattered.

On that April Friday in 1861, the Ohio Senate was in session in the state house at Columbus. In the midst of their deliberations a senator came in, from the lobby, and addressing the chairman exclaimed, "Mr. President, the telegraph announces that the Secessionists are bombarding Fort Sumter!" The announcement was followed by a solemn hush, and a deep silence. Then was heard the shrill voice of a woman, "Glory to God!" Everyone started, as if the foe were already within the gates. But it was the voice of the life-long friend of the slave; Abbie Kelly Foster, who, after long years of public agitation, had come to the conclusion that only through the shedding of blood could the freedom of the slave be won.

"Glory to God!" That was the shout that went up now from a united North. The long period of drifting, compromise, darkness, gloom and uncertainty was over. Men heard the echo of Beauregard's cannon, and feeling that the day had dawned, exclaimed, "Glory to God!"

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to have been young was very heaven."

## V

### OHIO AND WEST VIRGINIA

“People of Cincinnati wish Captain McClellan to be appointed to organize forces and take command at Cincinnati—William J. Flagg, S. F. Vinton, W. S. Groesbeck, L. Anderson, Rutherford B. Hayes, George E. Pugh.”

This was the telegram sent from Cincinnati to the authorities at Washington on April 21, 1861. On that Sabbath morning, Rutherford B. Hayes, then the city attorney, afterwards to command a regiment under McClellan at South Mountain, and in 1876 to be elected President of the United States, was preparing to start for church, when a man called at his house and asked him to attend a conference of prominent citizens at the Burnett House. This hotel had already been the scene of interesting and stirring events. It was there that Lincoln in 1854, at the time of the trial of the McCormick Reaper Case, heard Stanton, one of the counsel for the defendants, the John N. Manny Company, of Rockford, Illinois, say of him, “I will not associate with such a damned, gawky, long-armed ape as that. If I can’t have a man who is a gentleman in appearance associated with me in the case, I will abandon it.” Now leading citizens of Cincinnati gathered at the Burnett House to consider the crisis of the hour. So near the border, Cincinnati was exposed to attack, and everyone was anxious to secure an able leader for the forces to be organized. All agreed that the man who had the qualifications necessary was the President of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad, Captain George B. McClellan. One of those present read a dispatch to the effect that already another state had requested his services. It would not do to let him go elsewhere; Ohio and Cincinnati needed him, and the telegram was sent on to Washington.

Captain McClellan was a much wanted man. A telegram from New York said that the Governor of that state

desired his services. General Robert Patterson, whom McClellan had ridiculed as an officer in the Mexican War, wanted him as chief engineer in the Pennsylvania militia which he was organizing. Governor Curtin of Pennsylvania proffered him the command of the Pennsylvania Reserves, and McClellan had already informed his friend and future comrade, Major Fitz-John Porter, who was organizing Pennsylvania's forces at Harrisburg, that if he were offered the command of the Pennsylvania troops he would accept. This was natural, for he was a Philadelphian. McClellan evidently felt that there might be some question in the mind of Governor Curtin as to his sentiments in the present crisis, and he requested Porter to ask Scott to say a word to Curtin on his behalf. Porter was to tell Scott that he could count on McClellan's "loyalty to him and the dear old flag he has so long upheld."

Rumors had been abroad to the effect that McClellan was entertaining offers to enter the Confederate service. This was false. McClellan never hesitated for a moment in his allegiance to the Union. "At no period, either before or after the war broke out, did anyone suggest to me, either directly or indirectly, the idea of my taking part with the South. I always stated distinctly that, should the apprehended crisis arrive, I should stand by the Union and the general government."

McClellan entertained no delusions as to the inevitableness of the conflict, or the seriousness of it when it came. When he took the post of President of the Ohio and Mississippi Railroad and rented a house in Cincinnati, he had a clause inserted in the lease, releasing him from the obligation in the event of war. At the time when Lincoln and Seward were trying to assure the country that there was no crisis and no real danger, and that all would blow over in a short time, McClellan was convinced that the conflict was "irrepressible." Looking back after the war, McClellan wrote:

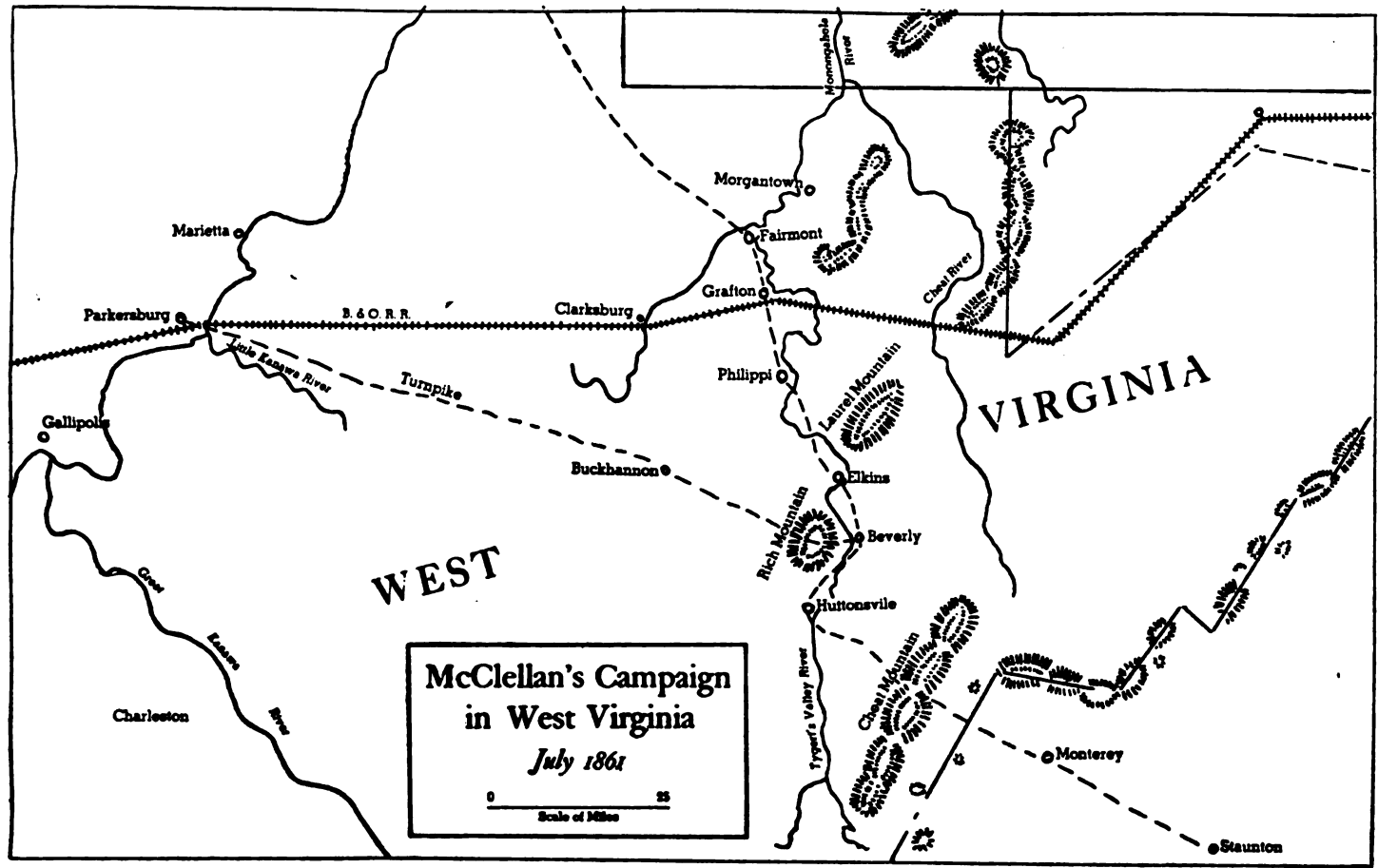
It is now easy to perceive how the war might have been avoided, if for two or three generations back all the men of both sections had been eminently wise, calm, unselfish, and patriotic. But with men as they are, it would be difficult indeed to indicate how

a permanent pacific solution could have been reached. It is no doubt true that events were precipitated, perhaps rendered inevitable, by the violent force of a comparatively small number of men on both sides of the line during the thirty years preceding the war. But it is the distinct lesson of history that this is always so, that the great crises in the world's history are induced by the words and actions of a few earnest or violent men who stir up the masses and induce them blindly to follow their lead, whether for good or for evil.

Everybody had confidence in the ability of McClellan. "He had," said Grant, "a way of inspiring you with the idea of immense capacity, if he would only have a chance." So thought Sherman also, for, himself not yet in the ranks, he said, "The Mississippi River is the hardest and most important task of the war, and I know of no one competent unless it be McClellan." It was not strange that Governor Dennison of Ohio was determined that Pennsylvania or New York should not secure the services of Captain McClellan.

On his way to Pennsylvania to consider the proposal from his native state, McClellan stopped over at Columbus to advise with Governor Dennison about the state of affairs in Cincinnati. It was for him a momentous stop-over. He was met at the station by Jacob B. Cox, afterwards a major-general. Cox thus sketches him, as he saw him that April morning come down the steps of the train: "He was rather under the medium height, but muscularly formed, with broad shoulders, and a well-poised head, active and graceful in motion. His whole appearance was quiet and modest, but when drawn out he showed no lack of confidence in himself. He was dressed in a plain traveling dress, and wore a narrow-rimmed soft felt hat."

Under the Ohio laws the command of the militia and volunteers had to be given to officers in the existing militia establishment. But at the governor's request, the Legislature passed a bill permitting the governor to appoint as major-general of the Ohio troops any resident of the state. As soon as the bill was passed, April 23, 1861, the governor signed it and commissioned Captain



**McClellan's Campaign  
in West Virginia**  
*July 1861*  
0 25  
Scale of Miles



McClellan as Major-General of the Ohio troops. The trip to Pennsylvania was abandoned.

Higher honors soon followed. On the third of May the government created the Military Department of the Ohio, consisting of Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and assigned McClellan to its command. Within a few days after this, the government made him a Major-General in the regular army; and within a few more days parts of western Pennsylvania and Virginia and the State of Missouri were added to his Department of the Ohio. Things had moved rapidly for McClellan.

McClellan soon discovered the military improvidence and unpreparedness of Ohio, typical of all the Northern states. As soon as he had accepted the command of the Ohio troops, he went over to the state arsenal with Cox to inspect the munitions there. What he found was a few boxes of war muskets, rusted and damaged, without belts or cartridge boxes; two or three six pounder brass pieces, and in a heap in one corner of the room a pile of mildewed harness. When the inspection was concluded, and they were leaving the building, McClellan stopped at the door, and looking back, remarked to Cox, "A fine stock of munitions on which to begin a great war."

How strangely the early war history of McClellan contrasts with that of another young officer who soon made his appearance at McClellan's Cincinnati headquarters. When the war broke out McClellan was receiving a salary of \$10,000 a year as the head of a railroad. Grant was getting \$800 a year as a clerk in his brothers' country store at Galena, Illinois. As soon as the flag was fired on at Sumter, three great states were asking for the services of Captain McClellan; and within a few weeks he found himself in quick succession Major-General of Ohio's militia, commander of a military department comprising four states and a portion of two others, and then a major-general in the regular army.

Meanwhile, where was Grant? He had said farewell to the stinking hides in the store room at Galena, and had been given a post by Illinois' war governor, Richard Yates, in the Adjutant-General's office, at Springfield, there his familiarity with military forms came in handy in filling out the requisitions for the new regiments which were being mustered into the service. When these

regiments had been brought into the field, Grant was again out of employment. On the 24th of May he wrote a letter to the War Department at Washington, in which he told them that having served for fifteen years in the regular army, and feeling it to be the duty of every one who had been educated at the Government's expense to offer his services for the support of the government, he desired respectfully to tender his services until the close of the war, "in such capacity as may be offered." "In view of my present age and length of service," he modestly says, "I feel myself competent to command a regiment, if the President, in his judgment, should see fit to intrust one to me. . . . A letter addressed to me at Springfield, Illinois, will reach me."

The letter never came. Grant confesses that he had some hesitation in suggesting rank as high as the colonelcy of a regiment, feeling doubtful whether he would be equal to the position. "But," he adds, "I had seen nearly every colonel who had been mustered in from the State of Illinois, and some from Indiana, and felt that if they could command a regiment properly, and with credit, I could also."\*

Having now nothing to do, Grant got permission from Governor Yates to visit his parents, then living in Covington, Kentucky. Covington is just across the Ohio from Cincinnati, and Grant took occasion to call at the headquarters of McClellan, whom he had known slightly at West Point and with whom he had served in the Mexican War. "I was in the hopes," says Grant, "that when he saw me, he would offer me a position on his staff." He called on two successive days, sitting unnoticed in McClellan's anteroom, but failed to see him on either day. Grant shared in the general expectation concerning McClellan. "I saw in him the man who was to pilot us through, and I wanted to be on his staff." The first day he called he was told the General was out and was asked to take a seat. After a long wait, he told the officer he would come the next day. The next day it was the same. "I sat and waited for two hours, watching the officers with their quills, and left. This is the whole story. McClellan never acknowledged my call, and, of course, after he knew I had been at his headquarters, I was bound to

\* Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 239-241.

await his acknowledgment. I was older, had ranked him in the army, and could not hang around his head-quarters watching the men with quills behind their ears. . . . McClellan had three times as many men with quills behind their ears as I had ever found necessary at the head-quarters of a much larger command." \*

In his account of Grant's application McClellan says:

I think it was during my absence on this very trip (to Indianapolis) that Grant came to Cincinnati to ask me, as an old acquaintance, to give him employment or a place on my staff. Marcy or Seth Williams saw him and told him that if he would await my return, doubtless I would do something for him; but before I got back, he was telegraphed that he could have a regiment, in Illinois, and at once returned thither, so that I did not see him. This was his good luck; for had I been there, I would no doubt have given him a place on my staff, and he would probably have remained with me and shared my fate.

The regiment to which Governor Yates had appointed Grant was the unruly 21st Illinois, which was almost in a state of mutiny. Grant telegraphed from Covington, "I accept the regiment, and will start immediately."

On a warm June day in 1861, a modest looking man of about forty years of age made his way out from Springfield, Illinois, to the fair grounds where the volunteer regiments were drilling. He had neither sword nor uniform, a stick in his hand and a red bandana about his sleeve being the only signs of rank. The unruly recruits were planning to make a fool of their new colonel, as they had with their old, and when Grant appeared in their midst, one of them, standing behind his back, began to spar and make passes at him. John A. Logan, afterwards a notable volunteer general, representing Governor Yates, made the soldiers an oration. At the close of his speech the men began to shout for Grant to make a speech. He did so, but with characteristic and ominous brevity, say-

\* John R. Young, *Around the World With General Grant*, II, 214-15. New York, American News Company, 1879.

ing, "Go to your quarters!" The unruly regiment had found its master.

What would have happened, if McClellan had been at his headquarters when Grant called to see him? Just what McClellan says. Grant would have been given a place on McClellan's staff and never have been heard of again. Instead of the conqueror of Donelson, Vicksburg, Chattanooga, and Appomattox, how narrowly Grant missed being just another man at McClellan's headquarters, "with a quill behind his ear"!

The western section of Virginia, that is, the part west of the Shenandoah Valley, differs sharply from the rest of the state in its physical features, and, in 1861, in the characteristics and sentiments of its inhabitants. The majority of the people were Scotch and Scotch-Irish, and in the whole territory there were only a few thousand slaves. When, on the 17th of April, 1861, Virginia seceded from the Union, popular meetings were held in the western section of the state, and on May 13th, delegates of twenty-five counties met in Wheeling to consider steps of independence and secession from Virginia. On June 19th, delegates of about forty counties between the Alleghenies and the Ohio, in session at Wheeling, adopted an ordinance creating a provisional state government. This new state was soon after admitted to the Union as the State of West Virginia. The name at first adopted, the State of Kanawha, would have been a happier one.

Both the North and the South made an effort to seize and hold this western part of Virginia. In the struggle which followed great advantage lay on the side of the Union forces. In the first place, this part of Virginia bordered on the populous and loyal sections of Ohio and Pennsylvania; and in the second place, the only access the Confederate forces had to it was by rough mountain roads and narrow mountain passes; whereas the Federal forces could penetrate it by the Ohio, Kanawha, and Monongahela rivers, and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. On the 14th of June Governor Letcher issued a proclamation to the people of northwestern Virginia, telling them that after everyone had had a fair chance to have his personal views represented, Virginia, by a majority of nearly 100,000, had seceded from the Union and united with the Confederacy. "You, as well as the

rest of the state," said the governor, "have cast your vote fairly, and the majority is against you. It is the duty of good citizens to yield to the will of the State. . . . By all the sacred ties of consanguinity, by the intermixtures of the blood of East and West, by common pater-nity, by friendships hallowed by a thousand cherished recollections and memories of the past, by the relics of the great men of other days, come to Virginia's banner and drive the invader from your soil."\* But the western Virginians did not come. The resounding eloquence of Governor Letcher fell on deaf ears. So now we have the interesting spectacle of secession from secession. War produces grand inconsistencies. The North denied the right of Virginia to secede from the Union, but encouraged western Virginia to secede from Virginia; whereas Virginia claimed the right to secede from the Union, but denied the right of her western counties to secede from her.

The contest which ensued for the mastery of western Virginia was in reality the first passage at arms in the long and notable duel between McClellan and Robert E. Lee, for Lee at that time had been commissioned Major-General of the Virginia forces. Lee did not espouse the cause of Virginia and the Confederacy with any degree of enthusiasm or with any great hope of success. On the contrary, there are occasional references which suggest a lack of conviction as to the correctness of his decision. For instance, writing to his wife about his son Custis, then a lieutenant in the Engineer Corps of the United States Army, Lee says: "Tell Custis he must consult his own judgment, reason, and conscience as to the course he may take. I do not wish him to be guided by my wishes or example. If I have done wrong, let him do better." Here Lee at least contemplates, and without distress, the possibility of a conscientious decision on the part of one of his sons which would have arrayed him in arms against his own father. After Virginia entered the Confederacy, April 17, 1861, Davis directed Lee to continue in command of the Virginia troops.

When General Robert Patterson, McClellan's old

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\* E. A. Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 61. New York, E. B. Treat and Company, 1867.

Mexican War commander, was operating in the vicinity of Williamsport, above Harper's Ferry, McClellan took it upon himself to telegraph General Winfield Scott at Washington, asking permission to join his forces with those of Patterson and "clear out the Shenandoah Valley." Scott sent back this curt reply: "The region beyond Piedmont is not within General McClellan's command. When his opinion is desired about matters there, it will be asked for." After this, McClellan says that he "very carefully abstained from unnecessary communication with Washington." The touchy old Lieutenant General, even at that time, began to show jealousy of the young officer who had served under him in Mexico. When McClellan made a request for artillery, with some suggestions as to how it should be organized, Scott was indignant, and said to Captain (afterwards Major-General) George Getty, through whom the request had come, "I know more about artillery than General McClellan does, and it is not for him to teach me."

McClellan made the movement into western Virginia upon his own initiative, but with the encouragement of Governor Dennison of Ohio. Although Scott and the Washington authorities had given McClellan no directions, they at least did not interfere with his operations. Among the first troops to enter Virginia was a brigade of Indiana volunteers, commanded by Colonel Lew Wallace, afterwards to take a not altogether glorious part in the battle of Shiloh, and at length to be known to the world as the author of "Ben Hur." Wallace captured Romney on the 13th of June, and this in turn compelled Johnston to evacuate Harper's Ferry. As his army moved into western Virginia, McClellan subjected the long suffering mountaineers to another broadside of proclamation. In this address McClellan said:

The general government has long enough endured the machinations of a few factious rebels in your midst. Armed traitors have in vain endeavored to deter you from expressing your loyalty at the polls. Having failed in this infamous attempt to deprive you of the exercise of your dearest rights, they now seek to inaugurate a reign of terror, and

thus force you to yield to their schemes and submit to the yoke of the traitorous conspiracy dignified by the name of the Southern Confederacy.

This proclamation, if not more eloquent than that of Governor Letcher, was, no doubt, more pleasing to the majority of the inhabitants. So far, so good. But now came another paragraph which did not make pleasant reading for many earnest people in the North, certainly not for the Abolitionists: "All your rights," said McClellan, "shall be religiously respected, notwithstanding all that has been said by the traitors to induce you to believe that our advent among you will be signalized by interference with your slaves. . . . Not only will we abstain from all such interference, but we will, on the contrary, with an iron hand crush any attempt at insurrection on their part."

The last sentence of McClellan's proclamation fell painfully on the ears of a large portion of the American people. A servile insurrection would have been a terrible thing, and few at the North would have advocated it. John Brown's raid sent a thrill of horror and alarm through all the slave states, and many of the Republican leaders of the North were quick to disavow such an attempt. One of the remarkable things in the history of the Civil War was the general, and sometimes touching and beautiful, loyalty of the southern Negroes to their old masters. At the same time, it must be remembered that there were hundreds of thousands of people in the North who regarded the enslavement of a race as infamous, and whose hearts beat in sympathy with the enslaved population. Should they rise and strike a blow for their own freedom, that would only be in keeping with the principles of freedom which had been advocated by the leaders of the anti-slavery movement for many a year. It was not strange, therefore, that many persons in the North felt that McClellan had gone out of his way to tell what his army would do in case the slaves rose to strike a blow for their liberty. If there was to be any talk about the "iron hand" crushing any attempt at insurrection, it ought, thought they, to be in connection with the insurrection, not of slaves, but of slaveholders, which at that time threatened the existence of the Republic. Of

great importance, therefore, is this proclamation in the career of McClellan. It marks the beginning of the difficult situation in which he was soon to find himself, difficult both for himself and for the government which he so ably served; that is, that the Commander General should be supposed, and not without reason, to hold views on slavery and on the method of putting down the southern revolt which differed sharply from those of a host of earnest patriots in the North who gave their treasure and their blood that slavery might pass and the nation endure.

For his invasion of West Virginia McClellan had at his disposal about 20,000 men. Opposed to him was General R. S. Garnett, an old officer of the regular army, who had served on the staff of Zachary Taylor in the Mexican War, and was conspicuous for gallantry in action at Monterey and Buena Vista. To resist McClellan, Garnett had about 5,000 troops. Of these, 1,300 were posted at Rich Mountain under Lieutenant Colonel Pegram, and the remainder under Garnett's immediate command on Laurel Mountain. The main line of communication between Virginia east of the Allegheny Mountains and western Virginia was by the Staunton and Parkersburg turnpike. At Beverly this road forks, one road leading northward to Crafton over Laurel Mountain, the other over Rich Mountain to Buckhannon. At these two gaps, where the roads went over the mountain, Garnett posted his troops and made what defense he could. When leaving Crafton to commence his campaign, McClellan issued an address to his soldiers. In this address he said, with a Napoleonic note: "Soldiers, I have heard that there was danger here. I have come to place myself at your head, and to share it with you. I fear now but one thing: that you will not find foemen worthy of your steel. I know that I can rely on you."

Beverly is a pretty little village in the lovely Tygart River Valley. There the turnpike from Staunton crosses the river by a covered bridge, and passing through broad and pleasant fields, commences the ascent of the mountains as it winds westward towards Buckhannon. Beverly was held by Confederate troops under Garnett, for in this beautiful valley friendly neighbors had suddenly turned aside from gathering the harvest and shepherding



their flocks to the more exciting pastime of hunting and killing one another. Barefoot boys who hung around the country stores of the little village where the Confederate soldiers were lolling on the steps, heard them singing,

“Old John Brown,  
He raised a ‘resurrection’;  
He thought the niggers would sustain him;  
But Old Governor Wise  
Put his specs upon his eyes,  
And sent him to the happy land of Canaan.”

Five miles from Beverly, where the turnpike winds over the summit of the lonely Rich Mountain, there stands a dilapidated frame house, with stone steps, and the long gallery characteristic of southern houses. Across the road is the barn, built of immense logs. The logs are pock-marked with bullets. This is the Hart farm. A more desolate and remote place it would be hard to find. Yet here it was that the soldiers of McClellan, coming up through the laurel and rhododendron on a warm July evening in 1861 fought the first important engagement of the war. The prize at stake was the possession of the turnpikes between eastern and western Virginia and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and with that, the mastery of western Virginia. When the fight was over, only twenty-five Union men had been killed and only sixty wounded. Yet this victory, won at so trifling a cost, stirred the nation.

Leaving part of his force under Morris to face Garnett at Laurel Mountain, McClellan with the rest of his troops moved against Pegram at Rich Mountain. David Hart, a mountain lad, conducted General W. S. Rosecrans by a circuitous path to his father's farm which was in the rear of Pegram. The plan was for Rosecrans to make his attack, and then McClellan would follow it up in force as soon as he heard the sound of the firing. By a blunder, the reveille was sounded in Rosecrans' camp at midnight, and Pegram was warned and put on the lookout. This compelled Rosecrans to take a longer route, and after ten hours' marching he emerged on the turnpike in the rear of Pegram. In the assault which followed, Pegram's men were scattered and several guns taken. By daybreak on

the 12th of July the Confederates had disappeared. The whole force might have been destroyed if McClellan had carried out the original plan and attacked when he heard the sound of Rosecrans' cannon. His explanation of his failure to attack was that the long continued cannonade made him think that Rosecrans had suffered a repulse. It was a prediction of a singular tendency to indecision, a trait which in the future will interfere with McClellan's success.

As soon as Garnett learned what had befallen Pegram, he abandoned his position at Laurel Mountain and fled to the northeast. At Carrick's Ford, on July 13, he halted with a few of his men to fight a rear guard action. Seeing that some of his troops were nervous under fire, Garnett, remarking that they needed an example of courage, stepped out in full view of the Federal troops, walking slowly back and forth, and soon fell an easy victim to sharpshooters. The same day Pegram surrendered what was left of his command, thirty officers and 535 men. The officer who came to McClellan with the flag of surrender from Pegram had been two days without food. McClellan gave him breakfast, and after breakfast a drink of whiskey. As the officer drained the flask, he said, "I thank you, General; I drink that I may never again be in rebellion against the general government."

Among the prisoners taken was a company made up of students of William and Mary College, Virginia, and commanded by their president. Many of them were mere boys, some of them badly wounded. Without waiting to consult his government, McClellan sent them home to their mothers. When the dead body of Garnett was brought to his headquarters, McClellan, looking upon the face of his old comrade and friend, exclaimed, "Poor Garnett, has it come to this!" Similar expressions were to fall from the lips of hundreds of old army officers, North and South, as they looked upon the dead bodies of West Point friends and classmates, or Mexican War comrades, who had fallen in fratricidal battle. Yes, alas, it *had* come to this.

With the possible exception of General Lee, the Union officers seem to have felt more keenly than the Confederate officers the sorrow and tragedy of a war which arrayed them against their old friends and comrades. This feeling appears frequently in the utterances or writings of

the Union commanders. None gave more eloquent expression to it than did McClellan in the speech he delivered in June, 1864, at the dedication of the monument at West Point to the soldiers and officers who had fallen in the war. In this oration McClellan called the roll of the chief officers of the old Army who had already fallen in the bloody contest. He referred to the empty space on the wall of the Doges Palace at Venice, where the portraits of those rulers are hung. The empty space, with only a black mass of canvass, instead of a portrait, is that which should have belonged to Marino Faliero, the Doge of Venice who, after great service to his country as a soldier and a statesman, was convicted of treason and put to death. "Oh," said McClellan, "that such a pall as that which replaces the portrait of Marino Faliero should conceal from history the names of those once our comrades who are now in arms against the flag under which we fought side by side in years gone by. But no veil can cover the anguish that fills our hearts when we recall the affection and respect we entertained towards men against whom it is now our duty to act in mortal combat."

The old Lieutenant General, Scott, was delighted when he heard of McClellan's success in western Virginia, and telegraphed him the following message:

The General-in-chief, and, what is more, the cabinet, including the President, are charmed with your activity, valor, and consequent success. We do not doubt that you will in due time sweep the rebels from West Virginia, but do not mean to precipitate you, as you are fast enough.

Before he made his attack, McClellan had written that his plan was to gain a victory by maneuvering rather than by fighting. "Say to the general, too, that I am trying to follow a lesson long ago learned from him; i.e., not to move until I know that everything is ready, and then to move with the utmost rapidity and energy." This message is an illuminating comment on McClellan's future military history, especially the first part of the message—"not to move until I know that everything is ready."

Never did so small an engagement have such a far-flung echo. McClellan himself prepared for this by a

somewhat bombastic proclamation to his army, but a proclamation which at once began to reverberate throughout the nation. In this he said:

Soldiers of the Army of the West: I am more than satisfied with you. You have annihilated two armies, commanded by educated and experienced soldiers intrenched in mountain fastnesses fortified at their leisure. You have taken five guns, twelve colors, fifteen hundred stand of arms, one thousand prisoners, including more than forty officers. . . . You have killed more than two hundred and fifty of the enemy. All this has been accomplished with the loss of twenty brave men killed, and sixty wounded on your part. Soldiers, I have confidence in you, and I trust you have learned to confide in me.

Those who knew McClellan well, and were familiar with his courteous and modest bearing, were puzzled at the grandiloquent dispatches and proclamations which fell from his pen, for they seemed out of keeping with the character of the quiet and genial man whom they had known. But whatever effect these dispatches had on McClellan's old friends, they rang with an enthusiastic echo in the ears of a victory-hungry public. The newspapers of the country heralded this minor skirmish in the Virginia mountains, where the total Union loss was eighty men, as if it had been the decisive battle of the war. The New York Herald of July 16th, after recounting his West Virginia victory, referred to McClellan as "the Napoleon of the present war."

Henceforth, those two names, McClellan and Napoleon, will be linked together. This was not altogether fortunate for McClellan, as Napoleonic action was expected of one who had been given Napoleon's name. Looking back over his career, McClellan recognized the handicap of a sudden, and, to a degree, unwarranted fame. "It would probably have been better for me personally had my promotion been delayed a year or more. Yet I do not know who could have organized the Army of the Potomac as I did; and I have the consolation of knowing that, during the war, I never sought any commission or duty, but simply did my

best in whatever position my superiors chose to place me."\*

A greater arena than the mountain passes of western Virginia now awaited McClellan. On July 22nd, the day after the Battle of Bull Run, a dispatch from the Adjutant-General was handed to McClellan at his headquarters at Beverly. This dispatch informed him that public affairs rendered his immediate presence in Washington necessary, and directed him to hand over his command to the next in rank and proceed to the Capital. McClellan turned over his command to General W. S. Rosecrans, and early the next morning mounted his horse and rode sixty miles over the mountains to the nearest railroad station, where he "took the cars" for Wheeling, on his way to Washington.

The mountain country, always lovely on a summer day, seemed all the fairer on that July day of 1861 to the youthful major-general as he rode his horse through the passes and forded the foaming streams, for he was sure the order to proceed to Washington meant a notable promotion. Perhaps it was a call to lead the armies of the imperiled nation! In a day of disappointment during the Mexican War, just after he missed his chance at Monterey, McClellan wrote in his Diary that he had hoped to be in hard fought battles and acquire a name and reputation, as a stepping stone "to a still greater eminence in some future and greater war." "I felt that if I could have a chance, I could do something." Now, as he rode his horse over the Virginia mountains, he realized that "a still greater eminence in the "future and greater war" was just at hand. The "chance" which, as "a humble subaltern" in Mexico he had prayed for, had come. The nation was ringing with his praise. Washington awaited with expectation the advent of the "Little Napoleon."

\* George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story*, 56. New York, C. L. Webster & Company, 1887.

**Book Two**  
**THE GRAND MARSHAL**

I  
THE MAN OF DESTINY

“My God! there will be no government by the time we get there.”

Two officers of the regular army, who had been stationed in the far west at the outbreak of the war, and were hurrying eastward to take part in the conflict, had reached a frontier post when the news came in of the battle of Bull Run, July 21, 1861. The dispatch was being read aloud to the officers and others who were present. After the first sentences, telling of the early Union successes in the battle, one of the officers exclaimed, “My God! it will be over before we get there.” But, as the reader continued, and came to the story of the rout and disaster, the officer exclaimed, “My God! there will be no government by the time we get there.”

After Bull Run there were thousands of people in the country who were fearful that the government would fall and the Union be dissolved. No event played such a part in the encouragement of the people and the restoration of their confidence that the nation would stand secure as the news that was flashed over the wires on the 23rd of July, that the victor of Rich Mountain, the “Little Napoleon,” was on his way to Washington to take command of the army. What effect this had on the country at large may be judged from the following expressions of joy and confidence. In an Indiana bank, the cashier, James M. Ray, exclaimed to Hugh McCulloch, the president of the bank, “Good news! good news! General McClellan has been ordered to Washington to take command of the army. There will be no more Bull Runs.” “You think, then,” said McCulloch, “that General McClellan is going to save the nation?” “Certainly I do,” answered Ray. “He is to do for the people of the United States what Moses did for the children of Israel. I have not a particle of doubt that he has been raised up for this very purpose.” \*

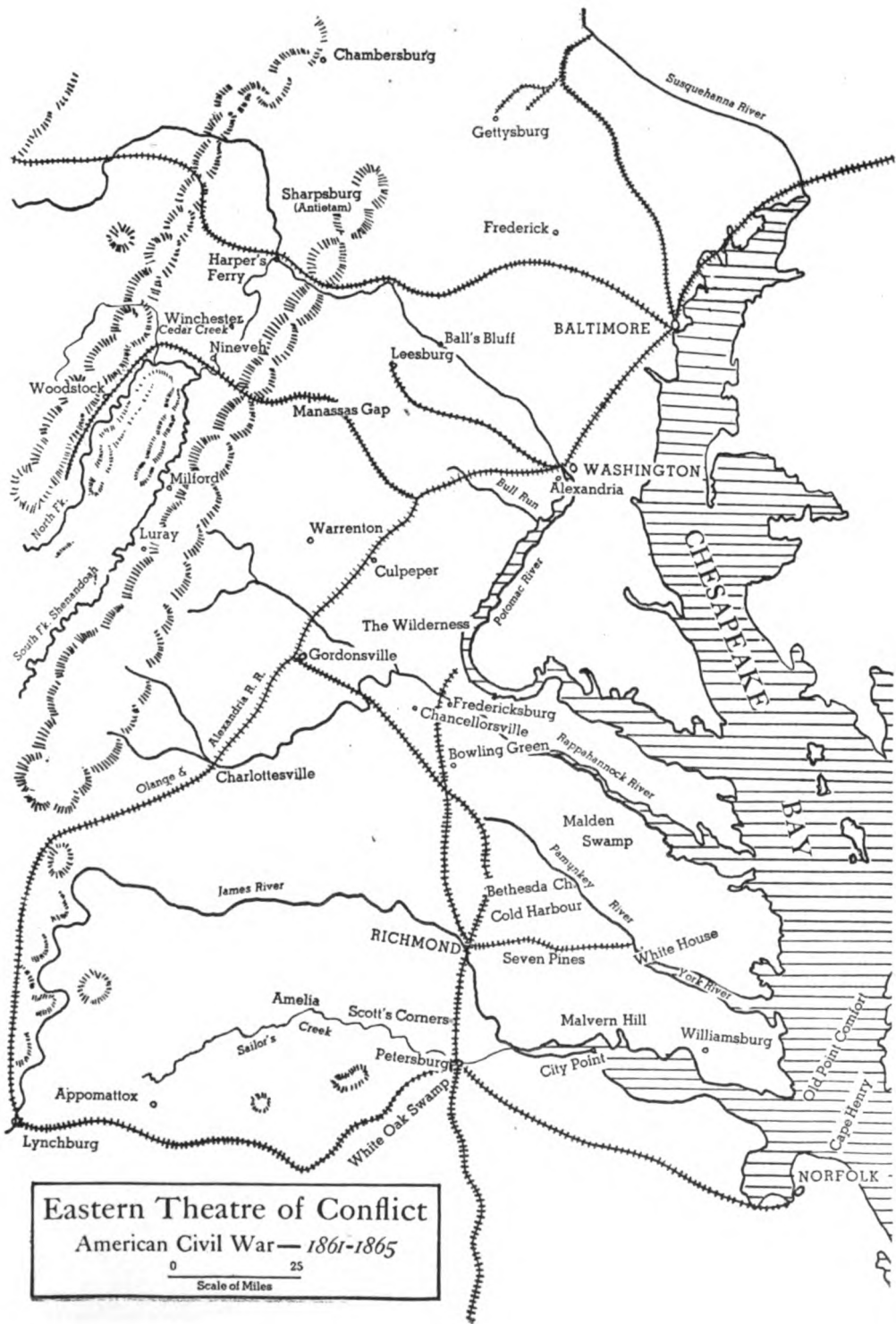
\* Hugh McCulloch, *Men and Measures of Half a Century*, 298. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1888.

A like expression of confidence came from the cloisters of Andover Theological Seminary in New England. Writing to McClellan, Professor E. P. Barrows said: "Though not supernaturally called, as was Joshua, to the solemn trust committed to you, you are called providentially, in so clear a way that you may well appropriate to yourself the divine promise made to him: 'I will be with thee; I will not fail thee nor forsake thee'; and if God be with our government and its army and navy, who can be against it? We of this region, whose heads are beginning to be silvered o'er with age, are all ready to stand by you with our treasure and our sons. I have two sons in the army, and have given them cheerfully to their country's cause."

On Sunday, July 28, the New York Herald expressed in an editorial what was the general feeling of both the country and the army, when it said: "McClellan! McClellan! There is a charm in this name which will yet work as a talisman upon the American heart. McClellan is now at the head of the Army of the Union."

McClellan reached Washington on the afternoon of Friday, July 26th. He called at once on the venerable chief of the army, Lieutenant General Scott, and the next morning reported to the Adjutant General, who instructed him to call upon the President. Lincoln received the young General with great cordiality, and informed him that he had placed him "in command of Washington and all the troops in its vicinity." He requested McClellan to return to the White House at one o'clock, to be present at a Cabinet meeting. McClellan then called again on General Scott, and after conversing with him for some time on military matters, casually remarked that he must take his leave, as the President desired him to attend a Cabinet meeting at one o'clock. Hearing this, the vain, aged, but patriotic Lieutenant General became indignant, declaring that it was improper that McClellan should receive an invitation to his exclusion, and insisted upon keeping him at his quarters until it was too late to attend the meeting. He then instructed him "to ride around the city immediately and send stragglers back to their regiments." Later in the day, McClellan presented his apologies to Lincoln, explaining to him the cause of his apparent lack of courtesy; at which, he says, Lincoln seemed "more amused than otherwise." This beginning of McClellan's relation-





ship with General Scott did not augur well for the future; and until the withdrawal of Scott from the scene in November, his vanity, jealousy, and incompetence were a serious handicap to McClellan in the work of reorganizing the army, or rather organizing the new army, for that was the stupendous task which fell to his hand.

## II

### SCOTT AND LEE

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the lieutenant general of the army, Winfield Scott, was almost an American institution. For half a century he had played a conspicuous part in the affairs of the nation. Battles such as Lundy's Lane, fought in the remote period of the War of 1812, and his successful campaign in Mexico, where, with an army of 12,000 men, he had conquered a nation in a succession of victories which seemed to revive the memories of Cortez, had won him extraordinary military renown, both at home and abroad. Scott was by no means unworthy of the high esteem in which he was held as a soldier and strategist. His Mexican campaign was a splendid piece of military thinking and execution. But at the beginning of the War between the States, Scott was seventy-five years of age, heavy and unwieldy in body, suffering from a painful affliction of the spine, and for a number of years had been unable to mount a horse. At his headquarters he had devised some kind of harness, with a pulley attached to the ceiling of the room, and when he wished to get up from his couch or chair, he would grasp the strap, pull his vast bulk into an upright position and swing his feet off the lounge to the floor. General Grant, who served under both Taylor and Scott in the Mexican War, makes an interesting comparison of the two generals. Taylor never wore a uniform if he could help it, and during a battle would sit sideways on his white horse viewing the proceedings. He talked little, but on paper could make his meaning very plain. He made little use of his staff, and saw things through his own eyes; whereas, Scott used the eyes of his staff. If "Rough and Ready" went about in undress, Scott put on all the uniform prescribed or allowed by law, and before a division was to be inspected by him, notices would be sent out so that the army would be under arms to salute him when he passed. "General Scott," said Grant,

“was precise in language, cultivated a style peculiarly his own; was proud of his rhetoric; not averse to speaking of himself, often in the third person, and he could bestow praise upon the person he was talking about without the least embarrassment.” \*

Old and infirm as he was, Scott, in contrast with many a younger officer or politician, had a clear conception of the problems of the war. In the dark and anxious months at the close of Buchanan’s administration, he had urged that measures be taken for the defense of the United States forts within the states which were threatening to secede. But in this he was balked, partly through the timidity of Buchanan, and partly through the influence of men in office whose sympathies were with the South. As far back as 1857, Scott had said to Sherman, just returned from California, “The country is on the verge of a terrible civil war.” When South Carolina threatened to secede from the Union in 1832, Scott was in command of the forces sent to Charleston by President Jackson, and his experience upon that occasion undoubtedly made him anxious as to the outcome of the new agitation. In October, 1860, he submitted to President Buchanan his “Views suggested by the imminent danger of a disruption of the Union by the secession of one or more of the Southern States.” In this document, sent to president-elect Lincoln also, Scott states his fear that if the Union is broken, an effort to restore it by military force would create a state of anarchy in the nation. As a lesser evil he suggested the formation of four new unions, the Eastern Northern States, the Old South, the Middle West, and the Far West. That so distinguished a man as Scott should have made this curious and preposterous suggestion, shows how much men’s confidence in the perpetuity of the Union had been shaken.

Before Lincoln came to Washington, Scott had entered into correspondence with him, telling him of his wish to co-operate with him in the effort to save the Union. In response to some complimentary words from the president-elect, Scott wrote, using the third person style to which Grant refers: “Lieutenant-General Scott is highly gratified with the favorable opinion entertained of him by the president-elect, as he learns through Senators

\* Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 139.

Baker and Cameron, also personal friends of General Scott, who is happy to reciprocate his highest respect and esteem. The president-elect may rely with confidence on General Scott's utmost exertions in the service of his country (the Union) both before and after the approaching inauguration." To this Lincoln replied, "Permit me to renew to you the assurance of my high appreciation of the many past services you have rendered the Union, and my deep gratification at this evidence of your present active exertions to maintain the integrity and the honor of the nation."

On the day of the inauguration Scott had troops posted throughout the city and was himself near a battery of guns placed in a commanding position. The day before, he had written to Senator Seward a letter dealing with the possible courses to be taken by the new President. He suggested four: 1. Adopt the conciliatory measure of the Crittenden Compromise. 2. Collect duties outside the ports of seceding states, or blockade them. 3. Conquer the seceding states by invading armies. 4. Say to the seceded states, "Wayward sisters, depart in peace." General Longstreet in his book, *Manassas to Appomattox*, says that if that policy had been followed, and the "wayward sisters" been permitted to go out in peace, it would have been but a short time before they would have come back into a stronger Union. But He who decrees the destinies of men and nations had determined otherwise, for not only was the Union to be preserved and restored, but the whole nation was to drink a cup of woe due to those by whom the offense of slavery had come.

General Scott's great wish to avoid a conflict in arms was due to the fact that he was one of the few men who foresaw the desolation and suffering such a war would bring in its train. In commenting on the third possible course for Lincoln to follow, that is, conquer the seceding states by invading armies, he said:

No doubt this might be done in two or three years by a young and able general—a Wolfe, a Desaix or a Hoche—with three hundred thousand disciplined men, estimating a third for garrisons, and the loss of a yet greater number by skirmishes, sieges, battles and Southern fevers. The destruction of life and property on the other side would be

frightful, however perfect the moral discipline of the invaders.

The conquest completed at the enormous waste of human life to the North and Northwest, with at least \$250,000,000 added thereto, and *cui bono?* Fifteen devastated provinces! not to be brought into harmony with their conquerors, but to be held for generations by heavy garrisons, at an expense quadruple the net duties or taxes which it would be possible to extort from them, followed by a protector or emperor.

However far the venerable general was from understanding the temper of the North, his was certainly a true, and, in contrast with most of his contemporaries, a rare, understanding of what civil war would mean.

Lincoln had not been in office long before he directed General Scott to send him a daily report of the military situation. Thus did the new pilot of the ship of state at the very beginning put himself into the closest relationship with the direction of the military efforts of the nation. Colonel A. K. McClure tells of a meeting which he and Governor A. G. Curtin of Pennsylvania had with Scott and Lincoln at the White House a few days after the firing on the flag at Sumter. McClure and Curtin found Scott waiting for them in the reception room. The punctilious old general, who could stand only with great discomfort, refused to be seated, because there were only two chairs in the room, and remained standing during the wait of half an hour.

McClure asked Scott if the Capital were not in danger. "No, sir," answered Scott. "No, sir; the Capital is not in danger." McClure then, and with some hesitation, for he had shared in the reverence with which the public regarded Scott, asked him how many men he had in Washington for its defense. Scott replied, "Fifteen hundred, sir; fifteen hundred men and two batteries." McClure ventured yet further and asked if Washington was a defensible city. With a shadow on his face, Scott answered, "No, sir; Washington is not a defensible city." He then pointed to a sloop of war which was visible in the distant Potomac and said, "You see that vessel?—a sloop of war, sir, a sloop of war." McClure reflected how a battery on

the heights of Arlington would make short work of the sloop of war, and was not reassured. He then asked the old warrior how many men Beauregard had under him at Charleston. In tremulous tones Scott replied, "General Beauregard commands more men at Charleston than I command on the continent east of the frontier." McClure then repeated his question, "General, is not Washington in great danger?" This roused Scott, who said with soldierly dignity and finality, "No, sir, the Capital can't be taken; the Capital can't be taken, sir."

During this dialogue between McClure and Scott, Lincoln remained a quiet listener, twirling his spectacles around his fingers. When Scott gave his final answer, Lincoln said to him, "It does seem to me, general, that if I were Beauregard I would take Washington." But this only brought from Scott, with renewed emphasis, his former assertion, "Mr. President, the Capital can't be taken, sir; it can't be taken." McClure and Curtin went away from the interview convinced that the "great Chief-tain of two wars and the worshipped Captain of the Age was in his dotage, and utterly unequal to the great duty of meeting the impending conflict."

However unfit he may have been for military execution and leadership, Scott grasped the problems of the war and comprehended the gigantic task that was before the nation. He was opposed to a direct attack through Virginia, and proposed instead the blockade of the ports of the South, while a large and well-drilled army advanced down the Mississippi Valley to New Orleans. This plan was outlined in a letter Scott wrote to McClellan, in which he said the Government proposed to raise twenty-five thousand more regular troops and sixty thousand volunteers for three years. After the autumnal frosts had killed the virus of malignant fevers in the river bottoms, the invading army of eighty thousand men, moving partly on the rivers and partly by land, was to proceed down the Mississippi and clear the Mississippi Valley to the Gulf. But the people of the North could not tolerate the thought of waiting until November before marching against the enemy, and heaped derision upon Scott's soldierly plan. The newspapers published cartoons showing a monster serpent, with General Scott's head, coiled round the cotton states, and called it "Scott's Anaconda." But wis-

dom was justified of her children. The ports of the South had to be blockaded, and a much larger army than even Scott had proposed had to fight its way to the Gulf ere the Father of Waters "flowed unvexed to the sea."

General Scott was a Virginian, and when that state seceded from the Union to whose glory it had made so notable a contribution, there were hopes in the South that Scott would do as Lee and other Virginians had done and throw in his lot with the Confederacy. Had not Virginia presented Scott with a handsomely engraved gold sword after his victories in the War of 1812? But they reckoned not with their man. Stephen A. Douglas, on his way to the West to arouse loyalty to the government, answered the questions about the loyalty of Scott by relating a conversation he had with the Chairman of the Committee of the Virginia Convention appointed to wait on Scott and offer him the command of the Virginia troops. Scott heard them patiently and then said, "I have served my country under the flag of the Union for more than fifty years, and as long as God permits me to live I will defend that flag with my sword, even if my own native state assails it." When the spokesman of the Committee intimated something about the honor and prestige which might be his if he led the troops of Virginia, Scott held up his hand in solemn protest and said, "Friend Robertson, go no farther. It is best that we part here before you compel me to resent a mortal insult."

Other Virginians who put their country above their state were Admiral Farragut and General Thomas. Robert E. Lee had been Scott's Chief of Staff in Mexico and Scott entertained the highest opinion of his ability. In his memorial address for Lee at Louisville, General John T. Preston said that long before the Civil War Scott had said to him that Lee was America's greatest living soldier, and added, "I tell you that if I were on my deathbed tomorrow, and the President of the United States should tell me that a great battle was to be fought for the liberty or slavery of the country, and he asked my judgment as to the ability of a commander, I would say with my dying breath, 'Let it be Robert E. Lee.'"

At the outbreak of the war, Francis P. Blair, Sr., with the authority of Lincoln, and Cameron, the Secretary of War, made a proposal to Lee to take command of the



Union Army. Lee declined the offer, telling Blair that, although opposed to secession and deprecating war, he could take no part in the invasion of the Southern States. The supposition has been that General Scott had commended Lee to Lincoln for high command. Some doubt, however, is cast upon this supposition by the history of an interview between Scott and Lee at the former's headquarters. On one of the first days of the war, Scott inquired of E. D. Townsend, afterwards the Adjutant-General of the Army, if he had seen or heard of Lee lately. Townsend replied that he was on leave and at his home at Arlington Heights. Then, said Scott, it is time he should show his hand, and if he remains loyal, should take an important command. At the suggestion of Townsend, a note was written to Lee asking him to call at Scott's headquarters. The next day, April 19, 1861, Lee came to call on Scott. When he made his appearance, Townsend rose to leave, but Scott motioned him to keep his seat. After some general remarks, Scott said, "These are times when every officer in the United States service should fully determine what course he will pursue, and frankly declare it. No one should continue in government employ without being actively engaged." There being no response from Lee, Scott continued: "Some of the Southern officers are resigning, possibly with the intention of taking part with their States. They make a fatal mistake. The contest may be long and severe, but eventually the issue must be in favor of the Union." After a pause, and noting that Lee showed no disposition to declare himself, Scott said, "I suppose you will go with the rest. If you purpose to resign, it is proper you should do so at once. Your present attitude is an equivocal one." Lee, speaking for the first time, then said: "General, the property belonging to my children, all they possess, lies in Virginia. They will be ruined if they do not go with their State. I cannot raise my hand against my children."

What Scott thought of this is shown by a conversation Lee had in the office of the Adjutant-General, Loring Thomas. Lee said to Thomas, "General Thomas, I am told you have said I was a traitor!" Thomas arose, and looking him in the eye, replied, "I have said so. Do you wish to know on what authority?" "Yes," said Lee. "Well,

on the authority of General Scott!" "There must be some mistake," replied Lee, and left the room.\*

This interview with Scott, painful as it was for Scott, must have been more so for Lee, who loved his old commander in Mexico and loved the Union and its flag.

How repugnant secession was to Lee can be judged from a letter he wrote to Martha Custis Williams, a cousin of his wife, as late as January 22, 1861. Lee was then stationed at Fort Mason, Texas, where he commanded the Department of Texas. "I am unable to realize that our people will destroy a government inaugurated by the blood & wisdom of our patriot fathers, that has given us peace & prosperity at home, power & security abroad, & under which we have acquired a colossal strength unequalled in the history of mankind. I wish to live under no other government, & there is no sacrifice I am not ready to make for the preservation of the Union save that of honour. If a disruption takes place, I shall go back in sorrow to my people & share the misery of my native state, and save in her defence there will be one soldier less in the world than now. I wish for no other flag than the 'Star-spangled banner,' & no other air than 'Hail Columbia.'"†

On April 20th, the day after his interview with Scott, Lee made the decision which was to exile him forever from his home at Arlington and turn its beautiful grounds into a graveyard for Union soldiers.‡ In the letter which he wrote to Scott, tendering his resignation, Lee said: "To no one, General, have I been so much indebted as to yourself for uniform kindness and consideration. I shall carry to the grave the most grateful recollections of your kind consideration and your name and fame will always be dear to me." Thus was Lee, against his own desire, flung out upon the bloody arena of the Civil War, an arena where fate had determined that he who was most unwilling to go to war and disrupt the Union should now be the chief leader and defender of the Confederacy.

\* Edward D. Townsend, *Anecdotes of the Civil War in the United States*, 29-32. New York, D. Appleton and Company, 1884.

† Robert E. Lee, "To Markie"; *The Letters of Robert E. Lee*, 58. Edited by Avery Craven, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1933.

‡ Townsend gives the 19th of April as the day of the interview with Scott. Lee in his letter to Scott refers to "My interview with you on the 18th instant."

As the first commander for the army which had been organized at Washington, Scott selected Irwin McDowell. McDowell, then forty-three years of age, had been trained in France and at West Point. He had won a captaincy at Buena Vista in the Mexican War, and was a favorite with Scott. Like Scott, McDowell protested against the premature campaign of First Bull Run. The impatient and excited people of the North were clamoring for action, and the *New York Tribune* was printing at the head of its columns the words, "On to Richmond! The rebel congress must not be allowed to meet there on the 20th of July. By that date, the place must be held by the national army." At a fateful council at the White House, on the 29th of June, the decision was made to attack the Confederate Army at Manassas. Military critics often neglect altogether the political significance of war. It is easy to say now that the government ought to have waited until a larger army had been organized; but there were political conditions which made the Bull Run campaign inevitable. The nation was restive. It felt that the national crisis was due in part to the vacillating and compromising policy of the government during Buchanan's administration. The election of Lincoln was a notification to the South and to the world that the Union must be preserved. But there were apprehensions lest the political victory should be lost by inactivity and further compromise. Spontaneously and irresistibly, the cry arose for an immediate demonstration of the power of the nation to vindicate its honor. A blow must be struck, and at once, else the nation would be humiliated.

During the hours of that eventful June Sabbath, when the battle of Bull Run was fought, Scott, dozing at his headquarters, was confident that the carefully worked out plans for the battle would bring victory. Lincoln worshipped at the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church in the forenoon, and at three in the afternoon, somewhat concerned, he went to Scott's headquarters and roused the old general out of his sleep. Scott assured him that all was going well and went back to sleep, while Lincoln went for a drive. At six in the evening, Seward, pale and haggard, came to the White House.

"Where is the President?"

"Gone to drive."

“Have you any late news?”

“Yes. McDowell has won a complete victory.”

“That is not true. The battle is lost. Find the President, and tell him to come immediately to General Scott’s.”

When Lincoln reached Scott’s headquarters, the following telegram was read to him: “General McDowell’s army in full retreat through Centreville. The day is lost. Save Washington and the remnants of this army.” In the evening, the newspaper correspondents and the senators and representatives who had flocked out to view the battle, began to arrive, and all through the night Lincoln listened to their accounts of what had transpired. When the full story of the debacle at the Bull Run Bridge was known, Scott reproached himself for having permitted the army to undertake the campaign. Losing control of himself, the old man exclaimed to Lincoln, “Sir, I am the greatest coward in America. I will prove it. I have fought this battle, sir, against my judgment. I think the President of the United States ought to remove me for doing it. As God is my judge, after my superiors had determined to fight it, I did all in my power to make the army efficient. I deserve removal because I did not stand up when my army was not in condition for fighting, and resist to the last.” Lincoln replied, “Your conversation seems to imply that I forced you to fight this battle?” Scott evaded Lincoln’s question, saying, “I have never served a President who has been kinder to me than you have been.”

After the rout of the Union Army at Bull Run, a new commander was necessary to restore the morale of the troops and revive the confidence of the country. The choice fell on the victor of the West Virginia mountains. McClellan, however, was not the first choice of Scott for commander-in-chief to succeed himself. Strange as it may seem, the officer whom he had in mind was Halleck, ten years older than McClellan, and accomplished in the theory of war, at least. Fortunately for the army and the country, the unhappy selection of Halleck was postponed for a year.

### III

#### SCOTT AND McCLELLAN

Misunderstandings between Scott and McClellan had arisen even before McClellan came to Washington. On July 22nd, the day after Bull Run, the Adjutant General had telegraphed McClellan at Beverly, Virginia, to proceed at once to Washington. Ignorant of this, Scott, on the same day, telegraphed McClellan, "Remain in your command instead of going to the valley of Shenandoah." Thus, from the very beginning, McClellan felt closer to the War Department and the President, and frequently went over Scott's head in his dealings with the government. Incensed at this, Scott even thought of a court martial, but feared "that a conflict of authority near the head of the army would be highly encouraging to the enemies and depressing to the friends of the Union." In a letter to the Secretary of War, October 4th, Scott says he will "try to hold out until the arrival of Major General Halleck, whose presence would give him increased confidence in the safety of the Union." \*

At the close of a meeting at General Scott's headquarters early in the fall, attended by Cameron, Seward, and other members of the government, Scott came up to McClellan, who was standing near the open door, and said to him, "You were called here by my advice. The times require vigilance and activity. I am not active and never shall be again. When I proposed that you should come here to aid, not supersede, me, you had my friendship and confidence. You still have my confidence." Evidently McClellan had lost Scott's friendship, although he still retained his confidence.

This absurd and unhappy relationship was permitted by Lincoln and the Secretary of War to continue for almost three months. On August 8th, McClellan wrote a letter to Scott, telling him that the Capital was in im-

\* Townsend, *Anecdotes of the Civil War*.

† Gideon Welles, *Diary, 1861-1864*, I, 242. Boston and New York, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911.

minent danger. Enraged at this, Scott complained to the Secretary of War and asked to be relieved. Lincoln then intervened and had McClellan write a note withdrawing his letter to Scott. But when he sought to have Scott withdraw his letter, the proud and hurt old general refused to do so, saying that McClellan had deliberately offended him, and that it would be "against the dignity of his years to be filing daily complaints against an ambitious junior."

On October 31st, the unhappy situation was ended by the resignation of Scott, who gave as a reason his dropsy, his vertigo, and his inability to mount a horse or walk any distance. That Scott was retained so long at the head of the army, is a tribute to Lincoln's kindness, but not to his military wisdom and administrative capacity. McClellan felt immediate relief when Scott retired, and when the President in his kindly fashion called on him on the night of the 1st of November, the day he assumed command, McClellan said to him, "It is a great relief, sir. I feel as if several tons were taken from my shoulders today." Lincoln and McClellan both did the handsome thing by Scott in announcing to the country and to the army his retirement. McClellan, as able with the pen as with the sword, in his graceful tribute to Scott said:

The army will unite with me in the feeling of regret that the weight of many years and the effect of increasing infirmities, contracted and intensified in his country's service, should just now remove from our head the great soldier of our nation—the hero who in his youth raised high the reputation of his country on the fields of Canada, which he hal- lowed with his blood; who in more mature years proved to the world that American skill and valor could repeat, if not eclipse, the exploits of Cortez in the land of the Montezumas . . . a warrior who scorned the selfish glories of the battle-field when his great abilities as a statesman could be employed more profitably for his country; a citizen who in his declining years has given to the world the most shining instance of loyalty in disregarding all ties of birth and clinging still to the cause of truth and honor.

Early on the morning of November 3, 1861, McClellan rose to escort the retiring lieutenant general to the depot. "It was pitch-dark and a pouring rain; but with most of my staff and a squadron of cavalry. . . . I saw the old man off. . . . The old man said that his sensations were very peculiar in leaving Washington and active life. . . . The sight of this morning was a lesson to me which I hope not soon to forget. I saw there the end of a long, active, and ambitious life, the end of the career of the first soldier of his nation; and it was a feeble old man scarce able to walk; hardly anyone there to see him off but his successor. Should I ever become vainglorious and ambitious, remind me of that spectacle." \*

One year and seven days after he saw General Scott off on that dark and wet morning, Major General McClellan, relieved of the command of the Army of the Potomac, came into the same Washington station on his way from the army in Virginia, stopping just long enough to catch the next train to Trenton, New Jersey, whither he had been directed to go, to "await further orders," which never came.

"Should I ever become vainglorious and ambitious, remind me of that spectacle." McClellan has been painted as both vainglorious and ambitious. But this charge is based largely upon sentiments to which he gave expression in the intimate correspondence with his wife. If what McClellan says in those letters is in self praise, it is a naive and inoffensive form of egotism, accompanied by expressions of humility, and with a sense of the heaviness of the responsibilities resting upon his shoulders.

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 173.

## IV

### HERO WORSHIP

The people love a hero, and McClellan found himself in the difficult and embarrassing position of being a hero without having done anything heroic. Everyone, from the President at the White House down to the private in the ranks, praised him and flattered him. The remarkable thing is not that McClellan, in some morbid moment due to the immense physical and mental strain under which he labored, now and then gave hasty expression to self esteem, but that he was not completely ruined by the waves of adulation that rolled over him from all parts of the country. Soon after his arrival in Washington, he wrote to his wife, "I find myself in a new and strange position here: President, Cabinet, General Scott, and all deferring to me. By some strange operation of magic I seem to have become the power of the land." After a visit to the Senate, he tells how he was overwhelmed with congratulations. "I suppose half a dozen of the oldest made the remark I am becoming so much used to: 'Why, how young you look, and yet an old soldier!' It seems to strike everybody that I am very young. All tell me that I am held responsible for the fate of the nation. . . . Who would have thought, when we were married, that I should so soon be called upon to save my country!" Of General Scott, McClellan writes, "Gen. Scott is the great obstacle. He will not comprehend the danger. . . . The people call upon me to save the country. I must save it, and cannot respect anything that is in the way."

McClellan did not exaggerate when he said that the people were calling upon him to "save the country." That was the very thing the people, and the politicians, too, were doing. For them he was the man for the crisis, the man of the hour. In a very brief period he had become the idol of the Army of the Potomac, and as such exerted a power and influence greater than anyone then in authority in the whole nation. Even at this early period,



men were whispering to him about a dictatorship. Some of them, no doubt, were unscrupulous intriguers and enemies of the administration. Others were sincere but anxious patriots, who saw no hope in the slow-moving and story-telling Lincoln. "I have no such aspiration," writes McClellan. "I would cheerfully take the dictatorship and agree to lay down my life when the country is saved." In view of all this, the enormous power in his hand, and the conviction of not a few that what the country needed was a dictator, and that he should be that dictator, it is strange that McClellan did not have even greater difficulties with the government than he did. Perhaps, in his quieter moments, he reflected that dictators thrive only on victories, and victories were still a thing of the future. This was the principle laid down by Lincoln in the fatherly letter he wrote to General Hooker, when he named him to the command of the Army of the Potomac after the bloody disaster on the heights of Fredericksburg.\*

With his military training, McClellan ought to have been prepared for inefficiency and interference in government circles. But the way in which he encountered it amazed him and shocked him. On October 2nd, he writes: "I am becoming daily more disgusted with this administration—perfectly sick of it. If I could with honor resign, I would quit the whole concern to-morrow." And after a meeting of the cabinet on October 10th he says: "I was obliged to attend a meeting of the cabinet at 8 p. m., and was bored and annoyed. There are some of the greatest geese in the cabinet I have ever seen—enough to tax the patience of Job."

Save for the soldiers in his army, who loved him and worshipped him, McClellan was soon a lonely man at Washington. "'Our George,'" he says, "the soldiers have taken it into their heads to call me. I ought to take good care of these men, for I believe they love me from the bottom of their hearts; I can see it in their faces when I pass among them." Then, thinking seriously of the task before him, he says: "I hope that I may succeed. I appreciate all the difficulties in my path: the impatience of the people, the venality and bad faith of the politicians, the gross neglect that has occurred in obtaining arms,

\* See page 315.

clothing, etc.; and, above all, I feel in my inmost soul how small is my ability in comparison with the gigantic dimensions of the task." \* After a long conference with the heads of the government, McClellan puts down this verdict concerning them: "It is sickening in the extreme, and makes me feel heavy at heart, when I see the weakness and unfitness of the poor beings who control the destinies of this great country."

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 172.

## V

### THE ORGANIZER OF VICTORY

“The war cannot be long,” wrote McClellan to the Philadelphia Council, which had presented him with a sword. But every principle which he adopted, and every course which he followed, was as if in preparation for a long and desperate war. He was determined that the folly and blunder of Bull Run should not be repeated, and as soon as he arrived in Washington began that great work of organizing the Army of the Potomac, a work which must be put side by side with the greatest victories of the war. It was the fine discipline and strong organization of that army which enabled it to survive so many reverses, and so many changes in commanders, until at length Grant took the well-tempered instrument McClellan had forged, and with it in his hand brought the war to a close. “Without McClellan, there could have been no Grant.”

At the rate of a regiment a day, the troops from the loyal states were pouring into the city. When McClellan took command on the 27th of July, 1861, the army was an undisciplined and ill-officered mass of men, “demoralized by defeat and ready to run at the first shot.” Into this chaos stepped the quiet, short, broad-shouldered McClellan, and said, “Let there be light.” The drunken officers and men, absent without leave from their regiments, disappeared from the streets, hotels, and bar rooms of Washington. One of the first things McClellan did was to bring into Washington 1,000 regular infantry from across the Potomac and employ them as a provost guard. Brigade commanders were given strict orders that the officers and soldiers were not to absent themselves from their camps without permission and without cause. The army soon learned that military service meant discipline and obedience, and that there was a real commander at its head. Always tender and affectionate towards the men, McClellan could deal with an iron hand

when he thought it for the good of the service. In some of the regiments mutiny was breaking out. The men of these regiments had enlisted for three years, "or for the war," but with an understanding that the war would be over in a few months, and that the phrase "three years" was just a precautionary measure. After Bull Run they felt they had been tricked.\*

One of these mutinous regiments was the 2nd Maine. McClellan sent sixty-three of them to serve out the rest of the war at hard labor in the Dry Tortugas. Another was the 79th New York Volunteers, the Highlanders. McClellan had a battalion and battery of Regulars drawn up in front of the mutinous regiment. Seeing that the Regulars meant business, the mutineers promptly submitted, and their ring leaders were placed in irons. McClellan took their colors away from them; but after two months of good conduct, the colors were returned to the regiment, which did good service during the war. Another regiment he ordered disarmed for breach of discipline. When Lincoln and McClellan reviewed the army on the occasion of the presentation of standards by Governor Curtin to General George A. McCall's corps, the famous Pennsylvania Reserves, they halted before the regiment which had been disarmed, and McClellan delivered to it a brief and inspiring address which was greeted with enthusiastic cheers by the erstwhile mutineers. The incident shows McClellan's rare powers as an organizer and commander, one who could not only train raw troops, but who could win loyalty and enthusiasm from mutinous regiments.

The river of excitement and enthusiasm which was flowing through the North, floated many strange organizations and strange devices and inventions to Washington, where McClellan had to give them consideration, accept that which was good, and reject that which was bad. There was a strange craze for curiously named and curiously uniformed regiments. There were Zouave regiments without number, for the valor of these French troops in Algiers struck a responsive chord in the United States, and the Zouave regiments with their wide red pantaloons were everywhere conspicuous. Another regi-

\* Fred A. Shannon, *Organisation and Administration of the Union Army*, I, 180. Cleveland, Arthur H. Clark Company, 1928.

ment was made up of blacksmiths; another of six footers; and another was to be composed of men whose name was Smith. Suggestions were made for a temperance regiment also.

In addition to his many responsibilities, McClellan had to consider the propositions of inventors. Poison gas was no discovery of the World War. Indeed, it goes clear back to the Middle Ages, for the Moslems used it against the Crusaders at the siege of Acre, 1291. McClellan was opposed to the use of such means of torture and destruction, and in answer to the inventor of an incendiary shell, from which a liquid stream of fire was guaranteed to "spread most fearfully in all directions" said, "Such means of destruction are hardly within the category of those recognized in civilized warfare. Kindred inventions have been made in Europe; but I do not think they have been employed in modern times. I could not recommend their employment until we exhaust the ordinary means of warfare." \*

It is a singular thing that despite the inventive genius of the American people, no great contribution, if we except the *Monitor* and iron-clad vessels, was made during the Civil War to the enginery of destruction or the means of defense. When General D. H. Butterfield was Hooker's Chief of Staff, Lincoln turned over to him a gaunt, haggard individual who had been haunting him for days with a request to display a new and terrible weapon of destruction. This individual appeared at Butterfield's headquarters carrying a huge case, nine feet long. Opening the case, he brought out an enormous knife, looking like a scythe. He explained to Butterfield that the knife was to be fastened to the saddle of the horse. In a cavalry charge the formidable looking blade would release itself, and sweeping round in a circle, would cut off every head within range. Butterfield inquired about the head of the horse, and, being assured by the inventor that neither horse nor rider would suffer from the revolutions of the dreadful blade, informed him that on the morrow the cavalry was going to make an attack on the enemy's outpost, and invited him to attach his weapon to one of the cavalry horses and join in the charge. If the weapon proved to be successful, Butter-

\* Shannon, *Organisation and Administration of the Union Army*, I, 144.

field promised to recommend it to the War Department. The inventor did not show up.\*

"I do not know," wrote McClellan, in quiet appraisal of his work of training the Army of the Potomac, "that any one worthy of attention has questioned the manner in which was performed the task of converting the unorganized, defeated, and dispirited remains of McDowell's Bull Run command into the Army of the Potomac—an army which so long bore on its bayonets the life and honor of the nation."† No one "worthy of attention" has ever questioned the way in which McClellan organized that army. Some thought that he took too long about it; but, in view of recent military experience, the general opinion now is that he did his work in a remarkably brief period. Some who would grudge him any credit whatever have said that the credit for the fine organization of the Army of the Potomac should go to McClellan's staff officers, notably Seth Williams; but, even so, it was McClellan who chose those officers. For Chief of Staff, an office which our army, up to that time, had never known, McClellan selected his father-in-law, General Marcy. Under ordinary circumstances, this would have been a dangerous appointment; but McClellan seems not to have suffered by it in hostile criticism, nor did he ever regret his choice.

In striking contrast to the free hand given General Pershing in his command and organization of the American Army during the World War, McClellan frequently had officers who were personally uncongenial, or incompetent, forced upon him. One such officer was J. S. Wadsworth, whom Lincoln made the commander of the Washington garrison when McClellan was starting on the Peninsula Campaign. McClellan was willing to give up one of his best division commanders, W. B. Franklin, for the post. But it was given to Wadsworth on the ground that it was necessary, for political reasons, "to conciliate the agricultural interests of New York." Wadsworth, indeed, played a gallant part in the Civil War, until the day he died beneath a tree in Grant's Wilderness Campaign. McClellan's objection to him was not personal, but that

\* Julia L. Butterfield, *Memorial Biography. A Biographical Memorial of General Daniel Butterfield.*

† *McClellan's Own Story*, 198.



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

AMBROSE E. BURNSIDE

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he was not a trained soldier. Another instance of how McClellan had officers thrust upon him, was the appointment by Lincoln without consulting him of David Hunter to be a major-general. A few days afterwards, Lincoln explained to McClellan that he had made this appointment "because the people of Illinois seemed to want somebody to be a sort of father to them, and he thought Hunter would answer that purpose."

McClellan was happy in the selection of his chief of artillery, Colonel H. J. Hunt, who served in this capacity throughout the war, and retired in 1882 with no higher rank than that of colonel. McClellan says of him, "He is one of the most marked instances within my knowledge of the highest merit and services passed over unacknowledged and unrewarded." His quartermaster, General Rufus Ingalls, remained in his post after McClellan left the army, and did splendid service under all its commanders. Of Ingalls Grant said: "We had a good many men in the war who were buried in the staff and did not rise. There is Ingalls, for instance. Ingalls remained quartermaster of the army of the Potomac during all commands, and did a great work. Yet you never heard his name mentioned as a general. Ingalls in command of troops would, in my opinion, have become a great and famous general. If the command of the army of the Potomac had ever become vacant, I would have given it to Ingalls."\*

The Union Army attracted many interesting and picturesque foreigners. Blencker's division was most notable for its foreign color. It had a Garibaldi regiment with a Hungarian colonel, d'Utassy, who had been a circus rider, and ended his career in the Albany Penitentiary. There were Zouaves from Algiers, men of the French Foreign Legion, Cossacks, Sepoys, Turks, Croats and Swiss. Many of these officers had left their own armies for those armies' good. McClellan felt that the comparative failure of many of the German regiments in the Civil War was due to the character of their officers.

Among the interesting personalities on McClellan's staff were two brothers, the Princes of the House of Orleans, the Comte de Paris and the Duc de Chartres. They were accompanied by their uncle, the Prince de

\* Young, *Around the World With General Grant*, II, 301.



Joinville, and when they arrived in Washington were assigned to McClellan's headquarters as aides-de-camp, being permitted to serve without taking the oath of allegiance and without pay. On the army register their names appeared as Louis Philippe d'Orleans and Robert d'Orleans, with the rank of captain. The Prince de Joinville had no rank, and was simply a guest at McClellan's headquarters. The two Princes quickly won the confidence and high regard of McClellan and his officers. No exception was made in their case, and they were called upon to perform just the same duties as other members of the staff. Their hearts, too, were with the cause of the North. Wherever the two Princes went, they were followed by a captain of French infantry, an enormous man, who never could be persuaded to mount a horse and made all the marches on foot. The two Princes and their uncle left the army at the end of the Peninsula Campaign, partly because the French expedition to back up Maximilian in Mexico had strained the relations between France and the United States.\* On one occasion Lincoln went with his secretary, John Hay, to McClellan's headquarters. A tall awkward youth, the Comte de Paris met them and went upstairs to call McClellan. While he was waiting for McClellan to come down, Lincoln said to Hay, "One doesn't like to make a messenger of the King of France, as that youth, the Comte de Paris, would be, if his family had kept the throne." †

Day and night, McClellan was in the saddle, directing the placing of the recruits and the erection of the fortifications which rendered Washington impregnable, even during the panic after Second Bull Run, and when General Jubal Early threatened the city in 1864. Day and night, the troops were becoming familiar with the fine soldierly figure of the graceful horseman who rode quietly through their camps. They soon were convinced that McClellan was a general who loved his men and took every effort to make them comfortable. A letter from a Pennsylvania soldier in the army relates an incident which reflects the opinion of the soldiers about McClellan and his care for their comfort:

\* Robert V. Johnson and others, ed., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, 55, 184. New York, The Century Company, 1887.

† John Hay, *Diary*, October 10, 1861. Edited by Mrs. Hay, Washington, privately printed, 1908.

It seems he in citizen's clothes was going through the camp of a New York Regiment and saw the Quartermaster delivering some pork which was utterly unfit to be eaten. He told the Quartermaster so, and received a very rough answer. Turning to some soldiers, he asked them about their food. They said it was miserable, and showed some they had to eat. He again went to the Quartermaster and declared it was disgraceful to serve out such stuff. He was told to mind his own business. Drawing himself up, he said, 'I am George B. McClellan. You are discharged. I give you till this evening to leave.' So, you see, we soldiers know he does what he can for our comfort.

As the autumn faded into winter, the mass of men which the loyal states had poured into Washington began to assume the proportions of a disciplined host. The mob had become an army, a living soul. By his frequent visits to the different camps, by his well-chosen proclamations, by his unfeigned and painstaking interest in the well-being and comfort of the troops, and by firmness and severity, when the iron hand was necessary, McClellan made himself loved and respected as few commanders have been in the history of war. The army was his; he could do with it what he pleased. In every regiment, battery, squadron, brigade, battalion, and division, it reflected his personality. He loved his soldiers and was loved by them.

## VI

### THE "BIG LITTLE" MAN

What of the physical tabernacle of this general to whom a nation was looking as its deliverer, and upon whom fell at one and the same time the stupendous task of organizing the nation's chief army and directing the organization of other armies and their operations? His portraits show him as a man short in stature, compactly built, graceful in the lines and carriage of his body. He had blue eyes, sandy hair, light complexion, and was sometimes taken for a lieutenant of a company. His shoulders were broad; the western troops called him "a big, little man." All those who put down their impressions of McClellan speak of the splendid appearance he made on horseback. Ask any survivor of the Army of the Potomac about McClellan, and the first thing he will say is, "He was a wonderful man on horseback." Colonel A. K. McClure, who saw McClellan when he reviewed the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps with President Lincoln, speaks of his superb posture in the saddle, and how on horseback he looked to be a taller man than Lincoln did on the ground. Another gives us this miniature: "He was the beau ideal of a dragoon leader. His legs, like those of General Taylor, were short in proportion to his body, so that he appeared to be small in stature when on foot, but, when mounted on his favorite charger, he looked as tall, if not taller, than those around him. He possessed a good head, firmly planted on a sturdy neck, upon ample shoulders. He wore his hair cut short, and his cheeks and massive jaw-bones shaven clean, while a well-shapen moustache gave dignity to his features. His complexion was ruddy, his eyes blue, and the lines of his mouth indicated good-humor and firmness in about equal proportions. His dress was plain, with the least possible insignia of rank." \*

\* Ben: Perley Poore, *Perley's Reminiscences of Sixty Years in the National Metropolis*, II, 89-90. Philadelphia, Hubbard Brothers, 1886.

Although the seeds of disease contracted in the Mexican War, where he suffered from fever, were never altogether eradicated from his system, McClellan at his prime, during the period of his command of the army, was a man of unusual physical strength. He could bend a quarter of a dollar over the end of his thumb by the pressure of the first and second finger of his hand. One evening, McClellan, a civilian friend, and a distinguished officer, who weighed over two hundred and fifty pounds, were chatting together. The civilian said to the officer, "They tell me, general, that McClellan can throw you over his head." "So they say," was the somewhat skeptical response. McClellan thereupon sprang from his chair, and walking across the room, stretched out his hands to seize the gigantic officer. "Let me alone, general!" exclaimed the officer, "let me alone! He can do it—he has done it. He can toss me in his arms like a baby."\*

Perhaps the best portrait of McClellan is that painted by a master in such matters, Nathaniel Hawthorne. Hawthorne paid a visit to the army in the fall of 1861, and this is McClellan as Hawthorne saw him:

His profile would make a more effective likeness than the full face, which, however, is much better in the real man than in any photograph that I have seen. His forehead is not remarkably large, but comes forward at the eyebrows; it is not the brow nor countenance of a prominently intellectual man (not a natural student, I mean, or abstract thinker), but of one whose office it is to handle things practically and to bring about tangible results. His face looked capable of being very stern, but wore, in its repose, when I saw it, an aspect pleasant and dignified; it is not, in its character, an American face, nor an English one. . . .

After we had had sufficient time to peruse the man (so far as it could be done with one pair of very attentive eyes), the General rode off, followed by his cavalcade, and was lost to sight among the troops. They received him with loud shouts, by

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\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 20.

the eager uproar of which—now near, now in the centre, now on the outskirts of the division, and now sweeping back towards us in a great volume of sound—we could trace his progress through the ranks. If he is a coward, or a traitor, or a humbug, or anything less than a brave, true, and able man, that mass of intelligent soldiers, whose lives and honor he had in charge, were utterly deceived, and so was this present writer; for they believed in him, and so did I; and had I stood in the ranks, I should have shouted with the lustiest of them.\*

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\* Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Chiefly About War Matters," in *Tales, Sketches and Other Papers*, II, 323-324. Boston, Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1891.

## VII

### BALL'S BLUFF AND THE FIRST DOUBTS

Under the trees at Ball's Bluff, where the Potomac makes pleasing music as it flows past the willows, there are a few lonely graves. They are the graves of soldiers who fell there on October 21, 1861. These graves recall one of the most important episodes in the early part of the war. Out of Ball's Bluff came the Committee on the Conduct of the War. It was to play a vital part in McClellan's destiny. It was after Ball's Bluff, too, that McClellan began to hesitate. The Comte de Paris, who was on his staff, says of him, "A fatal hesitation took possession of McClellan. If he did not then decide to postpone the campaign till the following spring, his conduct of affairs was such as soon to leave him no alternative, but recourse to this lamentable necessity."

This first engagement in which the troops of McClellan's newly organized army took part was not of a nature to inspire the country with great confidence in the leader of the army. It was learned that Confederate troops were operating in the neighborhood of Leesburg, on the Virginia side of the Potomac. McClellan told General Stone, who was in command at that point, to make a feint of crossing the river in force and start a reconnoitering party towards Leesburg. Instead of making only a feint, Stone crossed in considerable force, and in the engagement of October 21st, with a river at their back and superior numbers in front of them, the Union troops were defeated, and Colonel Edward Baker, who was in immediate command, was killed. Baker, a close friend of Lincoln, a hero of the Mexican War, and a man of great eloquence, had left the Senate to organize a regiment, most of the troops of which were from Pennsylvania, but which was called the California Regiment because Baker was from California. His death stirred the country and was a deep personal sorrow to Lincoln. In talking over this Ball's Bluff disaster, and the death of Colonel Baker,

McClellan said to Lincoln, "There is many a good fellow who wears the shoulder straps going under the sod before this thing is over. There is no loss too great to be repaired. If I should get knocked on the head, Mr. President, you will put another man immediately in my shoes."\*

After three months of unprecedented adulation and popularity, the Ball's Bluff repulse raised the first question mark as to McClellan's fighting ability. Although he disclaimed responsibility for the movement, it was done under his general supervision and command. John Hay, present at an interview between Lincoln and McClellan at the time of the Ball's Bluff battle, tells of his first feeling of skepticism as to McClellan's ability, and says that during the conversation it was "painfully evident that he had no plan, or the slightest idea of what Stone was about." Yet, with the country at large, Ball's Bluff did no serious damage to the prestige and popularity of McClellan, for it was soon after this, on November 1st, that Lincoln named him as Commander-in-Chief of all the Union Armies. This minor reverse was, however, an occasion of great encouragement to the South. In his congratulatory order of October 23rd, General Beauregard declared that the result of the action proved that no superiority of numbers could avail against Southern valor, when assisted by the "manifest aid of the God of battles."

Ball's Bluff had a repercussion in Congress which was to affect seriously the relationship of McClellan to his government. When Congress convened in December, 1861, Roscoe Conkling offered a resolution in the House requesting the Secretary of War to report to the House "whether any, and if any, what, measures have been taken to ascertain who is responsible for the disastrous movement of our troops at Ball's Bluff." A few days later, a resolution was offered in the Senate calling for the appointment of a joint committee of three members of the Senate and four of the House of Representatives to inquire into the conduct of the present war, with power to send for persons and papers. Chandler, of Michigan, declared it was the duty of the Senate to ascertain "who was responsible for sending 1,800 men across the Poto-

\* Hay, *Diary*, I, 46.

mac in two old scows without any means of retreat." The fiery Benjamin F. Wade, of Ohio, became Chairman of this powerful Committee on the Conduct of the War. Wade represented the Radical Republican element, and his appointment boded ill for McClellan. Armed with a rifle, Wade had gone out to witness the battle of Bull Run with Chandler of Michigan and other friends. They were caught in the general rout and carried as far back as Fairfax Courthouse. There Wade got out of his carriage, and brandishing his rifle, threw the party of men with him across the road, exclaiming as he did so, "Boys, we'll stop this damned runaway!" This he did in that particular locality at least until the troops of a New York regiment relieved him.\* Wade was the sort of man who was ready to stop, either with rifle or with voice, any retreat on the part of the government or the army.

In response to the resolution of the House concerning Ball's Bluff, the Secretary of War, Cameron, answered that General McClellan was of the opinion that an inquiry on the subject of the resolution would at this time be injurious to the public service. Conkling, author of the first resolution, immediately moved another, expressing the dissatisfaction of the House, and asking the secretary to return further answer. Nothing could show more clearly the cleavage between Union men on the subject of the war and its relation to slavery than the debate in the House on Conkling's resolution. Crittenden, of Kentucky, opposing the resolution, sarcastically inquired, and to the point, "If we are to find fault with every movement, why not appoint a committee of the House to attend the Commander-in-Chief? Why not send them with your army, so that the power of Congress may be felt in battle, as well as in the halls of legislation?"

Owen Lovejoy, of Illinois, voiced the sentiments of the radical anti-slavery Republican group. This Lovejoy was a brother of the young Presbyterian minister, Elijah Lovejoy, who was killed by an anti-Abolitionist mob at Alton, Illinois, in 1837. Kneeling upon his brother's grave on the banks of the Mississippi, Owen Lovejoy had sworn eternal enmity to slavery. His vow was faithfully and powerfully kept. Speaking in the House on Conk-

\* Albert G. Riddle, *The Life of Benjamin Wade*, 245. Cleveland, W. W. Williams, 1886.



ling's resolution, Lovejoy declared, "I believe before God that the reason why we have had Bull Run and Ball's Bluff, and other defeats and disasters, is that God in His providence designs to arraign us before this great question of human freedom and make us take the right position." Slavery, he said, was the Jonah on the national ship. When Jonah was cast forth into the sea, the sea ceased from raging. So it would be with the nation if it cast slavery overboard. Wickliffe, of Kentucky, retorted that they should "preserve the Union, and slavery under it," and that the real remedy was to "throw the Abolitionists overboard." Thaddeus Stevens, destined to become the most powerful figure in Congress, protested against the doctrine of non-interference on the part of Congress with the army, saying, "Has it come to this, that Congress is a mere automaton to register the decrees of another power?" This was an ominous debate. The echoes of it were to be heard throughout the war.

## VIII

### A SICK GENERAL AND A PERPLEXED PRESIDENT

In the middle of December, 1861, the cords of McClellan's vitality snapped under the tremendous burden he was carrying, and he was prostrated for three weeks with typhoid fever. His sickness was not so serious as was supposed, and he seems never to have lost his grip upon military affairs; but his illness aroused great anxiety in the mind of Lincoln and the whole country. McClellan says, "My malady was supposed to be more serious than it really was; for, although very weak and ill, my strong constitution enabled me to retain a clear intellect during the most trying part of the illness, so that I daily transacted business and gave the necessary orders, never for a moment abandoning the direction of affairs. As is often the case with such diseases, I sometimes passed days and nights without sleeping, and it more than once happened that the President called while I was asleep after such intervals of wakefulness, and, being denied admittance, his anxiety induced him to think that my disease was very acute and would terminate fatally."\*

The great mistake McClellan made at this time of general concern about his illness was to keep Lincoln uninformed as to his plans. He did, however, consult freely with the chiefs of the staff departments, "each of whom knew the exact condition of affairs in his own department, and could give to any properly authorized person all necessary explanations." But the most "properly authorized person" of all, the President of the nation, seems to have been left in the dark. In his anxiety, Lincoln went to call on the Quartermaster General of the Army, General M. C. Meigs. Sitting down before the open fire in Meigs' office, Lincoln, in great perturbation of mind, said to Meigs, "General, what shall I do? The people are impatient. Chase has no money, and he tells me he can

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 155.

raise no more. The General of the army has typhoid fever. The bottom is out of the tub. What shall I do?" Meigs urged the President to call a Council of War and discuss the military affairs. Acting on this suggestion, Lincoln held a conference at the White House the evening of that same day, January 10th, at 8 o'clock. The two generals present were the two division commanders, Franklin and McDowell, the former a warm adherent of McClellan, the latter anything but a "McClellan man." Besides these generals, there were present, Seward, Secretary of State, Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, and the Assistant Secretary of War. Lincoln spoke of the condition of the Treasury, the loss of public credit, the radicalism of Congress, the bad news from the west, and the lack of co-operation between Generals Halleck and Buell; but most of all, of the sickness of McClellan. He said he had gone to McClellan's house, and the general had not asked to see him. As he felt he had to talk to somebody, he had sent for Franklin and McDowell to get their opinion as to the possibility of an early commencement of active operations by the Army of the Potomac. If something was not soon done, the bottom would be out of the whole affair, and if General McClellan did not want to use the army; he would like to "borrow it," provided he could see how it could be made to do something.

In answer to Lincoln's question as to what could be done with the army, McDowell advised its organization into five army corps, and an offensive against the Confederates by way of Manassas. Franklin, when asked by the President if he had ever thought what he would do with the army if he had it, said that he had, and that his plan would be to leave a garrison sufficient to protect Washington, and then transport the army by water to the York River and operate from that point against Richmond. This was the plan finally adopted by McClellan. The conference ended with an invitation to a second conference on the next night, and in the meantime they were to get information as to army matters from the staff of the headquarters of the army.

On January 11th the two generals met the President again at the White House. At this meeting, there were present in addition to the two officers, Seward and Chase, and the Postmaster-General, Montgomery Blair. When

McDowell read a paper advocating the Manassas offensive, Blair strongly opposed the plan and spoke in favor of a movement by way of the Peninsula. Seward said, with mingled sense and sarcasm, that if the army only gained a victory over the Confederates, it didn't make much difference whether this victory was gained at Manassas or further south.

The next day, Sunday, the 12th, McClellan, having risen from his sick bed, made an unexpected and dramatic appearance at the White House, where McDowell and Franklin were again in conference with Lincoln. "Learning," says McClellan, "that a grand conclave was to assemble without my knowledge, I mustered strength enough on Sunday morning . . . to be driven to the White House, where my unexpected appearance caused very much the effect of a shell in a powder-magazine. It was very clear from the manner of those I met there that there was something of which they were ashamed." Lincoln directed McDowell and Franklin and McClellan to meet him again on the following day.

This White House conference on January 13, 1862, was one of the most memorable and dramatic held during the war. Those present were: McClellan, McDowell, Franklin, the quartermaster general, Meigs, and Secretaries Seward, Chase, Blair, and the President. After a brief explanation of why he had called McDowell and Franklin into conference with him during McClellan's sickness, Lincoln pointed to a map that hung on the wall and asked McDowell to outline a plan of campaign about which he had spoken to him at a previous meeting. McDowell then described his plan for an overland campaign, and concluded with a few words explaining his position and that of General Franklin, disclaiming any hostility to McClellan, and saying that what he and Franklin had done was at the President's request and on the ground of the supposed critical illness of McClellan. To this McClellan replied, "somewhat coldly, if not curtly," "You're entitled to any opinion you please." Franklin then added a few words, clearing himself of any improper motives, "Which," says McClellan, "was needless, as I could not suspect him of anything wrong." But the part of McDowell in these conferences McClellan deeply resented. "McDowell, who was probably at the bottom of

the affair, undertook it *con amore*, hoping to succeed me in command. Franklin was unwilling to touch it and simply acted under orders."

The President of the nation, the chief members of the government and the leading generals of the army were assembled to discuss the possible movements of the army and the next step in the war. But the one who was expected to enlighten them had nothing to say. After his curt rejoinder to McDowell's apology, McClellan quietly resumed his conversation with Blair and Meigs, "awaiting further developments." This was followed by general whispering between the persons present, especially between Lincoln and Chase. Meigs, who was present, describes the embarrassment and the awkwardness of the situation. "All looked to McClellan, who sat still with his head hanging down, and mute." Meigs moved his chair closer to McClellan's side and urged him to speak and promise some kind of movement. To this McClellan said, "If I tell him my plans, they will be in the *New York Herald* tomorrow morning. He can't keep a secret, he will tell them to Tadd." To this Meigs rejoined, "That is a pity, but he is the President,—the Commander-in-Chief; he has a right to know; it is not respectful to sit mute when he so clearly requires you to speak. He is superior to all."\* But the Commander-in-Chief, "awaiting further developments," "sat still, with his head hanging down and mute."

The round table whispering was suddenly brought to an end by Secretary Chase saying in a loud and excited tone that he understood the purpose of the meeting to be that McClellan should reveal his military plans, that they might be submitted to the "approval or disapproval of the gentlemen present." Surprised at the violence of Chase's manner, McClellan, keeping himself well in hand, told Chase that if such was the purpose of the meeting, it was entirely new to him. Furthermore, he did not recognize the Secretary of the Treasury as in any manner his official superior, and he denied his right to question him upon the military affairs committed to his charge; only the President and the Secretary of War had such a right. "I, then," says McClellan, "quietly resumed my conver-

\* "General M. C. Meigs on the Civil War," in *American Historical Review*, XXVI, 293 (January, 1921).

sation with Blair and Meigs, taking no further notice of Mr. Chase.”

Thus “disposed of” by McClellan, Chase turned to Lincoln and resumed his whispering. After some minutes had elapsed, Lincoln said, “Well, Gen. McClellan, I think you had better tell us what your plans are.” To this McClellan answered, that if the President had confidence in him, it was not right or necessary for him to entrust his designs to the judgment of others. But if his confidence was so slight as to require the Commanding General’s opinion to be fortified by those of other persons, then the President ought to replace him by someone who fully possessed his confidence. He said, furthermore, that no commanding general would willingly submit his plans to such an assembly, where some were incompetent to form a valuable opinion, and others incapable of keeping a secret, so that anything made known to them would soon become known to the enemy. He also reminded Lincoln that both he and the Secretary of the Treasury knew in general terms what his designs were. He then concluded by saying that he would give no further information to the meeting unless the President gave him the order in writing and assumed responsibility for the results.\* Lincoln, apparently unwilling to give the order and assume the responsibility for letting the conference know McClellan’s plans, resumed his conversation with Chase. After some minutes of this futile whispering, Seward arose, and buttoning his coat about him, said, laughingly, “Well, Mr. President, I think the meeting had better break up. I don’t see that we are likely to make much out of Gen. McClellan”; whereupon, the extraordinary conference adjourned.

Had the patriots of the North, who were spending their treasure and sending their sons into the army, and offering their prayers for the salvation of the nation, looked in on that conference and seen the angry Chase, the puzzled and baffled President, and the chief general of the nation sitting mute and resentful, with his

\* McDowell’s notes on this meeting differ here from the record of McClellan. McDowell says that when Chase put his question to McClellan, McClellan, after a long silence, said that a movement in Kentucky was to precede any in the east. When the President asked him if he was counting on any particular time for a movement of his army, he replied he had. Whereupon, the President said, as if satisfied, “I will adjourn this meeting.” William Swinton, *Campaigns of the Army of the Potomac*, 85. New York, Charles B. Richardson, 1866,

“head hanging down,” they would have been amazed, and, perhaps, enraged.

This meeting did not promise well for the future of a general who was expected to lead the armies of the nation to victory. It marks the beginning of a serious breach and unfriendliness, not so much between Lincoln and McClellan, as between McClellan and strong leaders in the government. Members of the Cabinet who were present on that occasion could hardly have relished being told that some of them were incompetent to pass opinion on McClellan's military plans, and that others were “incapable of keeping a secret.” Henceforth, Chase, in many respects the most powerful figure in the Cabinet, who had been influential in having McClellan appointed to the command of Ohio troops at the beginning of the war, and represented the strong anti-slavery and abolition sentiment of the North, is McClellan's enemy. McClellan failed to appreciate the fact that in a popular government “an army commander must have understanding with his political superiors.”

“The Radicals never again lost their influence with the President, and henceforth directed all their efforts to prevent my achieving success. After this time Secretary Chase worked with them and became my enemy.” \*

In his account of the conference, General Franklin says that when McClellan refused to give his plans for a campaign, unless the President ordered him to do so, Chase, who was standing with McDowell and Franklin in one of the window embrasures, said to McDowell, “Well, if that is Mac's decision, he is a ruined man.” †

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 159.

† *Annals of the War, written by Leading Participants*, 79. Philadelphia, The Times Publishing Company, 1879.

## IX

### STANTON'S SHADOW

McClellan was dressing for dinner one night, soon after this conclave at the White House, when an aide informed him that Cameron had resigned and that Edwin M. Stanton was now Secretary of War. Before McClellan had finished his toilet, Stanton's card came up. When McClellan went down to see him, Stanton told him that he had been appointed Secretary of War, and that his name had been sent to the Senate for confirmation. He wanted to confer with McClellan before he accepted the post, for to do so, he said, would involve very great personal sacrifice on his part, and the only possible inducement would be that he might have it in his power to aid McClellan in the work of putting down the rebellion. If McClellan wished him to accept, he would do so, but only for his sake. McClellan told him he hoped he would accept the post. Stanton then said he would accept the appointment, and exclaimed, "with great effusion," "Now we two will save the country."\* As the two shook hands that evening at McClellan's home, little did McClellan imagine that he was looking into the face of the man to whose hostility he would soon attribute his chief troubles and the failure of his Peninsula Campaign.

"If you want to know who was the cause of a three years' war, after we had created a disciplined army of 600,000 men, it was Stanton." †

This verdict by General Upton, one of the most intellectual, scientific and courageous generals of the war, was an opinion in which not a few concurred. Until he came to Washington as Commander of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan had never met Stanton. Indeed, he tells us he had never heard of him. Soon after his arrival in Washington, Stanton was introduced to him as "a safe adviser on legal points." From that moment,

\* Johnson, *Battles and Leaders*, II, 163.

† Peter S. Michie, *Life and Letters of Emory Upton*, 423.



Stanton professed the warmest friendship and devotion, and did all he could to ingratiate himself with the young Commander. McClellan never questioned the sincerity of Stanton's friendship. But later he held the opinion that from the very beginning of their association Stanton was in a treasonable conspiracy to block and frustrate his efforts at the head of the army. "Pretending to be my friend before he was in office, was only a part of his long system of treachery." So close was their early relationship, that McClellan used Stanton's home as a refuge from the regiment of interviewers and place seekers. He writes to his wife on a November day in 1861, "I have not been at home for some three hours, but am concealed at Stanton's, to dodge all enemies in the shape of browsing President, etc."

Who was this Stanton, whose cold shadow now falls across the path of McClellan? An anxious patriot asked the same question of Judge Edwards Pierrepont, soon after Stanton's appointment as Secretary of War. Pierrepont's answer was, "A man who in six months will be the chief power in this government."\* In the history of Stanton's administration of the War Department there was much which fulfilled the prediction of Judge Pierrepont. Born in 1814, at Steubenville, Ohio, of a Quaker father, Stanton became a lawyer in Steubenville, and at Pittsburgh, and then settled in Washington, where he had a large and lucrative practice. One of the most celebrated cases with which he was connected was the trial of Daniel Sickles for murder. Sickles, then a member of Congress from New York, and afterwards commander of the 3rd Corps at Gettysburg, shot Barton Key, son of the author of the Star Spangled Banner, for seducing his wife, the daughter of the composer, Baglioli. In his defense of Sickles, Stanton, with somewhat sensational eloquence, invoked what is now popularly called "the unwritten law." Sickles was acquitted.

Stanton met Lincoln for the first time in 1857, in Cincinnati, at the trial of the McCormick Reaper Case, when Cyrus H. McCormick was suing the John N. Manny Company for infringement of patent rights. Harding, of Philadelphia, Stanton, and Lincoln were the chief counsel for Manny. Harding and Stanton froze Lincoln out of

\* H. W. Bellows, "Speech at the Union League Club, New York,"

the case, and Stanton, in particular, treated Lincoln with contempt. He described Lincoln as a "long, lank creature from Illinois, wearing a dirty linen duster for a coat, on the back of which the perspiration had splotted wide stains that resembled a map of the continent." \*

When General Cass resigned as Secretary of State in December, 1860, Buchanan put in his place Jeremiah F. Black, then the Attorney-General, and appointed Stanton as the Attorney-General. Stanton thus entered Buchanan's Cabinet at one of the most critical periods in the nation's history, just after Major Anderson had removed the garrison from Fort Moultrie to the much stronger Fort Sumter. At the dramatic and critical meetings of the Cabinet which were held during the last days of December, 1860, Stanton stood courageously for the Union and the honor of the government, and, undoubtedly, was of great influence in preventing Buchanan from making an abject surrender to the South Carolina commissioners, who were demanding that Anderson be withdrawn not only from Sumter, but from the harbor of Charleston. When, on one occasion, Buchanan weakly pleaded a "gentlemen's agreement" and an understanding with the South Carolina commissioners, Stanton came back at him with, "You are not a gentleman. You are the President of the United States!" When the question of ordering Anderson back to Fort Moultrie was being discussed in the Cabinet, Stanton declared that "it would be a crime equal to the crime of Arnold, and that all who participated in it ought to be hung like André," and that a "President of the United States who would make such an order would be guilty of treason." †

Not only did Stanton fight secession in the Cabinet and the counsels of the government, but he had secret and almost daily consultation with such Republican leaders as Henry Wilson, Senator from Massachusetts, and a member of a Vigilance Committee which the Republicans had organized, and Charles Sumner. Sumner tells of one of these midnight conclaves when Stanton was present and says, "I saw nobody at that time who had so strong a grasp of the whole terrible case, nor can I doubt that

\* William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, *Herndon's Lincoln*, II, 355. Springfield, Ill., The Herndon Lincoln Publishing Company, 1924.

† George C. Gorham, *Life and Public Services of Edwin M. Stanton*, I, 158. Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1899.

had his spirit prevailed in the beginning, the rebellion would have been strangled at its birth."\*

The next chapter in Stanton's career is strange indeed. At Buchanan's request, when that statesman had retired to his Lancaster home, "Wheatland," Stanton wrote a series of letters to Buchanan, full of savage criticism and scorn of Lincoln and the new administration. There was, it is true, much in the "let-it-drift" policy of Lincoln during the first months of his administration which was of a nature to call forth angry and severe criticism. The strange thing is not that Stanton criticized Lincoln and the administration, but that he did this in letters to Buchanan, for as a member of Buchanan's Cabinet, and as a secret ally of leading Republicans, Stanton had fought courageously against the pusillanimous policy of Buchanan. In one of these letters to Buchanan, written soon after the Bull Run disaster, Stanton said, "The imbecility of this administration culminated in that catastrophe; an irretrievable misfortune and national disgrace never to be forgotten are to be added to the ruin of all peaceful pursuits and national bankruptcy, as the result of Lincoln's 'running the machine' for five months."† Stanton sees no hope of improvement "until Jeff Davis turns out the whole concern." Yet the man who writes in this vein to Buchanan is the same, who wrote to General Dix, of "shoot-him-on-the-spot" fame,‡ that "the uprising of the people of the United States to maintain their government and crush rebellion has been so grand, so mighty in every element, that I feel it a blessing to be alive and witness it."¶ There is much in the character and history of Stanton which suggests a political Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Yet, on the whole, whatever his relationship with McClellan, one cannot doubt that Stanton was a lover of the Union and a bitter and implacable foe of the Confederacy.

McClellan saw much of Stanton, and records his intemperate abuse of the administration and Lincoln. "He

\* Henry Wilson and J. S. Black, *A Contribution to History*. Edwin M. Stanton, 37. Easton, Pa., Cole, Morwitz & Company, 1871.

† Gorham, *Stanton*, I, 223.

‡ John A. Dix, Secretary of the Treasury in January, 1861, telegraphed to one of his revenue officials, "If anyone attempts to haul down the American flag, shoot him on the spot."

¶ Gorham, *Stanton*, I, 217.

never spoke of the President in any other way than as "the original gorilla," and often said that Du Chaillu was a fool to wander all the way to Africa in search of what he could so easily have found at Springfield, Illinois."\* McClellan says that this habit of Stanton was "most disagreeable," and that he was often shocked by it. Stanton even went the length on several occasions of urging McClellan to set up as dictator. When, in the fall of 1861, the then Secretary of War, Cameron, had made an abolition speech to a newly arrived regiment, Stanton urged McClellan to arrest him for "inciting to insubordination." "He often advocated the propriety of my seizing the government and taking affairs into my own hands."

McClellan says he regarded these extreme views of Stanton as the "ebullitions of an intense and patriotic nature," and that he wasted considerable time in trying to bring Stanton to more moderate views, "never dreaming that all the while this man was in close communication with the very men whom he so violently abused. His purpose was to endeavor to climb upon my shoulders and then throw me down." † Colonel Alexander K. McClure declares that it was well known "in the Administration circles and to Lincoln himself that Stanton earnestly urged McClellan to overthrow the constitutional Government because of weakness and incapacity, and declare himself dictator." † When Lincoln was holding his conferences with Generals McDowell and Franklin, at the time of McClellan's illness, it was Stanton who warned McClellan of what was going on, telling him, "They are counting on your death and already dividing among themselves your military goods and chattels."

How was it that this squat, hirsute, burly, thick-necked Stanton, pouring contempt upon Lincoln, breathing out threatening and slaughter against the administration, and urging McClellan to make himself "dictator," and throw them out, the man who, as Gideon Welles, the Secretary of the Navy said, when "the rebels had the government by the throat, and true friends were wanted," spoke no word of encouragement or support of the administration, was now made Secretary of War, an office, the impor-

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 152.

† Alexander K. McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century*, 206. Salem, Massachusetts, Salem Press Company, 1902.

tance of which, at that time, Buchanan did not exaggerate, when, in a letter to his niece, Harriet Lane, about the strange appointment of Stanton to the War Office, he described it as "the greatest and most responsible office in the world." \* Ward Lamon, Lincoln's close friend and bodyguard, and author of *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* (p. 226), always interesting, but not always reliable, is authority for the statement that Chase first brought Stanton to the White House to give his opinion on the Trent Affair, which in December, 1861, was agitating the government and the country. After Stanton had outlined his views to Lincoln, the President said, "Mr. Stanton, this is a time of war, and you are as much interested in sustaining the government as myself or any other man. This is no time to consider mere party issues. The life of the nation is in danger. I need the best counsellors around me. I have every confidence in your judgment, and have concluded to ask you to become one of my counsellors. The office of Secretary of War will be vacant, and I want you to accept the position. Will you do it?"

If Lincoln knew, and doubtless he did know, of Stanton's intemperate abuse of him and the administration, he knew also of the courageous stand Stanton had taken in the last months of Buchanan's administration. One of the lawyers associated with Lincoln and Stanton in the McCormick Reaper case, relates that at the time of the inauguration Lincoln sent for him and said that although there was a common expectation that he would take Stanton into his Cabinet, and that although he appreciated what he had done in the Cabinet of Buchanan, where he was "faithful among the faithless," he could not with self respect bring him into his Cabinet because of his personal treatment of him at Cincinnati. Almost a year later, just before Lincoln appointed Stanton as Secretary of War, Lincoln met the same lawyer and said to him, "You know the War Department has demonstrated the great necessity for a secretary of Mr. Stanton's great ability, and I have made up my mind to sit down on all my pride,

\* George T. Curtis, *Life of James Buchanan*, II, 522. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1883.

it may be a portion of my self respect, and appoint him to the place."\*

It will be remembered that it was Stanton who had warned McClellan of the meetings which were being held at the White House. How did Stanton secure information about these meetings, information which was concealed from all but a few officers and members of the government? Undoubtedly, through Chase. This is hinted at in the diary of the Secretary of the Treasury, for January 12, 1862. In this entry Chase says:

At church this morning. Wished much to join in communion, but felt myself too subject to temptation to sin. After church went to see Cameron. . . . Home, and talk and reading. Dinner. Cameron came in. . . . We talked of his going to Russia, and Stanton as successor. . . . He and I drove to Willard's, where I left him, and went myself to Seward's. I told him at once what was in my mind—that I thought the President and Cameron were both willing that C. should go to Russia. He seemed to receive the matter as new. . . . Wanted to know who would succeed Cameron. I said that Holt and Stanton had been named; that I feared Holt might embarrass us on the slavery question. . . . that Stanton was a good lawyer and full of energy, but I could not, of course, judge him as an executive officer as well as he could, for he knew him when he was in Buchanan's cabinet. Seward replied that he saw much of him then; that he was of great force, full of expedients, and thoroughly loyal. . . . Finally he agreed to the whole thing, and promised to go with me to talk with the President about it tomorrow.

The *Diary* then goes on to tell how Cameron seemed greatly offended with a letter from Lincoln, proposing his nomination to Russia. Chase and Seward endeavored to soothe him, and advised him to go and see the Presi-

\* Joseph B. Doyle, *In Memoriam, Edwin McMasters Stanton*, 42. Steubenville, Ohio, Herald Printing Company, 1911.

dent. Chase told him to thank the President for his consideration, and "tell him frankly how desirable it was to him that his successor should be a Pennsylvanian and should be Stanton." He said that inasmuch as the President had already mentioned Stanton in a favorable way, that if his appointment were requested by Cameron, Seward, and himself, it would certainly be made. The entry for the day ends with this expression, "We parted, and I came home. A day which may have—and, seemingly, must have—great bearing on affairs. Oh! that my heart and life were so pure and right before God that I might not hurt our great cause."\*

Chase did not overestimate the importance of that day when he wrote in his *Diary*, "a day which may have—and, seemingly, must have—great bearing on affairs." It was indeed a day which was to have great bearing on affairs, and, especially, on the affairs of Major-General George B. McClellan. Salmon P. Chase had been the first to hail McClellan and advocate him for high position. As early as July, 1861, he wrote to McClellan, then in command in Ohio, telling him of his high regard and deep confidence in his abilities. Chase claims some of the credit for what McClellan had by that time accomplished in West Virginia, and in a letter to McClellan discloses the part he had in his advancement. "In the result the country was indebted to me—may I say it without too much vanity?—in some considerable degree, for the change of your commission from Ohio into a commission of major-general of the army of the Union, and your assignment to the command of the Department of the Ohio. I drew with my own hand the order extending it into Virginia."†

Now this same Chase who had been influential in advancing McClellan to high command is the chief actor in bringing into the Cabinet the man who is to oppose and hamper McClellan at every move. The suggestion as to Stanton was no new thought for Chase, for when Bates, the Attorney-General, was asking Chase to back him up in urging Lincoln to assume full authority as Commander-

\* Robert B. Warden, *An Account of the Private Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase*, 401. Cincinnati, Wiltach, Baldwin & Company, 1874.

† J. W. Schuckers, *The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase*, 427. New York, D. Appleton & Company, 1874.

in-Chief of the armies, Chase said to him, "Lincoln can do nothing till he has a Secretary of War," and then went on to tell how he had been working for two months to bring Stanton into the Cabinet.

Why was it that Chase was so anxious to have Stanton at the head of the War Department? Undoubtedly, because he had come to feel that McClellan did not possess that hatred of slavery and that detestation of secession which, in Chase's opinion, the commanding general ought to hold. He felt confident that with Stanton in the War Department, McClellan's power to do evil would be greatly diminished. Although written after the Peninsula Campaign had come to a stalemate, the entry in Chase's *Diary* for July 22, 1862, expresses the opinion he must have held when he secured the appointment of Stanton to the War Department. In this entry Chase says: "I did not regard General McClellan as loyal to the administration, though I did not question his general loyalty to the country." In this business of putting Stanton in the War Department, Chase was altogether sincere and earnest, just as sincere and earnest as he was in his own opinion that he would make a greater and more useful President at that crisis of the nation than Lincoln. Chase was a great man, and abominated slavery, and could not think of the armies of the country being entrusted to a man who did not share that abomination. When, at the end of his successful day's work in securing the appointment of Stanton to the War Department, Chase wrote in his *Diary*, "Oh! that my heart and life were so pure and right before God that I might not hurt our great cause," he was no hypocrite, but absolutely sincere. No; Chase had no desire to hurt the great cause of union and freedom. But when he put Stanton in the War Department, he did seriously hurt the career of the commanding general, and the cause.

McClellan had not long to wait before he discovered that Stanton, his erstwhile confidant and friend, the man who had told him that if he took the appointment as Secretary of War, it would be only for his sake, was now his chief obstacle and enemy. At once there was a change in the atmosphere at the War Department and the White House. When McClellan and the chief officers, according to the custom, called on the new Secretary of War, Stan-



ton, at the end of the introductions, and looking directly towards McClellan, said: "It is my work to furnish the means, the instruments for prosecuting the war for the Union and putting down the rebellion against it. It is your duty to use those instruments and mine to see to it that you use them." This had an underlying threat in it which McClellan could not have missed. Stanton, who, as a citizen, had often sought out McClellan, now held himself aloof from his old friend, and McClellan, being a proud man, did not go out of his way to confer with Stanton. He says: "Soon after Mr. Stanton became Secretary of War it became clear that, without any reason known to me, our relations had completely changed. Instead of using his new position to assist me he threw every obstacle in my way, and did all in his power to create difficulty and distrust between the President and myself. I soon found it impossible to gain access to him. Before he was in office he constantly ran after me and professed the most ardent friendship; as soon as he became Secretary of War, his whole manner changed, and I could no longer find the opportunity to transact even the ordinary current business of the office with him."

Stanton's old Ohio friend, Donn Piatt, knowing well what Stanton had said of Lincoln, asked Stanton in surprise if the report were true that he had accepted the war office under Lincoln. "Yes," said Stanton, "I am going to be Secretary of War to Old Abe." "What will you do?" inquired Piatt, wondering how Stanton could serve the Lincoln upon whom he had heaped his contempt. "Do?" said Stanton. "I intend to accomplish three things. I will make Abe Lincoln President of the United States, I will force this man McClellan to fight or throw up; and last, but not least, I will pick up Lorenzo Thomas † with a pair of tongs and drop him from the nearest window."\* It is clear from the record of Stanton's administration of the War Department that Stanton was determined, not so much to make McClellan fight, as to "throw up." In this he finally succeeded, when McClellan's army was taken away from him and given to the incompetent Pope in the summer of 1862. But his victory

† The Adjutant General of the Army.

\* Donn Piatt, *Memories of Men Who Saved the Union*, 58. New York and Chicago, Belford, Clarke & Company, 1877.

was short lived, for in the crisis which confronted the nation, Lincoln again turned to McClellan, and called upon him to save Washington and the cause in the Antietam campaign. After that great victory, McClellan was again compelled to "throw up."

Stanton's hand in the final retirement of McClellan is not so clear as in his first retirement. Nevertheless, Stanton symbolized and incarnated all those influences and agencies, some good, and some bad, which hampered, opposed, and finally removed McClellan from his great post, and at the moment of his greatest opportunity. But back of Stanton, and back of Chase, was something stronger than any man and any number of men; and that something was the spirit of a people who hated and abominated slavery and secession, and who were suspicious of any general who could not hate with their perfect hatred. McClellan strikes back at Stanton and Chase and his other adversaries who opposed him or failed to support him, as if they were responsible for his lack of success in his first campaign in the Peninsula. But it was not merely with Stanton, and Chase, and Wade, and other radicals that McClellan was contending, but with a greater and more powerful adversary, the spirit and purpose of an aroused people. General Grant, who said that McClellan was the "one mystery" of the Civil War, came nearer to the clearing up of the mystery than he thought, when, in one of his comments on the war he said: "The trouble with many of our generals in the beginning was that they did not believe in the war. I mean they did not have that complete assurance in success which belongs to good generalship. They had views about slavery, protecting rebel property, State rights—political views that interfered with their judgments. Now I do not mean to say they were disloyal. A soldier had as good a right to his opinions as any other citizen, and these men were as loyal as any men in the Union—would have died for the Union—but their opinions made them lukewarm, and many failures came from that." \*

McClellan's feelings were not intense enough to suit Chase, Stanton, Wade, and that great body of the people of whom they were the spokesmen and representatives. That is why they opposed him. That is why now, as he

\* Young, *Around the World With General Grant*, II, 289-290.

looks forward to the beginning of his great campaign, McClellan is conscious of hostility and opposition in the War Department. Henceforth, Stanton will be to McClellan the spectre of opposition and failure.

In addition to being Commander of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan was commander-in-chief of all the armies of the United States from November 1, 1861 to March 11, 1862. During this period of his supreme command the first important Union successes were won. In pursuance of the policy of McClellan, General George H. Thomas attacked the Confederate Army under Zollicoffer and Crittenden at Mill Springs, in Central Kentucky. Zollicoffer was killed and the Confederate Army defeated. This was the first taste of victory the North had had after the disaster at Bull Run. It was McClellan who, as commander-in-chief, wrote the orders for Burnside's successful expedition to the coast of North Carolina, and for Butler's campaign against New Orleans. The great victories which Grant won on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, were the result of a movement undertaken by General Grant in obedience to orders from McClellan, through Grant's department commander, General Halleck.\* McClellan was not in actual command at these engagements; but as the supreme commander of the armies, he was in a position to do immense damage to the cause, had he been incompetent, or had he ordered or sanctioned unwise movements. His instructions to the generals of his far-flung armies show the highest order of intelligence and a comprehensive grasp of the problems which confronted the military forces of the Union. When he became commander-in-chief in November, he discovered that things were in a chaotic condition in the western armies, with no co-operation and very little organization. Although he himself was not on the field to organize and drill these afterwards splendid armies of the West, it was under his general supervision, and, for the most part, through officers whom he appointed, that that great work was accomplished.

\* Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 285.

## X

### McCLELLAN AND SHERMAN

As commander-in-chief McClellan had interesting relationships with the two men who were to become the most famous generals of the war, Sherman and Grant. Sherman he relieved of his command, under the impression that he was incompetent, and perhaps mentally deranged; and Grant, through Halleck, he relieved of his command, and gave directions for his arrest, if that should prove to be necessary.

When war was threatening, Sherman was at the head of the State Military College of Louisiana, and when it was evident that Louisiana would secede, he gave up his post and went north. In March, just before the outbreak of the war, he was introduced to Lincoln by his brother John, the Senator from Ohio. His brother told Lincoln that Colonel Sherman had come up from Louisiana and might have some useful information for him. In answer to Lincoln's question, "How are they getting along down there?" Sherman replied, "They think they are getting along swimmingly—they are preparing for war." "Oh, well!" said Lincoln, "I guess we'll manage to keep house," meaning that he thought there would be no war. Disgusted with Lincoln's attitude, Sherman said to his brother as they left the White House, "You [the politicians] have got things in a hell of a fix, and you may get them out as best you can."\*

Sherman then returned to St. Louis to take the presidency of a horse car railway. He was out of sorts with the government, and at first determined to have nothing to do with its efforts to save the Union; but he thought better of it, and on the 8th of May wrote the Secretary of War a somewhat haughty note, in which he said he would not volunteer for *three months*, because he could not throw his family on the cold charity of the world, but would

\* William T. Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 196. Fourth edition, New York, Charles L. Webster & Company, 1891.

volunteer for three years. If the Secretary of War wanted to know for what post he was fitted, a study of the records of the War Department would give him the desired information. To this he received no reply; but on the 14th of May, 1861, he was appointed Colonel of the 13th Regular Infantry, and afterwards was given a brigade in McDowell's army and shared in the debacle of Bull Run. He came out of that battle with great contempt and disgust for the volunteer soldiers and officers. If Grant narrowly missed being an unknown officer on McClellan's staff, Sherman, in some respects the greatest genius of the war, narrowly missed being the Chief Clerk of the War Department; for in April, 1861, he received a telegram from Montgomery Blair, the Postmaster General, asking him if he would accept the chief clerkship of the War Department, with an intimation that he might be made Assistant Secretary of War. What if the grand invader and bisector of the South, the victor of Peach Tree Creek, Atlanta, and Bentonville, had spent his days as the Chief Clerk of the War Department!

Sherman rejoiced in the advent of McClellan as Commander of the Army of the Potomac, and, in common with everyone else, thought the choice was fully justified by his reputation and ability. Sherman remembered that in 1849 he had heard General Persifor S. Smith pronounce McClellan better qualified to command than any of the officers then in the army.\* Their first meeting in Washington was on a July Sunday, when McClellan rode along the lines of the Army of the Potomac on the Virginia side, and found Sherman "somewhat nervous." Sherman attempted to dissuade him from passing beyond his pickets, believing the enemy was close at hand. McClellan says he rode beyond the pickets and found no enemy. Sherman, with his detestation of Washington and all its works, was disappointed that McClellan maintained his headquarters in Washington, instead of pitching his tent with the army. "I still hoped," he says, "he would come on our side of the Potomac, pitch his tent, and prepare for real hard work, but his headquarters still remained in a house in Washington City. I then thought, and still think, that was a fatal mistake." †

\* William T. Sherman, *Home Letters*, 250. Edited by M. A. DeWolfe Howe, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.

† Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 220.

One of the best things Sherman ever did for his country was to persuade Lincoln to make George H. Thomas, his classmate at West Point, a brigadier-general. Thomas was a Virginian by birth, and in the regiment in which he was serving at the outbreak of the war, the 2d Cavalry, his superior officers were Albert Sidney Johnston, Robert E. Lee, and N. Pardee, Jr., all of whom resigned their commissions. It was not strange, therefore, that Lincoln had some misgivings about the loyalty of Thomas. But Sherman vouched for his loyalty, and with his assurance Lincoln sent his name to the Senate for confirmation as a brigadier-general.

After he had certified to the loyalty of Thomas, Sherman had some anxiety about the matter and rode out to the Maryland post where Thomas was stationed. He found him in the saddle and said to him, "Tom, you are a brigadier general." "I don't know of anyone that I would rather hear such news from than you," Thomas replied. "But," said Sherman, "there are some stories about your loyalty. How are you going?" "Billy," answered Thomas, "I am going South." "My God!" exclaimed Sherman; "Tom, you have put me in an awful position; I have become responsible for your loyalty." "Give yourself no trouble, Billy," said Thomas, "I am going South, but at the head of my men."\*

Mill Spring, Stone River, Chickamauga, Missionary Ridge, and Nashville were the great answers to the question as to the loyalty of George H. Thomas.

McClellan had a high opinion of Sherman, and it was with great reluctance that he permitted him to leave his army and go with General Robert Anderson, the hero of Sumter, to the seat of war in Kentucky. In Kentucky Sherman had an unhappy and altogether undistinguished career, for not a single incident of his brief chapter there was prophetic of the great things he was to do in the future. Anderson, unequal to the strain and stress of the command in Kentucky, resigned in October, 1861, and Sherman, very unwillingly, took his place. On a journey to the western front, the Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, stopped off to visit Sherman at Louisville. At a conference in Sherman's room at the Galt House, Sherman described his situation and asked for 200,000 men.

\* Henry Coppée, *General Thomas*, 319-20. New York, D. Appleton & Company, 1893.

Hearing this, Cameron, who was ill, raised himself on his bed and exclaimed, "Great God! Where are they to come from?" When Cameron reached Washington he asked the adjutant-general of the army, Lorenzo Thomas, who had accompanied him on his trip to the West, to submit a memorandum on military matters. In this memorandum, which found its way into the newspapers, Thomas made mention of Sherman's "insane" request for 200,000 men. The newspapers took up the cry, and everywhere it was rumored that Sherman was insane.

As soon as McClellan became commander-in-chief of the armies, Sherman requested him to send to his department great numbers of troops and some of the chief officers in the Army of the Potomac. After the publication of Thomas' memorandum, Sherman, greatly outraged, telegraphed McClellan, "The publication of Adj-Gen. Thomas's report impairs my influence. I insist upon being relieved to your army, my old brigade. Please answer."\* On November 6th Sherman sent a report to McClellan which revealed a disturbed state of mind, undue fears and apprehensions, and a general unfitness for the successful administration of his department, that of the Cumberland. In this report are such expressions as, "Our enemies have a terrible advantage—we are brought to a standstill, and this produces doubt and alarm. With our present force, it would be simple madness to cross Green River; and yet hesitation may be as fatal. . . . The future looks as dark as possible. It would be better if some man of sanguine mind were here."

Bombarded with such telegrams from the disturbed and pessimistic Sherman, it is not strange that McClellan relieved him of his command. "I gladly and promptly acquiesced in Sherman's request to be relieved, and sent Buell to replace him." The advent of Buell in the West was as significant for the Union cause in that part of the country as the advent of McClellan had been at Washington after Bull Run. Buell was in California when the war broke out, and McClellan sent for him at once and had him appointed a brigadier-general. When he succeeded Sherman in Kentucky, Buell found everything in confusion and chaos, and at once set himself to organize the army, which afterwards became famous as the Army

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 201.

of the Ohio. It was this army which, under Buell, saved Grant at Shiloh, and under its subsequent commanders wrote such a glorious chapter in the history of the War.

As for Sherman, he was furloughed home as unfit for command. Halleck reported to McClellan: "I am satisfied that General Sherman's physical and mental system is so completely broken by labor and care as to render him, for the present, unfit for duty; perhaps a few weeks' rest may restore him." After gnashing his teeth in idleness for a season, and railing bitterly at all those who had spread the rumor that he was insane, Sherman at length got back into the army, and, from Shiloh on, began his march to glory.

Two years later, when Sherman was in the midst of his great campaign through Georgia, and McClellan was the Democratic candidate for President, Sherman, writing to his wife, gives his appraisal of McClellan. In this curious letter, he denies that he had pledged ninety-nine out of every hundred votes in his army to McClellan, saying that the report was "the invention of some knave." As between McClellan and Lincoln, he prefers the latter:

. . . though I know that McClellan, Vallandigham or even Jeff Davis if President of the United States would prosecute the war, and no one with more vigor than the latter. But at the time the howl was raised against McClellan I knew it was in a measure unjust, for he was charged with delinquencies that the American people are chargeable for. . . . He had to fight partly with figures. Still I admit he never manifested the simple courage and manliness of Grant, and he had too much staff, too many toadies, and looked too much to No. 1. When I was in Kentucky he would not heed my counsels, and never wrote me once, but since I have gained some notoriety at Atlanta and the papers announced, as usual falsely, that I was for him, he has written me twice and that has depreciated him more in my estimation than all else. . . . I believe McClellan to be an honest man as to money, of good habits, descent, and of far more than average intelligence, and therefore I never have joined in the hue and cry against him.\*

\* Howe, *Home Letters of General Sherman*, 316. Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909, New York.



## XI

### McCLELLAN AND GRANT

McClellan's relationship with Grant was hardly less unfortunate than his relationship with Sherman. Things had moved quickly for Grant since that spring day when he sat knocking his heels together in the anteroom of McClellan's headquarters at Cincinnati, whither he had gone on his vain quest for some post on McClellan's staff. After he had mastered the mutinous 21st Illinois Regiment at Springfield, Grant read in the papers one day, at Mexico, Missouri, where he was then stationed, that his Illinois friends in Congress had had him made a brigadier-general. So it was "Brigadier-General Grant" who moved down the Mississippi and raided the Confederate camp at Belmont. In this initial success Grant had a narrow escape from death. After he had got his command safely aboard the steamboats again, he lay down on a sofa in the Captain's room, and after a moment's rest arose to go out on the deck. As he did so, a musket ball passed through the head of the sofa. But Grant's hour had not yet come; he was destined for greater things.

Halleck was then in command in Grant's department. His sobriquet was "Old Brains," and he was known as the author of a book on military science and the translator of works on Napoleon and on international law. Yet, from all accounts, he was a colossus of stupidity. McClellan wrote of him, "Of all men whom I have encountered in high position, Halleck was the most hopelessly stupid. It was more difficult to get an idea through his head than can be conceived by anyone who never made the attempt. I do not think he ever had a correct military idea from beginning to end." These depreciations of the man whom Lincoln put in supreme command of the Federal Armies reach a ludicrous climax in the verdict passed on Halleck by Ben Butler. When Butler was in command on the James River, Halleck sent him an aide without consulting him. When the aide made his appearance at

Butler's headquarters, that erratic general said to him, "Aide-de-camp, sir! Ordered on my Staff, sir! I'm sure I do not know what you are to do. I have really nothing for you. All the positions are filled. Now there is General Halleck, what has *he* to do? At a moment when every true man is laboring to his utmost, when the days ought to be forty hours long, General Halleck is translating French books at nine cents a page; and, sir, if you should put those nine cents in a box and shake them up, you would form a clear idea of General Halleck's soul!"\*

Early in January, 1862, Grant received directions from General McClellan, through Halleck, his Department Commander, to make a reconnaissance in favor of General Buell, who was confronting a Confederate force in Kentucky. In order to prevent reinforcements being sent to the Confederate Commander, Grant made a movement up the Tennessee River, threatening Fort Henry. The result was that Grant felt that he could capture Fort Henry if given a chance. He asked for a brief leave of absence and went to meet Halleck at his headquarters to submit to him a plan of campaign. Of this interview Grant says: "I was received with so little cordiality that I perhaps stated the object of my visit with less clearness than I might have done, and I had not uttered many sentences before I was cut short as if my plan was preposterous. I returned to Cairo very much crestfallen."† Nevertheless, Grant at length received permission to take Fort Henry, if he could, and he at once proceeded to show that he could, and took, not only Fort Henry, on the 6th of February, 1862, but also the far more important Fort Donelson on February 16th. When Buckner asked about the terms, Grant's reply was, "Unconditional surrender." Henceforth, to the nation, "U. S." Grant meant "Unconditional Surrender Grant."

Grant had no sooner won the applause of the country and struck this first great blow at the vitals of the Confederacy, than he was compelled to taste the cup of bitterness. He found himself superseded in command and

\* Theodore Lyman, *Meade's Headquarters, 1863-1865*, 193. Edited by George R. Agassiz, Boston, The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922.

† Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 287.

threatened with arrest. Soon after the great victory at Donelson, Halleck telegraphed McClellan:

I have had no communication with Gen. Grant for more than a week. He left his command without my authority and went to Nashville. His army seems to be as much demoralized by the victory of Fort Donelson as was that of the Potomac by the defeat of Bull Run. It is hard to censure a successful general immediately after a victory, but I think he richly deserves it. I can get no returns, no reports, no information of any kind from him. Satisfied with his victory, he sits down and enjoys it without any regard to the future. I am worn out and tired with this neglect and inefficiency. C. F. Smith is almost the only officer equal to the emergency.

As for not communicating with Halleck, Grant explains that many of the telegrams addressed to him by Halleck never reached him, because of the treason of a telegraph operator, who proved to be a rebel, and held up the dispatches. For the same reason, Grant says, an order from General McClellan of February 16th, asking for a report of the situation was not received until the 3rd of March. Under these circumstances, McClellan telegraphed Halleck, saying: "The success of our cause demands that proceedings such as Grant's should be at once checked. Generals must observe discipline as well as private soldiers. Do not hesitate to arrest him at once, if the good of the service requires it, and place C. F. Smith in command."

Back of these words about "observing discipline," there was, no doubt, the anxiety in McClellan's mind about Grant's habit of drinking. Two days later, on the 4th of March, Halleck telegraphed McClellan: "A rumor has just reached me that since the taking of Fort Donelson, Grant has resumed his former bad habits. If so, it will account for his repeated neglect of my oft-repeated orders. I do not deem it advisable to arrest him at present, but have placed Gen. Smith in command of the expedition up the Tennessee." On the same day Halleck telegraphed Grant, "You will place Major-General C. F.

Smith in command of expedition, and remain yourself at Fort Henry. Why do you not obey my orders to report strength and positions of your command?"

"Thus," says Grant, "in less than two weeks after the victory at Donelson, the two leading generals in the army were in correspondence as to what disposition should be made of me, and in less than three weeks I was virtually in arrest and without a command." \*

When the Adjutant-General of the Army, Lorenzo Thomas, asked from Halleck a report as to Grant's unauthorized visit to Nashville and as to his general conduct, Grant was able to give satisfactory explanations, and on the 13th of March was restored to his command. More than a year after these events, General Franklin wrote McClellan about meeting Grant on the Mississippi, and how Grant asked him what made McClellan hostile to him. Franklin told him that he was not hostile, but very friendly. Grant said that could not be, for without any reason McClellan had ordered Halleck to relieve him from command and arrest him soon after Fort Donelson, and that Halleck had interfered to save him. In 1866, when McClellan was in Europe, Grant communicated with him about certain papers which were missing from the files of the office of the General-in-Chief during McClellan's tenure of office. General Marcy, McClellan's former Chief of Staff, found a copy which he had retained of the dispatch of March 2nd from Halleck, in which that general made his complaint about Grant. This dispatch, and McClellan's reply, had disappeared from the files in the office. "Someone," says McClellan, "abstracted the telegrams above alluded to." The inference, of course, is, that Halleck, when he was commander-in-chief, and had possession of these files, fearing that Grant, now a great military figure, would learn the truth, removed from the files his dispatch to McClellan which led to Grant's being relieved of his command and threatened with arrest. "As to Halleck's conduct with regard to Grant," says McClellan, "no comment by me was necessary."

Grant's next great achievement, Shiloh, took place after McClellan had been relieved of the supreme com-

\* Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 327.

mand. Two years later, when he was made lieutenant general, on his way to Washington, in March, 1864, Grant had Sherman accompany him as far as Cincinnati, in order to discuss with him plans for the spring campaign. One of the things which they discussed was the restoration to command of important officers such as Buell, Burnside, McCook, and McClellan. Sherman was especially anxious to see Buell again in active service. But he says, "General Grant never afterward communicated to me on the subject at all; and I inferred that Mr. Stanton, who was notoriously vindictive in his prejudices, would not consent to the employment of these high officers."\*

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\* Sherman, *Memoirs*, II, 7.

## XII

### McCLELLAN AND LINCOLN

“If the nation possesses no generals in the service competent to direct its military affairs without the aid or supervision of politicians, the sooner it finds them and places them in position, the better it will be for its fortune.”

In this sentence, taken from his Official Report of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan shows an impatience with those at the head of civil affairs which will seriously handicap him in the Peninsula Campaign. A highly intelligent man, and an educated soldier, he could not brook interference on the part of those whom he called “politicians.” In the World War the troops of the United States were put under a leader who was given an absolutely free hand by the President. But in a civil war conditions are different, and politicians cannot be ignored or pushed aside with contempt. The great success of Lincoln as a leader and a President was due to this very understanding of the importance of public and party opinion. McClellan did not fully realize that in a popular government, even the greatest general, and the greatest army in the world, must have sympathetic and friendly relations with those in political power. As far as Lincoln himself was concerned, McClellan had little difficulty; between the two there was a high degree of mutual esteem and friendly regard. Lincoln never permitted his mind to be poisoned by the bitter enmity of those about him towards McClellan, and McClellan never attributed the failure of his first great campaign to Lincoln, but to Stanton, and others who stood between him and the President. In his Report of the Army of the Potomac, his last official act, McClellan says of his relationship with the President:

I cannot omit the expression of my thanks to the President for the constant evidence given me of his sincere personal regard, and his desire to sus-

tain the military plans which my judgment led me to urge for adoption and execution. I cannot attribute his failure to adopt some of those plans and to give that support to others which was necessary to their success to any want of confidence in me; and it only remains for me to regret that other counsels came between the constitutional Commander-in-Chief and the General whom he had placed at the head of his armies, counsels which resulted in the failure of a great campaign.

In confirmation of this statement, it will be remembered that in the Antietam campaign, a memorable and important success, McClellan, in the excitement and urgency of the crisis, was given a free hand, and what communications he did have with the government were with Halleck and Lincoln, and not with the Secretary of War.

“No general can succeed without proper relations with the administration.”

This sentence, from a conversation Francis Blair had with one of McClellan's generals, Pleasanton, explains why McClellan's first campaign was a failure. When Pleasanton was appointed a brigadier-general, Francis Blair, who was a firm supporter of McClellan, said to Pleasanton, whose appointment he had secured, “You are going to McClellan. You will have confidential relations with him. I like him and want him to succeed. But no general can succeed without proper relations with the administration. Say to him for me that Francis P. Blair, Jr., can be of great service to him. I shall have access to the administration and can do much to keep McClellan right. Say to him that he ought to ask for the assignment of Blair to him and to make him his Chief-of-Staff. Now, Pleasanton, when you get down to Virginia, say this to McClellan and telegraph me the result.” The communication was to be in cipher. If McClellan received the suggestion favorably, the answer was to be “Fair Weather.” If otherwise, “Weather is fair, but portends a storm.” When Pleasanton joined McClellan at his headquarters, he gave him Blair's message and noted that it made an impression. However, after three days' deliberation, the bad weather signal was sent back to

Blair. McClellan preferred Marcy, his father-in-law, to one of those stormy petrels, the Blairs, for chief-of-staff.

In vetoing the Blair proposal, McClellan was wise, for the three Blairs, although most able and patriotic men, were constantly at war with someone, and even Lincoln himself had to dispense with the services of the Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair, before the end of the war. Nevertheless, there was meat in what Blair said about the importance of confidential relations with the administration. If McClellan had had for a friend and mediator with Congress and the administration such a friend and supporter as General Grant had in E. B. Washburne, Member of Congress from Illinois, the history of his first campaign, and, indeed, of the Civil War, might have been altogether different. He was too aloof from the administration and the government, and this, together with open hostility on the part of powerful officials of the government, resulted in the failure of his first campaign.

During the first months of McClellan's command at Washington, Lincoln joined with all others in extolling him, praising him, and acquiesced in his judgment. Almost every day, the President called at McClellan's headquarters to talk with him and to get the news. This was an initial mistake on the part of Lincoln, and led to a far different relationship in the future. The eager, anxious, and friendly Lincoln sometimes forgot that he was the President of the nation, the commander-in-chief of all its armies and navies, and remembered only that he was a patriot and lover of his country, and in that capacity went to talk with McClellan, just as once he had been accustomed to talk with him around the stove in the tavern of some Illinois county seat when they were trying cases for the Illinois Central. George Bancroft relates how he once went with Lincoln to McClellan's headquarters. Lincoln rang the bell, and at first began to ask the sergeant who opened the door if he could see McClellan. Then, suddenly recalling his own high office, he changed his tone and told the servant to inform McClellan that the President was waiting. "Of all silent, uncommunicative, reserved men whom I ever met," Bancroft says, "the general stands among the first."\*

\* M. A. DeWolfe Howe, *Life and Letters of George Bancroft*, II, 147. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.



have thought that McClellan would discuss his military plans with Lincoln, and any chance guest he brought along with him, in the way they were wont to talk things over in the tavern of an Illinois village. On the evening of November 13, 1861, Lincoln, Seward, and Hay called at McClellan's house and were informed by the servant that the general was at an officer's wedding and would soon return. After they had waited an hour, McClellan came in, and without paying any particular attention to the porter who told him the President was waiting to see him, went upstairs, passing the door of the room where the President and Seward were seated. After a wait of half an hour, a servant was sent up to tell the General they were waiting for him. The answer came back that he had gone to bed.† After this, the friendly relationship of McClellan and Lincoln remained unbroken, but future conferences were held at the White House. In introducing the narrative of this incident, Hay says, "I wish to record what I consider a portent of evil to come." If McClellan had only taken Lincoln into his confidence more, all might have been different.

Soon after the White House conference with Lincoln, the members of the Cabinet, and Generals McDowell and Franklin, McClellan writes that he discovered "that excessive anxiety for immediate movement of the Army of the Potomac had taken possession of the mind of the Administration." The appointment of Stanton increased this anxiety for immediate movement, and the hand of Stanton was soon shown in President Lincoln's general War Order No. 1, issued January 27, 1862. In this the President ordered a general movement of all the land and naval forces of the United States against the insurgent forces on the 22nd of February, Washington's birthday. The Army of the Potomac and some of the western armies and flotillas were specifically named, and then came this singular statement: That all other forces, both land and naval, with their respective commanders, obey existing orders for the time, and be ready to obey additional orders when duly given.

This was a strange thing to say. None of the troops or officers were mutinous or had any idea of disobeying orders. The threat was probably in the direction of the

† Hay, *Diary*, 52.

commanders of the armies, and especially the Commander-in-Chief, McClellan. It looks as if Lincoln had lost all patience with the delays incident to all great military movements, and now declares that when he orders a general and an army to do a certain thing, on a certain day, he expects it to be done forthwith. This grand Washington's Birthday celebration was, of course, impossible; and it is almost unthinkable that Lincoln should have issued an order for such a vast movement on February 22nd, regardless of weather conditions, or of events which might have transpired in the period between the issuance of his order and the time set for the advance. Not satisfied with this order, Lincoln followed it with another on January 31, directing that after providing for the safety of Washington, the army should occupy the point on the railroad known as Manassas Junction, where Johnston's army then lay. But only a few days after giving these extraordinary orders, Lincoln writes to McClellan, saying that he will be glad to yield his plan, if McClellan has something better to suggest.

Lincoln asked McClellan five questions:

1. Does not your plan involve a greatly larger expenditure of *time* and *money* than mine?
2. Wherein is a victory *more certain* by your plan than by mine?
3. Wherein is a victory *more valuable* by your plan than by mine?
4. In fact, would it not be *less* valuable in this: that it would break no great line of the enemy's communications, while mine would?
5. In case of a disaster, would not a retreat be more difficult by your plan than by mine?

In answer to these questions, McClellan wrote a long letter to the Secretary of War. In this letter he speaks of the carefully prepared defenses of Washington, so that a small garrison will secure its safety. If he should follow the wish of Lincoln, and march overland against the Confederate Army at Manassas, and on to Richmond, he would secure little, save the moral victory of compelling the Confederates to abandon their position; but their army would fall back upon other positions and fight again,

destroying bridges and roads as it retired. As for the other plan, either by Urbana on the Rappahannock, or by Fortress Monroe and the Peninsula, that movement, if successful, would give the Federal Army the Capital, the communications, and the supplies of the Confederates. In the event of a reverse in battle, the army could safely retreat down the Peninsula with both its flanks protected by the fleet. McClellan is not certain of victory at Manassas. "On the other line," he says, "I regard success as certain by all the chances of war. . . . Nothing is certain in war, but all the chances are in favor of this movement."

It can hardly be said that McClellan answered satisfactorily all the questions raised by Lincoln in his letter. However, much that McClellan asserts about the results of an overland campaign, and how the Confederates would retire to fight again, and in the end the plan of campaign might have to be changed and a shorter land route to Richmond sought—all this was strikingly confirmed in the campaign of Grant which started on the Rapidan in the spring of 1864. At the end of repeated battles and heavy losses, Grant after the bloody repulse of Second Cold Harbor, June 12, 1864, abandoned the plan by which he had said he would "fight it out if it took all summer"—that of throwing his army against the right flank of Lee and trying to get between him and Richmond—and took his army to the James River, commencing all over again where McClellan had left off two years before. McClellan's theory that a decisive battle could not be won at Manassas is confirmed by the testimony of the Confederate commander there, General Joseph E. Johnston, who says that his army had no thought of making a stand against the much stronger Union army at Manassas.\*

As a preliminary step, and perhaps to allay the general impatience, McClellan made a move to open up the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad as far westward as Cumberland. Early in February, troops crossed at Harper's Ferry. The railroad was opened as McClellan had planned, but the troops across the river had to be withdrawn because of the lack of a permanent bridge. The plan was

\* Joseph E. Johnston, *Narrative of Military Operations*, 102. New York, D. Appleton & Company, 1874.

to lay a pontoon bridge across the Potomac, using canal boats for the pontoons. McClellan's engineers had assembled the canal boats; but when an attempt was made to bring them into the river through the lift lock at Sandy Hook, it was discovered that the canal boats were several inches too broad to pass through the lock. It was in connection with this Harper's Ferry delay and fiasco that Lincoln showed his impatience and the strain under which he was laboring. When an officer reported to him that the Harper's Ferry movement had been held up because the pontoons were not ready, Lincoln, lapsing into the provincialism of his frontier days, said in a voice of thunder to the astonished officer, "Why in h—l ain't they ready?" On this canal boat and lock failure at Harper's Ferry Chase sarcastically commented, "It died of 'lock-jaw.'"

When McClellan saw Lincoln after the withdrawal of the troops at Harper's Ferry, the President expressed considerable disappointment at the outcome of the expedition. McClellan was surprised at this, for when he returned from Harper's Ferry he had carefully explained to the Secretary of War the difficulty about the canal boats, and had also expressed the desire to explain the matter personally to the President. Stanton told him that Lincoln understood the whole affair and that he would hand him his memorandum. A day or two afterwards, Stanton said he had done this, and that Lincoln was entirely satisfied with his conduct, and requested him not to mention the subject to the President. When McClellan mentioned this to Lincoln, the President showed much surprise, and said he had never heard of any memorandum or any explanation by McClellan. In this McClellan saw what he took to be the cloven hoof of Stanton, and from the record, as preserved by McClellan, it would indeed seem that Stanton, in order to have Lincoln dissatisfied and impatient with McClellan, had deliberately withheld from him McClellan's reasonable explanation of the Harper's Ferry failure. "It was a part of Mr. Stanton's policy—only too well carried out—to prevent frequent personal interviews between the President and myself; he was thus enabled to say one thing to the President and exactly the opposite to me."\*

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 195.

“Why in h—l ain’t they ready?”

What Lincoln asked about the Harper’s Ferry pontoons, the impatient North was now beginning to ask about the Army of the Potomac. Why ain’t it ready? Why does it not march against the insolent foe, which for months has been flaunting its banners almost within sight of the capitol? At Bull Run, where the nation suffered its defeat and humiliation, there let a second battle be fought, and the disgrace of the first battle wiped out on the very soil where it was incurred. The loyal states had been pouring recruits into Washington at the rate of a regiment a day, and the folks at home wanted action, battles, victory. They had not sent their sons merely to be drilled and to march up and down in grand reviews on the banks of the Potomac. “Why ain’t they ready?”

To the layman’s eye, the Army of the Potomac, on one of those beautiful autumn days, certainly looked ready, as it lay encamped along the Virginia hills. Visitors and relatives who came by the score to see the army looked with wonder at the thousands of white tents by day and the thousands of glowing camp fires by night. They saw the grim and orderly parks of artillery, the countless canvas-covered wagons of the commissary, the tethered observation balloon, floating lazily in the heavens above the armed hosts. They listened with a thrill to the answering bugle calls and the crash of the military bands. They felt the Virginia earth shake beneath their feet as the squadrons of cavalry galloped by, with the gonfalons and pennants streaming in the air, and the beautiful well-groomed horses, so soon to lie mangled and festering in the swamps and woods of the Peninsula, curveting and champing their bits. And when the commander-in-chief, with his strong, intelligent, but kind face, gracefully acknowledging with lifted cap the salutations of his troops, rode down the lines on his war charger, “Devil Dan,” the visitors joined in the salvos of cheering which followed him, and felt certain that they were looking upon the patriot and the military genius who would lead the hosts to victory and redeem the nation. When they went back to their homes at Montpelier, Worcester, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, Columbus, and Madison, they told their townfolk what they had seen and heard. That was just what Julia Ward Howe

had seen and felt when visiting the encampment of the Army of the Potomac, and watching the great host and its glowing camp fires, she saw the "glory of the coming of the Lord," and read "His fiery Gospel, writ in burnished rows of steel," and recorded her vision in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Yet, when these citizens went to the post office to get the weekly *Tribune* and read that the Army of the Potomac still lay in its camps on the banks of the river, they began to say one to another, "Why in h—l ain't it ready?"

McClellan at length won approval from the reluctant Lincoln for his plan to attack Richmond by way of the Peninsula. But the President was not altogether satisfied in his mind, for he called a council of officers for the 8th of March. At this council the twelve division commanders were present. These twelve generals had previously met with McClellan, who submitted his plans, and then left the officers by themselves to vote. The vote stood eight to four in favor of the Peninsula plan. General Franklin believed that the object of this meeting was to obtain a condemnation of McClellan's plan by his subordinate generals.

When the twelve generals met Lincoln and Stanton at the White House, each one in turn was asked by Stanton his opinion as to the time it would take to transfer the army to its new base on the Peninsula. The general opinion was that it would take a month. Stanton then asked each one whether he was willing to have "this suffering country wait a month before a blow was inflicted on the enemy." They were then asked as to whether or not the army, then organized with divisions only, should not be organized into corps. All agreed that this ought to be done. Stanton's questions, and the way in which he put them, gave Franklin the impression, as they do to one today, that there was an attempt on the part of Stanton to have McClellan discredited by his own officers. It was of this vote by the council in favor of McClellan's plan, that Stanton said with contempt, "We saw eight generals afraid to fight."

An assertion has been made that Lincoln was deliberately deceived at this conference by the friends of McClellan. After the abortive Harper's Ferry movement, Lincoln, it was said, was very angry, and threatened to

remove McClellan unless he submitted reasonable plans. McClellan did not have plans to submit; but his friends, among them General H. M. Naglee, prepared on bits of paper of different colors and texture plans for the Peninsula campaign. The purpose of the different bits of paper and the different colors was to create the impression that even in the midst of the Harper's Ferry movement McClellan had found time carefully to outline a plan of campaign.\* When asked by Judge Kelly about this, Stanton produced the slips and papers saying, "Yes, here are the slips. These were the implements by which effect was given to a conspiracy to deceive the President, and in consequence of which, 80,000 of our best troops are afloat in wooden bottoms; and should the *Merrimac* get among the fleet of transports, she could sink them all as easily as she sunk the *Congress* and the *Cumberland*."

According to Kelly, at the council of generals which voted for McClellan's plans, it was arranged to have Hooker, who was opposed to the Peninsula plan, absent, and McDowell, also opposed to the Peninsula plan, who was fond of talking, and thought himself a military authority, in the chair, where he could say nothing. Stanton confirmed this, saying that no matter what question was asked, General Naglee, who represented Hooker, always answered the question, till Stanton said to him, "This is a council of division commanders, and you are in command of a brigade. What are you doing here?" Naglee responded that Hooker was indisposed and had requested him to take his place at the council. According to this view of the council, McClellan knew little or nothing of the plans submitted, which were offered merely to save his head, and that for this reason it was arranged that he should be absent from the meeting, lest he should be asked embarrassing questions about plans of which he knew nothing.†

General H. M. Naglee denies that there was any such conspiracy to save McClellan by proposing a plan of which he himself was not the author. Naglee says that the council of the twelve generals met at 10 o'clock on the morning of March 8th, at McClellan's headquarters.

\* General Naglee denies this. See H. M. Naglee, *McClellan vs. Lincoln*. Philadelphia, 1864.

† William D. Kelly, *Lincoln and Stanton*, New York and London, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1885.

McClellan placed a map on the table, explained his proposed plan, and then retired, so as to leave them untrammelled in their decision. After several hours they were summoned to the White House. Lincoln greeted them, saying he had been unwell, and was glad to get to know the officers of the army, for to him military matters were incomprehensible. He spoke also of the strong pressure that was being exerted to have McClellan removed. During the long interview, Stanton asked many questions which showed his hostility to McClellan. Lincoln finally said that he was determined not to remove McClellan, as he had promised to do, but that he would let him make his campaign as he had planned, but under the restrictions which he would make known to them at a conference at 10 o'clock on the following day. Naglee, as the recorder of the Council of War, then informed the President as to the vote taken by the generals, eight to four, in favor of McClellan's Peninsula plan. Lincoln exclaimed, "What, have the council decided by a vote of eight to four, two to one, in favor of the Peninsula campaign?" More questions were asked and answered, until Stanton came in again. When Naglee proposed reading the records of the Council of War to him, Stanton said, "Give me the papers. I'll read them myself." He then read them, making notes, and put the officers through another examination. The object of these questions, Naglee asserts was to neutralize the effect of the decision of the Council of War on the mind of the President. At the end of the interview, General Naglee said to Stanton, "If you please, Mr. Stanton, permit me to have the proceedings of the Council of War, that they may be copied in a fair hand, and General Sumner, the President of the Council, will sign them, the recorder will sign them, and they will be in proper form." Stanton then abruptly rejoined, "I'm as good a judge of form as you are."

The next morning, when the generals repaired to the White House, Lincoln said, "I have slept better than for two weeks. I feel relieved of immense responsibility. I have determined upon the following program." This, in substance, was that McClellan was to carry out his Peninsula plan, leaving sufficient troops for the defense of Washington, and that he, the President, would divide the army into four corps.\*

\* Naglee, *McClellan vs. Lincoln*,



That Stanton was not whole-heartedly supporting McClellan, even when he was about to set out on his great enterprise, is proven by the testimony of General Ethan Allen Hitchcock, a very able officer, but at that time an invalid, and subject to frequent hemorrhages. On March 15, 1862, less than a week after the council had decided on the Peninsula movement, Stanton asked Hitchcock to take McClellan's place.† McClellan's Secret Service head, Major Allan Pinkerton, declares that it was on the 9th of March, the day after the council voted for the Peninsula movement, that Johnston's army evacuated Manassas, "a move," he said, "which was the result of direct treason, or 'at least' criminal indiscretion on the part of some member of that commission either directly or indirectly." \* This was the first of many serious charges made against the administration, and Stanton in particular, to the effect that in one way or another, assistance was given to the army opposing McClellan. General Joseph E. Johnston, the Confederate Commander, however, declared that his army had no thought of confronting McClellan in battle at Manassas, and as early as February 22nd, two weeks before the Council of War, he had given orders for the withdrawal of the Confederate army to a point nearer Richmond, and that the movement of the troops began on the morning of March 7th. This is something which is overlooked by all those who say McClellan blundered in not attacking Johnston's army at Manassas, and advancing upon Richmond in that direction. It is not possible to attack an army which will not permit itself to be attacked. If McClellan had moved against Johnston, Johnston would have retreated at once towards the defenses of Richmond. In the last event, the campaign had to be fought around Richmond, and to get the army to that vicinity by water transportation was a much quicker and safer plan.‡

McClellan's movement towards Centreville and Manassas on the 10th of March, was not for the purpose of starting an overland campaign, but, as he says, to give the troops an opportunity to gain some experience on the

† Ethan A. Hitchcock, *Fifty Years in Camp and Field*, 438. New York and London, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909.

\* Allan Pinkerton, *The Spy of the Rebellion*, 572. New York, G. W. Carleton & Company, 1883.

‡ Johnston, *Narrative*, 102-103,

march and in bivouac preparatory to the campaign, and to get rid of the superfluous baggage and impedimenta which accumulate so quickly around an army encamped for a long time in one locality. Nevertheless, the fact that McClellan marched out to the place where Johnston's army had been, and found only an empty bivouac, afforded great amusement to the enemies of McClellan. Nathaniel Hawthorne, hearing that there was the likelihood of a battle in the vicinity of Manassas, came down to Washington to see how it would fare with the army. He arrived on the day McClellan had marched out to the empty camps of Johnston. "It was as if General McClellan had thrust his sword into a gigantic enemy, and beholding him suddenly collapse, had discovered to himself and the world that he had merely punctured an enormously swollen bladder. . . . The whole business, though connected with the destinies of a nation, takes inevitably a tinge of the ludicrous. The vast preparation of men and war-like material—the majestic patience and docility with which the people waited through those weary and dreary months—the martial skill, courage and caution with which our movement was ultimately made—and, at last, the tremendous shock with which we were brought up suddenly against nothing at all!"\*

On the 8th of March, two days before this movement, without consulting McClellan, Lincoln ordered the formation of army corps. It had been the intention of McClellan to effect this organization, but not until he had tried out some of the division commanders in battle, for, he said, "the mistakes of an incompetent division commander may be rectified, but those of a corps commander are likely to be fatal." McClellan attributed the order for corps formation to McDowell. As soon as he heard of the President's orders, he asked that they be suspended "until the present movement be over." To this Stanton made the following ominous reply: "I think it is the duty of every officer to obey the President's orders. Nor can I see any reason why you should not obey them in the present instance; I must therefore decline to suspend them." McClellan answered that he would have to countermand his orders for an advance, pending the corps organization. Whereupon, Stanton assumed the respon-

\* Hawthorne, "Chiefly About War Matters," in *Tales*.

sibility of suspending the President's orders. A few days later, on the 13th of March, McClellan issued his own orders for the formation of army corps. The four corps commanders were McDowell, Sumner, Heintzelman, and Keys. Of these four corps commanders thus forced upon McClellan, three had opposed his Peninsula campaign.

If McClellan was taken by surprise at the order of the President for the organization of the army corps, without having consulted the commander-in-chief, still greater must have been his amazement when, in his movement towards Centreville and the retreating Confederate Army, he read in the newspapers the following Order of the President:

Maj.-Gen. McClellan having personally taken the field at the head of the Army of the Potomac, until otherwise ordered he is relieved from the command of the other military departments, he retaining command of the Department of the Potomac.

We can well imagine what the feelings of McClellan must have been when he read in the newspapers the copy of this order. The order was bad, both as to its content and its manner. It is almost unbelievable that Lincoln should have deposed his commander-in-chief at the very start of a campaign, and by an order of which the deposed commander first learned through the public press. By one stroke of the pen Lincoln destroyed McClellan's plan for unity of action and central authority, and the folly of it was soon manifest when the Peninsula Campaign was under way. Of this order McClellan says, "The intelligence took me entirely by surprise, and the order proved to be one of the steps taken to tie my hands in order to secure the failure of the approaching campaign." McClellan, however, gracefully acquiesced in the President's orders, writing to him that no feeling of self-interest or ambition should ever prevent him from devoting himself to his service. "You will find that, under present circumstances, I shall work just as cheerfully as before, and that no consideration of self will in any manner interfere with the discharge of my public duties."\* Yet in this lamentable order McClellan cannot but have seen a

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 226.

menace to the success of his campaign, and again the cloven hoof of Stanton. Shortly after this he says, "I had now only too good reason to feel assured that the administration, and especially the Secretary of War, were inimical to me and did not desire my success, and some conception may be formed of the weight upon my mind at a time when whatever hopefulness and vigor I possessed were fully needed to overcome the difficulties in my path."

On the first day of April McClellan embarked on the steamer *Commodore*, and it must have been with a feeling of exultation that he saw the dome of the Capitol fade away in the distance as the transports carried his army down the tranquil Potomac. At length the expedition was under way. The Army of the Potomac was moving, and moving according to the plan of its commander. But the question may well be asked if McClellan had not gained his plan at too great a cost. The President and Secretary of War had finally, though very reluctantly, given their consent to the Peninsula movement. But their heart and enthusiasm were never in the movement; and no sooner had it commenced than they began to take those measures which resulted in the failure of the expedition. Whatever McClellan may have thought of the difficulties of an overland campaign, by way of Manassas, some of those difficulties would have been more than compensated for by the fact that in that movement he would have had the enthusiastic support of the President, if not of the Secretary of War. As it was, he went into action on the Peninsula leaving behind him a skeptical and anxious President and a hostile and contemptuous Secretary of War. The greatest genius in the world could hardly have succeeded under such circumstances.

Why, it will be asked, did not McClellan, realizing the great handicap under which he was laboring, surrender his command and turn it over to another? The answer to this will be found in the natural ambition of a general who had the enthusiastic love and devotion of his troops, and who was sure about the military correctness of the move he was going to make, one for which he had carefully prepared through a period of nine months. No doubt, McClellan, anxious as he was about the attitude of the administration and the hostility of Stanton, must

have felt as he saw his troops embark for Fortress Monroe and heard their enthusiastic cheering, that with such an army back of him he could defeat the enemy, take Richmond, and end the war, regardless of the hostile attitude at Washington. Answering this question himself, as to why he did not give up the command when he found he was not to be cordially supported, McClellan says:

Even before I actually commenced the Peninsular campaign, I had lost that cordial support of the executive which was necessary to attain success. It may be said that under these circumstances it was my duty to resign my command. But I had become warmly attached to the soldiers, who had already learned to love me well; all my pride was wrapped up in the army that I had created, and I knew of no commander at all likely to be assigned to it in my place who would be competent to conduct its operations.\*

Before McClellan embarked for the Peninsula, he had a dramatic interview with Lincoln. The President sent for him to come to the White House at 7.30 o'clock on the morning of the 8th of March. Lincoln was plainly much concerned about something, and told McClellan he wished to talk with him about "a very ugly matter." McClellan asked him to state what it was, and when the President hesitated, told him that the sooner and the more directly "ugly matters" were approached the better. Lincoln then commenced to talk about the Harper's Ferry failure, and when McClellan had made satisfactory explanation, returned to the more serious, or "ugly matter," which he had mentioned at the beginning of the interview. "And now," says McClellan, "the effects of the intrigues by which he had been surrounded became apparent." Lincoln went on to tell McClellan that it had been represented to him that his plan of campaign, taking the army by water to the Peninsula, "was conceived with the traitorous intent of removing its defenders from Washington, and thus giving over to the enemy the capital and the government, thus left defenseless." The President concluded his remarks by saying that it "did look to him much like

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 154.

treason." At that, McClellan sprang to his feet, and, "in a manner perhaps not altogether decorous towards the chief magistrate," desired that he retract the expression, telling the President that he would permit no one to couple the word "treason" with his name. Lincoln was greatly agitated, and at once disclaimed any thought of stigmatizing McClellan as a traitor, saying that he had merely repeated what others had said, and that he did not believe a word of it himself.

What an extraordinary scene! The President of the nation, on the eve of a great campaign, asks the commander of the army to let him know whether or not he is a traitor! The only thing which can be said in extenuation of Lincoln's conduct is that his heart was eaten out by anxiety for the safety of the nation, and inasmuch as men high in the counsels of the government were openly hinting at the disloyalty of the commander-in-chief of the army, he thought it well to talk it out with him. Despite the apologies of the President, and his assertion that he did not believe the hostile report about McClellan, the latter never could have forgotten that interview.

It was bad enough for McClellan that he started on his expedition leaving behind him a President who, to say the least, was not enthusiastic about his plan of campaign, and a Secretary of War openly hostile to it. But the suspicion of disloyalty was much worse. As McClellan walked the quarterdeck of the *Commodore* on that soft April evening, bound for the Peninsula, he could hardly have been happy in the reflection that even the President of the United States had thought it necessary to ask him about his loyalty to the country and the cause.

Henceforth, through all his campaigns, in his days of adversity on the Peninsula, and even in the hour of his great achievement on the banks of the Antietam, the spectre of disloyalty will haunt McClellan.

**Book Three**  
**THE PENINSULA**

## I

### McCLELLAN AND HIS GENERALS

The Grand Expedition was under way. McClellan's army was safely landed on the Peninsula. Now the nation was to see the fruits of the nine months' drilling and marching in the camps on the Potomac. The last time American soldiers had disembarked on the Peninsula was when Washington's troops from Philadelphia disembarked to take part in the siege of Yorktown. How different now was the errand of the troops from the North, who came marching down the gangplanks to set foot on Virginia's soil. On the very ground where American independence was achieved, a great army was now moving forward in a campaign, the purpose of which was to maintain the unity and integrity of the nation whose independence had been won there eighty-two years before.

What of the generals upon whom McClellan was to depend during this campaign? Some of them had been forced upon him by the administration, or by circumstances and considerations other than purely military; and some of them were McClellan's own choice. Nearly all of the latter justified his confidence. The army had been divided by the President's orders, and over the protest of McClellan, into four corps; the First under McDowell, the Second under Sumner, the Third under Heintzelman, and the Fourth under Keys. On the 18th of May, the President gave McClellan authority to organize two more provisional corps. One of these McClellan gave to Fitz-John Porter, and the other to Franklin. Of the four corps Commanders designated by Lincoln, none achieved any great renown, save the commander of the Second Corps, the noble veteran, Sumner. McDowell is remembered chiefly for his failure at Bull Run. But both in command and in defeat, he had shown a humble and manly spirit, and there were many who thought that it was merely his misfortune to have been the commander in the first great battle, and that any general might have



suffered his fate. McClellan retained McDowell, partly through the feeling that if he sent him away he would be ruined for life, and partly because he thought that circumstances had as much to do with his failure at Bull Run as want of ability and energy.

That McDowell was not the man for a great crisis was demonstrated in both the first and second battles of Bull Run. When, amid great confusion, the army was retreating towards Washington after first Bull Run, McDowell and some of his officers held a Council of War at a rail fence by the roadside, with the wreck of the army drifting by them. It was the general opinion that they ought not to try to entrench at Centreville, but retreat to the positions the army occupied before it commenced the movement. McDowell, prostrated by lack of sleep, anxiety, and fatigue, said to Tyler, who commanded one of the divisions, "Can you hold the enemy in check and give me fifteen minutes to decide?" "Yes," was the reply, "fifteen minutes or half an hour; just as long as you please." As soon as these words were uttered, McDowell was soundly asleep. Tyler ordered his division into line, and drawing his watch from his pocket, stood with it in his hand. Through the rumble of wagons and caissons and the tread of thousands of retreating soldiers McDowell slept calmly for half an hour, when he was aroused by Tyler. When he awoke, he looked around him in amazement for a little, and then making his decision, gave the order to retreat.\*

After second Bull Run, when McClellan took charge of the army again, he said it would have been unsafe for McDowell to show himself, for the angry and disgusted soldiers had threatened to shoot him. McClellan came to regret his retention of McDowell, saying he lacked the qualities necessary for a commander in the field, and that he was convinced that McDowell had intrigued against him. The retention of McDowell he describes as "one of my greatest errors. . . . In all human probability I should have been spared an infinite amount of trouble had I relieved him upon reaching Washington, and allowed him to sink at once into obscurity." As we shall see, McDowell did not serve with McClellan on the Peninsula;

\* John S. C. Abbott, *The History of the Civil War in America*, I, 182. New York, Henry Bell, 1863.



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

**McCLELLAN AND HIS STAFF**

Left to right, Gen. George W. Morrell; Lieut. Col. A. V. Colburn; McClellan; Lieut. Col. N. V. Sweitzer; the Prince de Joinville, son of King Louis Philippe of France; and his nephew, the Count de Paris



and the disastrous part which his corps took in the campaign was due to no fault of his, but to the blunders of Lincoln and Stanton.

The heroic figure among these first corps commanders, and one of the noblest characters in either army, was General Edwin V. Sumner, the commander of the Second Corps. Sumner was sixty-four years old when the Civil War broke out, one of the oldest officers in the service; old enough to have served in Blackhawk's War. Many of the highest officers in both armies had served under him. Sumner had won two brevets in the Mexican War, and during the troubles in Kansas had represented the government and dispersed the Free State Legislature, a task not to his liking; but he was always a soldier who obeyed orders. He was in California when the war began, and took loyal and courageous steps to defend the government and apprehend secessionists. When he appeared at Washington in November, 1861, McClellan at once gave him a division. When Lincoln was on his way to Washington, Sumner, then a Colonel, was in charge of the escort. At Harrisburg, Lincoln's advisers persuaded him to make his secret and nocturnal entry into Washington. Sumner protested against the plan, declaring that it would be "a damned piece of cowardice." "I'll get a squad of cavalry, sir, and cut our way to Washington, sir."

That was Sumner through and through. General O. O. Howard, who commanded a brigade under him, said of him, "If two methods were presented, one direct and the other indirect, he always chose the direct; if two courses opened, the one doubtful and leading to safety, the other dangerous and heroic, he was sure to choose the heroic at whatever cost." \* Dressed in a dark blue blouse and a rough flannel shirt with a bright cravat beneath the shirt of his collar, Sumner was always a picturesque figure. We shall hear of his heroic exploits at Seven Pines and Antietam, and still later, after McClellan had left the army, in the bloody debacle of Fredericksburg. From all accounts, one of the most stirring and thrilling of battle spectacles was to see General Sumner ride down his lines

\* Oliver O. Howard, *Autobiography*, I, 181. New York, Baker & Taylor Company, 1907.

when they were going into action, his eyes blazing like a furnace and his gray hair streaming in the wind.

When, on the eighteenth of May, Lincoln gave McClellan permission to organize two more provisional corps, he wrote him one of his fatherly letters, saying that he had ordered the army corps organization on the unanimous opinion of the twelve generals commanding the divisions. He says also that he had consulted "every modern military book." It was after the sickness of McClellan that Lincoln began to give himself seriously to the study of strategy and tactics, and, on the whole, not for the good of the army. In this letter Lincoln warns McClellan against conferring and consulting with Fitz-John Porter only, and "perhaps General Franklin." He tells him, too, that he must be careful not to lose the support of men in Congress. "When you relieved General Hamilton of his command the other day, you thereby lost the confidence of at least one of your best friends in the Senate." Then he goes on to tell McClellan that officers of the army must not be too much incensed when Senators and Representatives say what they think about them, reminding him that they do the same with him, the President, and that the officers must "cease addressing insulting letters to them for taking no greater liberty with them." "Are you strong enough," he asked, "even with my help, to set your foot upon the necks of Sumner, Heintzelman and Keys all at once? This is a practical and very serious question for you." \* Blunder as he did in military matters, Lincoln was a real major-general in the field of politics, and McClellan would have done well had he taken Lincoln's counsel more to heart.

One of the two new corps, the Fifth, was given to Fitz-John Porter, one of the most brilliant, and most unfortunate, of all the soldiers of the war. Born in New Hampshire, he was graduated at West Point in 1845. He was severely wounded at the Belen Gate at Mexico City, and received the brevet rank of major for distinguished conduct at Chapultepec. Porter had the reputation of being one of the number of those Union officers who, while opposed to the dismemberment of the Union, were pro-slavery in their feelings. Perhaps Lincoln had this in mind when he counseled McClellan against too great intimacy with

\* "War Records," II, Part 3, 154, 155.

Porter. Of Porter's magnificent stand in the Seven Days' Battle and the misfortune which befell him after Second Bull Run, we shall hear more later. He was of the highest intelligence, devoted to his commander, who says of him, "Take him for all in all, he was probably the best general officer I had under me. He had excellent ability, sound judgment, and all the instincts of a soldier. . . . He was treated with the grossest injustice—chiefly, I fear, because of his devotion to me."

Among the division commanders in these six corps were officers who were to achieve lasting renown in their service with the Army of the Potomac. Sedgwick, who played such a gallant part in the campaign of Chancellorsville, and made one of the most famous marches in military history at the battle of Gettysburg, was killed by a sharpshooter's bullet near Spottsylvania Court House when fighting under Grant. Hooker was one of the first of the generals to distinguish himself on the Peninsula. A native of Massachusetts, he graduated at West Point in 1837, served with distinction in the Mexican War, and then tried his hand at ranching in California. When the war broke out he had not sufficient funds to get to the scene of hostilities, but generous friends raised \$1,000 to defray his traveling expenses. The War Department paid no attention to his application for a commission, just as it had done in the case of Grant and Sherman. After the battle of Bull Run, Hooker, about to go back in chagrin to California, was presented to Lincoln at the White House. The friend who introduced him named him as "Captain Hooker," whereupon Hooker said to Lincoln, "Mr. President, I am not Captain Hooker, but was once Lieutenant-Colonel Hooker of the Regular Army. I was lately a farmer in California; but since the rebellion broke out I have been here trying to get into the service, and I find that I am not wanted. I am about to return home, but before going, I was anxious to pay my respects to you and to express my wishes for your personal welfare and success in quelling this rebellion; and I want to say one word more. I was at Bull Run the other day, Mr. President, and it is no vanity in me to say that I am a damned sight better general than any you had on that field."

Lincoln evidently took him at his word, for shortly afterwards Hooker was made a Brigadier-General of

Volunteers. The ladies of Mexico City had called him El Capitan Hermoso, the handsome Captain, and Hooker was generally regarded as the best looking man in the Federal Army. He was tall and well proportioned, his complexion as ruddy as a school girl's, his hair a light brown. When mounted on his white charger, Hooker presented a magnificent appearance, and his presence among his troops in the midst of battle never failed to evoke wild cheering. He gave a splendid account of himself in the Peninsula, at South Mountain, at Antietam, and after Fredericksburg became the commander of the Army of the Potomac. Although he was superseded by Meade on the eve of the battle of Gettysburg, Hooker's maneuvering of the army, almost up to the very day of the battle, was superb, and he had the Army of the Potomac in a position where, barring some inexcusable blunder, the defeat of Lee was inevitable. This was recognized by Congress in the resolution of thanks passed after the battle of Gettysburg. This resolution mentions Hooker, first of all, commending him and his officers "for the skill, energy and endurance which first covered Washington and Baltimore from the meditated blow of the advancing and powerful army of rebels led by General Robert E. Lee."

When the western army at Chattanooga was threatened with destruction after the disaster at Chickamauga, in September, 1863, Stanton sent Hooker west with soldiers of the 11th and 12th corps of the Army of the Potomac in what was perhaps the greatest troop transportation movement in the whole war. With these troops Hooker took part in Grant's brilliant defeat of Bragg's army, and leaped again into fame with his so-called "battle above the clouds." As a matter of fact, however, when Hooker charged up Lookout Mountain, most of the Confederate troops had been withdrawn to strengthen Bragg's lines on Missionary Ridge. "The battle of Lookout Mountain," said General Grant, "is one of the romances of the war. There was no such battle, and no action even worthy to be called a battle on Lookout Mountain. It is all poetry." Hooker accompanied Sherman in the invasion of Georgia. But when Sherman, after the Battle of Peach Tree Creek in which McPherson was killed, appointed General O. O. Howard to succeed McPherson, Hooker was offended and left the army. He

considered it an insult that an officer whom he outranked, and whom he blamed for his defeat at Chancellorsville, should be appointed over his head. It was an unhappy ending to a military career which was on the whole notable. Sherman's comment on Hooker is, of course, unfriendly, but has some truth in it: "Hooker . . . took offense and has gone away. I don't regret it; he is envious, imperious, and braggart. Self prevailed with him, and knowing him intimately I honestly preferred Howard."

Another picturesque officer was General Phillip Kearny. Kearny a native of New Jersey and, after graduating at Columbia College, studied law. In 1837 he joined the army as a Lieutenant of Dragoons, and won a high reputation as a cavalry officer in campaigns against the Indians on the western frontier. In 1839 he was sent by the government to study and report upon French cavalry tactics. As an officer of the Chasseurs d'Afrique, he fought through the Algerian War in Africa, receiving the Cross of the Legion of Honor. In the Mexican War his squadron was General Scott's bodyguard. He lost his left arm at the San Antonio Gate, and for gallant conduct was breveted major. After the war he went abroad to study the operations of the Crimean War, and again entering the French Army, fought with renown at Magenta and Solferino. When Sumter was fired upon, he returned to the states and received a commission as brigadier-general. Kearny was one of the few officers who did not entertain a high regard for the ability of McClellan. McClellan says of Kearny, "Though he stood high as a remarkably daring man and good cavalry captain in the Mexican War, I had not sufficient confidence in his brains to give him one of the first divisions. I have since sometimes thought that I would have done well had I given him command of the cavalry." Kearny served through the Peninsula campaign, only to fall in battle in the campaign of Second Bull Run. Those who had witnessed it, declared that one of the greatest of battle sights was to see Kearny leading a charge, his sword held aloft in the one arm remaining to him, and the bridle lines gripped with his teeth.

Among the hundreds of young lieutenants who landed on the Peninsula with McClellan's army, there was one who was destined to achieve a lasting fame. When the

army was on the Chickahominy, the chief engineer, Barnard, wishing to get some information about the country across the river, turned to a lieutenant whom he saw standing by, and said to him, "Jump in!" The lieutenant sprang into the river, and crossed it, holding his weapons high over his head. After a dangerous exploration of the tangled thickets on the other side, he recrossed the river and made his report to General Barnard. When Barnard gave an account of this to McClellan, McClellan asked him the name of the officer. Barnard did not know the name; but after some search the young officer was found and sent to headquarters, where he appeared with flushed face, unkempt hair, his clothing and boots still soiled and dirty from his plunge into the river. McClellan soon put him at his ease, and impressed by his intelligent and comprehensive report, suddenly said to him, "Do you know you are just the young man I've been looking for. How would you like to come on my staff?" The embarrassed lieutenant replied, "You don't really mean it, General?" "I do," said McClellan. "How say you?"

This young lieutenant was none other than George Custer, known at West Point by the sobriquet of "Cinnamon" because of his use of cinnamon hair oil. Custer thus commenced a meteoric career which streamed with brilliancy till it was quenched in the smoke and carnage of the battle with the Indians on the Big Horn. When one of the officers asked Custer how he felt when McClellan made him the proposition to go on his staff, he replied, "I felt I could have died for him!" That was the feeling of the average officer and soldier of the Army of the Potomac. They were always ready to die for McClellan.



## II

### “THE FIRST GREAT CRIME OF THE WAR”

“I do not know whether the perpetrators of this crime were punished for it in this life. But the ghastly account of bloodshed in Virginia for the next three years shows that the innocent country was punished in a way that will be remembered by widows and orphans for a generation.”

The crime to which General Franklin, one of McClellan's corps commanders thus refers, was the holding back from McClellan's army of its most powerful corps, McDowell's, just when the campaign on the Peninsula had commenced.

The astute commander of the Confederate Army, Joseph E. Johnston, recommended to the Confederate authorities that the stand against McClellan's army be made near Richmond, and that no energies be wasted in attempting to check McClellan at the end of the Peninsula. But in this wise plan he was temporarily overruled by Davis and by Lee, then military adviser to Davis, and orders were given him to take command on the Peninsula. Johnston did so with the expectation that sooner or later his plan would have to be adopted. “The belief that events on the Peninsula would soon compel the Confederate Government to adopt my method of opposing the Federal army, reconciled me somewhat to the necessity of obeying the President's order.”\* All that Johnston did was to make a show of strength at the end of the Peninsula. McClellan, cautiously advancing up the Peninsula, after having been checked for a little by 12,000 men under Magruder, sat down to the siege of Yorktown.

Eighty-one years before, October 21, 1781, after the surrender of Cornwallis, Baron Steuben, the Inspector-General of Washington's Army, planted the Stars and Stripes on the British works at Yorktown. The fall of Yorktown and the raising of the American flag on the parapet marked the end of the War for Independence and

\* Johnston, *Narrative*, 116.

the establishment of a new nation. On that October day in 1781, the troops from New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the South, rejoiced together over their common victory. Who then could have foreseen, that in less than a century the cannon would again be roaring at Yorktown, as soldiers from New England and Pennsylvania attacked the troops of Virginia and the Southern states, entrenched behind the same works which had protected the British troops?

McClellan invested Yorktown with all his scientific accuracy and engineering genius. Huge emplacements and parallels for bombarding the town were reared. But on the 3rd of May, just when McClellan was ready to blow the place to atoms with his huge siege guns, the Confederates decamped, retreating in the direction of Williamsburg, where, on the 5th of May, the advance of McClellan's army, under Hooker, Kearny, and Hancock, and with Sumner in general command, fought a serious engagement against the troops of Longstreet.

The evacuation of Yorktown was discovered by Professor T. S. C. Lowe, the balloonist, who was attached to McClellan's army. In the night he and General Heintzelman ascended in a balloon and quickly noted that the fortress of Yorktown was ablaze with bonfires, and that slowly moving wagons were leaving the fortress. As soon as they descended to the earth, they reported what they had discovered to General McClellan, who at once gave orders to rouse the sleeping corps commanders and start the army in pursuit of the Confederates in the early morning.

During the engagement at Williamsburg McClellan was at Yorktown, superintending the embarkation of Franklin's division, which was to be sent up the York River in the direction of White House, the future base of the Army, and did not know that an engagement of any importance was taking place, until it was too late to co-ordinate the valorous efforts of Hooker and Kearny. As soon as he understood the situation, McClellan mounted his horse and rode the fourteen miles through mud, water, swamps and woods, until he reached the front, between four and five o'clock in the afternoon. There, he says, he found "everything in a state of chaos and depression," and the attack at a standstill without a direct-

ing head. The presence of McClellan on the battlefield after his fourteen mile ride was like that of Sheridan when he rode his black Rienzi the twenty miles from Winchester to Cedar Creek. As soon as the weary and discouraged troops recognized McClellan riding through their ranks, wild and enthusiastic cheering told the Confederates that a new personality and a new factor had been thrown into the lagging battle. This was the first of those salvos of battle cheers which McClellan was to hear rolling about him wherever he met his troops in battle, until that November day in 1862, when he rode for the last time through the camp of his army. In this Williamsburg battle, Philip Kearny, on his own responsibility, ordered his division into the fight at the double quick. Seeing some exhausted soldiers by the roadside, he inquired who they were. They answered, "Jersey men." "Then," cried Kearny, "in the name of God, follow a one-armed Jersey Blue back into the fight, and we'll whip them to pieces!" Aroused by his presence and personality, the dispirited soldiers sprang up and went cheering into the midst of the battle.

When he entered Williamsburg on the morning after the battle, McClellan found the buildings of ancient William and Mary College crowded with the wounded. Students from this college had been his first adversaries in western Virginia. As he went among them in his friendly way, a wounded Confederate expressed the desire to speak with him. This man, a private in a Virginia regiment, told McClellan that he had been deputed by his comrades to beseech him to spare their lives. Not understanding what he meant, McClellan asked the man to repeat his petition. He then said that the soldiers had been told that the northern men had come down to Virginia to destroy and slay, and that their intention was to kill all prisoners, wounded and unwounded. But having been told that McClellan had treated kindly the prisoners he had taken in West Virginia the year before, they hoped that he might be induced to spare their lives. "I then relieved his mind," says McClellan, "by telling him that although I was perhaps the most brutal among the northern Generals, I would treat them precisely as I did my own wounded." As he said this, McClellan noted the expression of relief which came over the faces of the un-

fortunate soldiers who lay on the floor, and who had listened with keen interest to the conversation.

Lincoln watched the long siege of Yorktown with much misgiving. "Your call for Parrot guns from Washington," he wrote McClellan during the siege, "alarms me, chiefly because it argues indefinite procrastination. Is anything to be done?" Yes, something was already being done; but in a slow, but scientific and sure way, and with the least possible loss in life. Francis Blair, Sr., when discontent and impatience was showing itself in Washington because of the Yorktown siege, wrote to McClellan, "There is a prodigious cry of 'On to Richmond!' among the carpet-knights of our city, who will not shed their blood to get there. . . . If you can accomplish your object of reaching Richmond by a slower process than storming redoubts and batteries in earthworks, the country will applaud the achievement which gives success to its arms with greatest parsimony of the blood of its children." As events turned out, McClellan might have taken Yorktown by assault; but with the information then at hand, his slow, but not costly, method of siege was to be preferred.

At one o'clock on the morning of April 6th, just as the thunder of his guns was proclaiming the investment of Yorktown, McClellan, sitting in his tent, wrote to his wife these words: "While listening this P.M. to the sound of the guns I received an order detaching McDowell's corps from my command. It is the most infamous thing that history has recorded." Whether infamous or not, the verdict of history is that the order to which McClellan refers was a sad blunder on the part of Lincoln and Stanton. It was this which, in the end, spelled the doom of McClellan's campaign.

Before McClellan had started from Alexandria for the Peninsula, one of his divisions, the picturesque Blenker's, consisting of ten thousand men, had been taken away from him. This did not make McClellan feel happy; but it in no way prepared him for what was to follow. How Blenker's division came to be detached from McClellan is explained in a letter of Lincoln to General Fremont, who had been given a new command, the Mountain Department in West Virginia. Fremont, who had been deposed for incapacity and too ardent emancipation sen-

timents from his command in the Mississippi Valley, had written Lincoln reminding him of a promise that the President was to give him a corps of 35,000 men. In his answer Lincoln wrote: "Your despatch of yesterday, reminding me of a supposed understanding that I would furnish you a corps of 35,000 men, and asking of me the fulfillment of this understanding, is received. I am ready to come to a fair settlement of accounts with you on the fulfillment of the understanding." Lincoln then goes on to say how, "at the expense of great dissatisfaction to General McClellan," he had taken the 10,000 men of Blenker's division and given them to Fremont. Thus we see the President in one of his characteristic military decisions, merely for the sake of appeasing a disappointed general who was a proved failure, weakening the army of the chief commander.

Just before McClellan sailed for the Peninsula, Lincoln had given him the assurance that although Fremont wanted this division, he would not give it to him. But at the last moment Lincoln wrote him, saying, "This morning I felt constrained to order Blenker's division to Fremont; and I write this to assure you that I did so with great pain, understanding that you would wish it otherwise. If you could know the full pressure of the case I am confident that you would justify it, even beyond a mere acknowledgment that the commander-in-chief may order what he pleases." On this strange defense, McClellan's comments: "To this it might be replied that the commander-in-chief has no right to order what he pleases; he can only order what he is convinced is right. And the President had already assured me that he knew this thing to be wrong, and had informed me that the pressure was only a political one to swell Fremont's command."

Lincoln's understanding with McClellan, when he gave his consent to the Peninsula Campaign, was that he would leave Washington "entirely secure." But on the day after McClellan sailed, April 2nd, General Wadsworth in command of the Washington garrison, a patriotic, but untrained and unscientific soldier, reported to the Secretary of War that in his opinion the force left under his command was inadequate. Instead of being satisfied with the opinion of the trained expert who had constructed the defenses of Washington, Lincoln took the advice of the

patriotic New York volunteer, Wadsworth, and ordered McDowell's corps to be held back. On April 3rd, Franklin, of McDowell's corps, was about to embark his division, when he received orders to call at headquarters. At the War Department he found McDowell and Wadsworth. McDowell told Franklin that about an hour before, Stanton had told him that McClellan had intended to work by strategy, and not by fighting, and that he should not have another man from his department; that all the enemies of the administration centered about him and that he had political aspirations. Stanton also declared that McClellan had disobeyed the President's orders as to the troops to be left in Washington. McDowell earnestly protested, but in vain, against Stanton's orders, and his corps was sent to Catlett Station in Virginia, where it could do no good.

Speaking of this fatal order, Franklin says: "McClellan's plan of turning Yorktown by the movement of McDowell's corps on the north bank of the York River was utterly destroyed. Thus was consummated the first great crime of the war. An army of nearly 100,000 men, which had been in preparation for more than six months, was despatched to deal the enemy a deadly blow, under the General who had organized it and was beloved by it, and who was unanimously recognized by soldiers and civilians as its proper Commander. But before he had been absent forty-eight hours, his largest corps, commanded by his second in command, containing more than one-fourth of his army, attached to a service which was vital to the success of his campaign, was detached from his command without consultation with him and without his knowledge. I do not know whether the perpetrators of this crime were punished for it in this life, but the ghastly account of bloodshed in Virginia for the next three years shows that the innocent country was punished in a way that will be remembered by widows and orphans for a generation." \*

Whatever may have been in Stanton's mind, he certainly showed a disposition not to help McClellan to succeed; Lincoln's motives were sincere and patriotic. He was led to believe that Washington was in danger, and thus was persuaded to issue the calamitous order. In

\* William B. Franklin, "First Great Crime of the War," in *Annals of the War*, 81. Philadelphia, Times Publishing Company, 1879.

answer to McClellan's complaints and protests against this measure, Lincoln wrote a long letter of explanation and self-defense. He tells McClellan that his despatches complaining that he has not been properly supported, "while they do not offend me, do pain me very much." McClellan, he says, had disregarded his implicit orders that Washington be left entirely secure. Then, looking to the future, he urges McClellan to move faster, saying, "It is indispensable to you that you strike a blow. I am powerless to help this." In his comment of Lincoln's exhortation to move faster and accomplish more, McClellan refers to an incident of which he had heard when he was in the Crimea in 1855. The French Emperor had telegraphed the French Commander, Pelissier, to renew an assault immediately. When Pelissier explained that preliminary preparations would require several weeks, the Emperor cabled a peremptory order to attack at once; whereupon Pelissier cabled, "I will not renew the attack until ready. If you wish it done, come and do it yourself."

McClellan was right in not moving until such time as he, the commander of the army, and the one responsible for the movement, felt himself ready for it. The experience of McClellan, hampered and badgered by Washington, is in striking contrast with the liberty and patience with which Lincoln indulged Grant during his protracted Virginia campaign. But here again we see what Grant meant when he said it was unfortunate for McClellan that he had been thrust into this high command at the beginning of the war. Had Grant been in command on the Peninsula in 1862, he would have had to suffer the same interference and annoyance at the hands of Washington and Lincoln that McClellan did. By 1864 Lincoln was a wiser man, and the North a more patient people.

The handicap under which McClellan labored, as compared with the free hand given Grant, is well put in a letter of Colonel Theodore Lyman, who was on the the staff of General Meade during Grant's Virginia campaign:

I liked McClellan, but was not "daft" about him; and was indeed somewhat shaken by the great cry and stories against him. But now, after seeing

this country and this campaign, I wish to say, in all coolness, that I believe he was, both as a military man and as a manager of a country under military occupation, the greatest general this war has produced. . . . Mind, I don't say he was perfect. I say he was our best. Think how well we are off. Do we want the very garrison of Washington? Grant beckons, and nobody is hardy enough to say him nay. McClellan had over 20,000 men taken from him at the very crisis of the campaign. Suppose at the culmination of our work, a telegraph from the President should come: "Send General Wright and 25,000 men at once to Winchester." How would that do?\*

It is after his great disappointment in the matter of McDowell's corps, that a note of bitterness creeps into the correspondence of McClellan, expressions which show his conviction that there were those in Washington who would gladly betray him, and if possible, prevent his success. We come upon sentences like the following:

Don't worry about the wretches; they have done their worst, and can't do much more. I am sure that I will win in the end, in spite of their rascality. History will present a sad record of these traitors who are willing to sacrifice the country and its army for personal spite and personal aims. . . . I am tired of public life; and even now, when I am doing the best that I can for my country in the field, I know that my enemies are pursuing me more remorselessly than ever, and 'kind friends' are constantly making themselves agreeable by informing me of the pleasant predicament in which I am—the rebels on one side, and the abolitionists and other scoundrels on the other. I believe in my heart and conscience, however, that I am walking on the ridge between the two gulfs, and that all I have to do is to try to keep the path of honor and truth, and that God will bring me safely through.

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\* Lyman, *Meade's Headquarters, 1863-1865*, 141-42.



“Abolitionists and other scoundrels”! That would not have made pleasant reading for Chase and Sumner and Benjamin Wade, and other powerful leaders in the Republican Party. Expressions such as this, while they do not convict McClellan of a lack of love for the Union, or a lack of interest in the war for its maintenance, do show that the suspicion among certain leaders of the administration, that McClellan was out of sympathy with the great emancipation element of the North was well founded. McClellan goes into battle under two great handicaps; first, the ill disguised hostility of powerful personalities at Washington, and second, a lack of heart in the cause, as that cause was conceived of by thousands upon thousands of patriots at the North. True, the two most successful Union generals, Sherman and Grant, had even less zeal for the destruction of slavery than McClellan, and Grant’s family held slaves even after the war commenced. But these two generals in the last two years of the war were winning great successes and victories, and a certain coldness towards emancipation did not hurt their standing with their armies or with the government. But had either one been in command in the Peninsula in 1862, and his views on the subject of slavery been widely known, he would have had to contend with the same opposition which hampered McClellan.

Among the first who gave the “last full measure of devotion” on the Peninsula was a young Vermont lad, William Scott, a private in Company K, 3rd Vermont Regiment. Scott, when with his regiment on the Potomac, volunteered to act as sentinel in place of a sick comrade, and thus, for the first time in his life, was awake all night. The next night he was called out again to act as sentinel and fell asleep at his post. A court martial sentenced the lad, with two others who had been guilty of the same offense, to be shot. Some of the boy’s comrades went to L. E. Chittenden, the Register of the Treasury, and a Vermonter, and got him to plead the case of Scott with Lincoln. Lincoln went to visit the boy in the tent where he was confined, and after talking with him about his home and his parents, and looking at the photograph which the boy showed him of his mother, said to him as he was about to leave, “My boy, you are not going to be shot tomorrow. I believe you when you tell me that you

could not keep awake. I am going to trust you and send you back to the regiment. But I have been put to a great deal of trouble on your account. I have had to come here from Washington when I had a great deal to do. Now, what I want to know is, 'How are you going to pay my bill?' When the boy mentioned his bounty in the savings bank, and money his family could get by a mortgage on the farm, and the help his comrades in the company would give, Lincoln said: 'But it is a great deal more than that. My bill is a very large one. Your friends cannot pay it, nor your bounty, nor the farm, nor all your comrades. There is only one man in all the world who can pay it, and his name is William Scott. If from this day William Scott does his duty, so that when he comes to die he can look me in the face as he does now, and say, 'I have kept my promise and have done my duty as a soldier,' then my debt will be paid. Will you make that promise and try to keep it?''

The promise was kept and the debt discharged on a fresh spring morning on the 16th of April, 1862, when, in a battle at Lee's Mills, near Yorktown, the young Vermont soldier fell, mortally wounded, in an attack upon the Confederate rifle pits. As he lay dying, he charged his comrades to tell the President that he had tried to keep his promise and pay his debt.\*

\* L. E. Chittenden, *Recollections of President Lincoln and His Administration*, New York and London, Harper & Brothers, 1901. Unsuccessful efforts have been made to discredit this testimony of a reputable and honored public servant, on the ground that the record of this pardon cannot be found in the War Department. This might well have been for it is quite possible that Lincoln should have pardoned the soldier and no record of it been preserved.

### III

## LINCOLN VERSUS STONEWALL JACKSON

After the battle of Williamsburg, McClellan's army moved slowly up the Peninsula, first to West Point, where the Pamunkey and the Mattaponi Rivers join to form the York, and thence up the banks of the Pamunkey River to White House, where the army established its headquarters on the 16th of May. Fleets and transports brought plentiful supplies and munitions of war up the York and the Pamunkey to the army's new base. In a short time a canvas city of more than 100,000 inhabitants arose in this wilderness on the Pamunkey. It was May time, and the dogwood, the magnolias, jessamines, and all the forest flowers were blooming in rich profusion, and multitudes of birds answered the soldiers' songs with their spring-time melody. On a pleasant grassy plateau, where the broad Pamunkey flows silently through the forest solitudes, one can see today a few scattered stones and bricks. They are all that is left of the fine old Virginia mansion, White House. It was here that McClellan established his headquarters. White House was the former home of Washington's wife, Martha Custis, there he courted her, and there he spent his honeymoon. The mansion, which has since been destroyed, stood on a grassy elevation overlooking the broad Pamunkey, the waters of which, hitherto visited only by the waterfowl or an occasional fishing boat, were now covered with steamers and schooners bringing supplies for McClellan's army.

When General Lee entered the Confederate Army and abandoned his home at Arlington, White House, which had come down to his wife, became his family seat. When Mrs. Lee departed upon the approach of McClellan's army, she left on a table a note which read as follows: "Northern soldiers, who profess to reverence Washington, forbear to desecrate the home of his first married life." Almost the first Union officer who entered the house was a cousin of the Lee family, commanding a regi-

ment of cavalry. McClellan respected the wish of the departed owners, and not only forbade any of his troops to enter the place, but abstained from doing so himself, occupying a tent in a nearby field. On the wall of the room where Mrs. Lee's note had been found, one of the guard left this answer: "A Northern officer has protected your property, in sight of the enemy, and at the request of your officer." \*

Because he thus protected the property of Lee's wife, McClellan's enemies at Washington were not slow to assail him for holding too friendly relationship with leaders of the Confederacy and with unpatriotic sentimentalism towards those in arms against the government. On the day of his arrival at White House, McClellan entered St. Peter's Church, where Washington was married. Always a devout Christian, McClellan, finding himself alone in the church, knelt down in the chancel and prayed that he might serve his country as unselfishly and truly as the great patriot who had often worshipped there.

The leisurely advance of McClellan's mighty host up the Peninsula created deep anxiety in the Capital of the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis sent his family off to Raleigh, North Carolina, and the Sunday before their departure received Christian baptism in his home. Some days later, he writes to his wife, "Be of good cheer and continue to hope that God will in due time deliver us from the hands of our enemies. As the clouds grow darker, and when one after another of those who are trusted are detected in secret hostility, I feel like mustering clans were in me, and that cramping fetters have fallen from my limbs." Some time later, he writes to his wife that he is forwarding to her the sword he wore for many years in the army, and the pistols he used at Monterey and Buena Vista. †

All was not concord at Richmond by any means. Davis' military adviser, General Lee, was spoken of as "evacuating Lee," and his unsuccessful campaign in Western Virginia against Rosecrans had seriously damaged his military reputation. Commenting on the Confederate President's religious expressions and confessions, John M. Daniel, in an editorial in *The Examiner*,

\* Pollard, *Lee and His Lieutenants*, 68.

† Davis, *Jefferson Davis*, II, 269, 273, 279.

said, "When we find the President standing in a corner telling his beads, and relying on a miracle to save the country, instead of mounting his horse and putting forth every power of the government to defeat the enemy, the effect is depressing in the extreme." The Federal gunboats had gone up the James River as far as Drewry's Bluff and thrown shells into the fort. This gave Richmond a real scare and provoked the editors of the papers to eloquent "last stand" declarations. If worse comes to worst, let the ruins of Richmond be the monument to its heroism. As the Russians gave Moscow to the flames, rather than let it become the dwelling place of the French, so, if necessary, let it be with Richmond.\* But all during the period of McClellan's slow and cautious advance, Confederate troops were being assembled for the defense of Richmond, so that when the battles around Richmond commenced on May 31st, McClellan was confronted by the largest Confederate Army that fought during the whole war.

Disappointed in the disarrangement of his plans by the withdrawal of McDowell's Corps, McClellan still maintained his poise and calmness of spirit. He is shown at his best in a letter to his old friend and comrade, Burnside:

My dear Burn: It always does me good, in the midst of my cares and perplexities, to see your wretched old scrawling. I have terrible troubles to contend with, but have met them with a good heart, like your good old self, and have thus far struggled through successfully. . . . I pray for God's blessing on our arms, and rely far more on his goodness than I do on my poor intellect. I sometimes think now that I can almost realize that Mahomet was sincere. When I see the hand of God guarding one so weak as myself, I can almost think myself a chosen instrument to carry out his schemes. Would that a better man had been selected. . . . Goodbye, and God bless you, Burn.

McClellan did not give up his appeals to the government to order McDowell's large corps to his assistance.

\* *Richmond Dispatch*, May 15, 1862,

Several telegrams to the Secretary of War brought no reply. Then McClellan telegraphed directly to the President. In this telegram he urges upon the President the necessity of concentrating upon the attack against Richmond, and not dissipating the energy of the government by a divided effort. He assures Lincoln that the soldiers of the army love their government and will fight for it, and that they have full confidence in him as their general and in Lincoln as their President. Other influences, too, were at work on Lincoln. One of McClellan's corps commanders, Keys, had written a long letter to Senator Ira Harris, explaining to him the folly of breaking up McClellan's campaign by holding back McDowell. "The great master of war," he writes, "has said that if you will invade a country successfully, you must have one line of operation and one army under one General. But what is our condition? The State of Virginia was made to constitute the command, in part or wholly, of some six Generals. The great battle of the war is to come off here. If we win it, the rebellion will be crushed. If we lose it, the consequences will be more horrible than I care to tell."

Four days after McClellan telegraphed to Lincoln, he received a telegram from Stanton, saying that McDowell had been ordered to march at the earliest moment and by the shortest route to join him. McClellan was to push out the right wing of his army to the north, so as to establish communications with McDowell coming down from the direction of Fredericksburg. But the order made it clear that McDowell's chief task always was to cover and protect Washington. "You will give him no order," telegraphed Stanton, "which can put him out of position to cover this city." In a memorandum for McDowell on May 17th, Lincoln gave him the following instructions: "While co-operating with General McClellan you will obey his orders, except that you are to judge, and are not to allow your force to be disposed otherwise than so as to give the greatest protection to this Capital."

In an endorsement on this order, the Quartermaster-General, M. C. Meigs, wrote to the Secretary of War, "*I suggest that it is dangerous to direct a subordinate not to obey the orders of his superior in any case.*" There could be no better illustration of Lincoln's extraordinary management of military affairs than this memo-

randum to McDowell, where he practically tells him to use his own judgment as to whether or not he shall obey the orders of his superior.

Inasmuch as McClellan was ordered to effect a junction with McDowell's corps coming from the north, he felt it necessary for him to divide his army into two parts, separated by the Chickahominy River, three corps being stationed north of the river and two corps on the south side. McClellan was alive to the danger of such an arrangement; but, under the circumstances, if he was to threaten Richmond, and at the same time keep in touch with McDowell, there was nothing else for him to do.

With McDowell's corps of 40,000 men coming up, McClellan was still hopeful of success. On the 24th of May he received a telegram from Lincoln telling him that McDowell's corps would soon go forward and join him, and giving him this admonition, "I wish you to move cautiously and safely." But a few hours later Lincoln telegraphed him that he had been compelled to suspend McDowell's movement.

The cause for this almost fatal order was the outbreak in the Shenandoah Valley of Stonewall Jackson, who had attacked and worsted the Union forces at Winchester, and was marching towards the Potomac. This gave Lincoln and the administration a great scare. McClellan had tried to make it plain to Lincoln that all such raids would be only a feint, and that Washington was safe as long as a great Federal army threatened Richmond. But Lincoln, in great anxiety for the Capital, took counsel of his fears instead of his general, and embarking on the sea of military science himself, sent McDowell to the Shenandoah Valley to join with Banks and Fremont in a futile effort to destroy Jackson's fleet-footed army. When McClellan received the President's orders he wrote to his wife: "I have this moment received a dispatch from the President, who is terribly scared about Washington, and talks about the necessity of my returning in order to save it. Heaven save a country governed by such counsels."

McDowell, as well as McClellan, realized the foolishness of the order he had received; but with soldier-like promptness he proceeded to carry out his orders. In his reply McDowell said, "The President's order has been received and is in process of execution. This is a crush-

ing blow to us." Lincoln answered, "I am highly gratified by your alacrity in obeying my orders. The change was as painful to me as it can possibly be to you or to anyone. Everything now depends upon the celerity and vigor of your movements." Replying to this message, McDowell gave it as his opinion that he could accomplish nothing in the effort to capture Jackson. "I shall gain nothing for you there, and lose much for you here. It is, therefore, not only on personal grounds that I have a heavy heart in the matter, but I feel that it throws us all back, and from Richmond north, we shall have all our large mass paralyzed, and shall have to repeat what we have just accomplished."\* On this same day Lincoln, anxious and disturbed about the orders he had given, telegraphed his defense and apology to McClellan, and tried to picture the desperate situation in which Washington would have found itself, if McDowell at that time had been with McClellan. "If McDowell's force was now beyond our reach, we should be entirely helpless. Apprehensions something like this, and no unwillingness to sustain you, has always been my reason for withholding McDowell's forces from you. Please understand this and do the best you can with the forces you have."

When Grant was fighting in Virginia, he had to deal with the same unwarranted apprehension at Washington of an attack on the Capital. "When I was in the field, I had on two or three occasions to come to Washington to see that Halleck carried out my orders. I found that there was some panic about the rebels coming between our army and the Capital, and Halleck had changed or amended my orders to avoid some such danger. I would say, 'I don't care anything about that. I do not care if the rebels do get between my troops and Washington, so that they get into a place where I can find them.'"<sup>†</sup> McClellan knew as well as Grant that a large Federal army threatening Richmond was Washington's best defense. When Grant was in command of the army he was able to enforce upon the government his opinions. But in 1862, when McClellan was on the Peninsula, the government had not yet learned its lesson, and took counsel of its fears, rather than of the general at the head of its army.

\* Abbott, *History of the Civil War*, II, 74.

† Young, *Around the World With General Grant*, II, 216.



## IV

### SEVEN LONELY PINES

With the understanding that McDowell's withdrawal was still only temporary, and that he would eventually come forward to join him, McClellan maintained his position and planned for an offensive against Richmond. But his position was undoubtedly dangerous. A famous general once said, "A general must suppose that his opponent will do against him whatever he ought to do." This is precisely what the Confederate Commander, Joseph E. Johnston proceeded to do. Watching with eagle eye the divided Union army, his first plan was to attack the three corps of McClellan's army which lay north of the Chickahominy, and accomplish their destruction before McDowell could come up with reinforcements. But when he learned through Stuart's Cavalry of the withdrawal of McDowell, and favored by a terrific rainstorm which had flooded the bridges of the Chickahominy, he changed his plan, and directed his attack against the two corps which were isolated on the south side of the river.

The first intimation the Union army had of the impending attack was the capture on the morning of the 31st of May of one of Johnston's aides-de-camp, whose presence so near the Union lines excited suspicion. About noon the Confederate attack struck the Union forces at Fair Oaks, six miles from Richmond. The smaller Union force was steadily driven back for more than a mile to Seven Pines, on the verge of the dismal White Oak Swamp. It looked like a complete rout of that part of McClellan's army south of the Chickahominy. But help was at hand.

Far across the Chickahominy, McClellan, seriously ill at his headquarters at New Bridge, had sent word to General Sumner to hold his corps in readiness to cross the river and aid the two corps which were being attacked. When General Sumner was building the two bridges over the Chickahominy, seeing that the river was rising

rapidly, and hoping to hasten the work, he gave the men a barrel of whiskey. The pious General O. O. Howard, of Maine, a regiment of whose brigade was helping in the work, protested to Sumner against the distribution of the whiskey. Sumner answered his objection by saying, "Yes, General, you are right; but it is like pitch on fire, which gets speed out of the engine, though it burns out the boiler." With commendable zeal, Sumner moved his corps close up to the one bridge which was available, the other bridge having been swept away by the flood.

While the battle was raging across the Chickahominy, Sumner was pacing up and down the banks of the river like a caged lion. At 2:30 P.M. he received McClellan's order to cross the river, and immediately put his columns in motion. A less heroic and energetic commander than Sumner would have hesitated and delayed, and perhaps never dared to cross the flooded river. When the head of Sumner's column came near the bridge, the logs of the road approaching the bridge were afloat, and the bridge itself was swaying to and fro in the flood. The engineer officer in charge of the bridge rode up to Sumner and said, "General Sumner, you cannot cross this bridge!"

"Can't cross this bridge? I can, sir! I will, sir!"

"Don't you see the approaches are breaking up, and the logs displaced? It is impossible."

"Impossible! Sir. I tell you I *can* cross. I am ordered."

Wherever Sumner was ordered he went. Marching his troops over the bridge, as it swayed to and fro in the angry flood, Sumner crossed the river, threw his troops into battle, and the Confederate advance was stayed.\*

Followed by a calvalcade of eager sightseers, President Davis and General Robert E. Lee had ridden out to the scene of the conflict. Lee had written a note to Johnston expressing his willingness to participate in the battle. Johnston thanked him, invited him to ride down to the battlefield, and asked him to send such reinforcements as he could. Towards evening on the 31st, Johnston was wounded in the right shoulder with a musket shot, and a few minutes afterwards was unhorsed by a heavy fragment of shell which struck his breast. He was carried to the rear in an ambulance, and Major-General G. W. Smith

\* Howard, *Autobiography*, I, 237.

succeeded to the command of the Confederate Army. This Smith was McClellan's old friend of Mexican War days, known then by the sobriquet of "Legs."

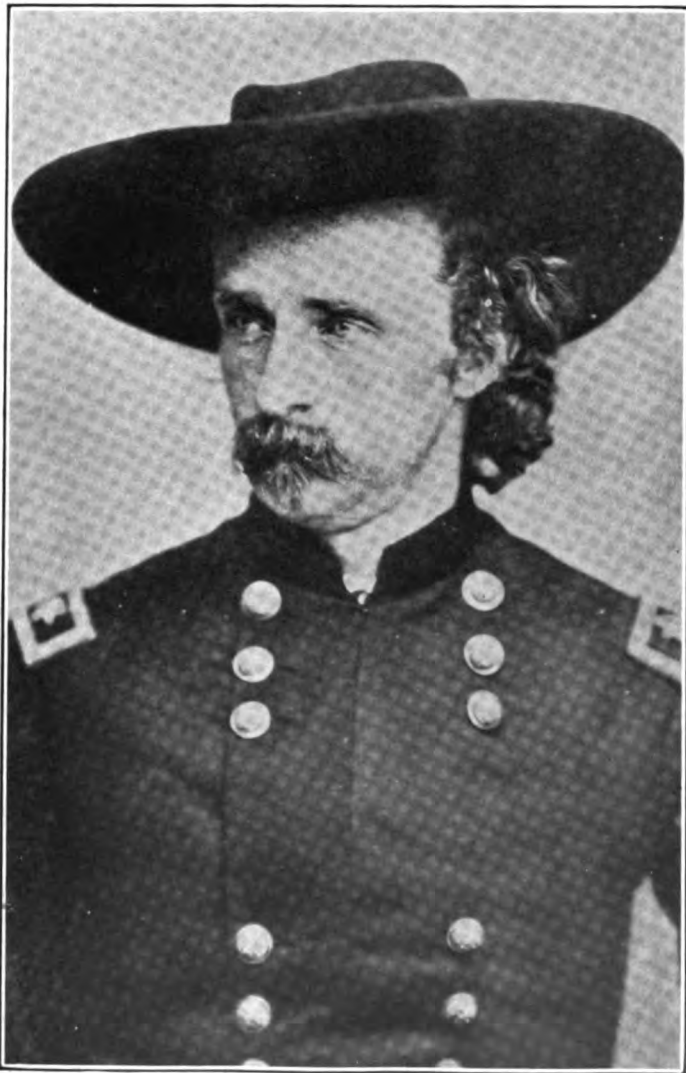
During the battle on May 31-June 1st, Professor T. S. C. Lowe was aloft in his balloon, and telegraphed important information to McClellan. This was the first time in military history that information was telegraphed from the sky. The Confederates, looking with envious eyes upon Lowe's huge balloon floating over their lines, resolved to have a balloon of their own. A call was sent out through the Confederate States, and the women of the Confederacy donated their silk skirts for the fabrication of the balloon. Unfortunately, the steamer to which the balloon was anchored was left high and dry in the James River, whereupon the Federals promptly seized it, and with it, most of the silk dresses left in the Confederacy. "This capture," said Longstreet, "was the meanest trick of the war, and one that I have never yet forgiven."

On Sunday morning, June 1st, after a brief conflict, the Confederate army withdrew, and the Union forces re-occupied the position at Fair Oaks which they had held at the beginning of the battle on the day before. The initial success of the Confederate army at Seven Pines, followed the next day by a Union success, was characteristic of many of the battles of the Civil War, such as Shiloh, Stone River, and Gettysburg, where the first successes were with the Confederate army, but the final victory with the Union. Speaking of this in his comments on the battle of Shiloh, General Grant said: "It was the staying power and pluck of the North as against the short-lived power of the South; and whenever these qualities came into collision the North always won. I used to find that the first day, or the first period of a battle, was most successful to the South; but if we held on to the second or third day, we were sure to beat them, and we always did."

At noon on the first of June, General Lee was appointed to succeed Johnston. He did not, however, at once assume command, but with generous consideration gave General Smith a chance to win a victory on that day, if the opportunity presented itself. The grimness of war was now apparent to the soldiers and officers of both armies, most of whom had never been in action. General

John B. Gordon, one of the Confederate officers, riding forward with his men into battle, noted among the wounded his nineteen year old brother, a Captain, shot through the lungs; but he dared not turn aside, even to ease the agony of a brother. The irony of war was illustrated by the feeling entertained by one of the Confederate officers, Pickett, towards the Federal Commander. "I have heard," he wrote to his wife, "that my dear old friend, McClellan, is lying ill about ten miles from here. May some loving, soothing hand minister to him. He was, he is, and he always will be, even were his pistol pointed at my heart, my dear loved friend. May God bless him and spare his life."

Seven Pines was a fruitless battle for both sides; but the moral victory was with the Federal Army, for the Confederate attack had failed, and their army had retired towards Richmond. Some have blamed McClellan for not taking his whole army to the south side of the Chickahominy and advancing upon Richmond. But this was impossible, both because of the flooded state of the Chickahominy, and the risk incurred in separating himself from his base of supplies. McClellan, however, was making all preparations to press on towards Richmond. On the 2nd of June, the day after the battle of Seven Pines, he wrote, "I only wait for the river to fall, to cross with the rest of the force and make a general attack." The next day, Lincoln telegraphed him expressing his anxiety about his line of communications, with the flooded Chickahominy crossing it. McClellan assured him that every precaution was being taken, and reminded the President that the Army of the Potomac had no child's play before it. On the 5th of June McClellan got the encouraging news from Stanton that a part of McDowell's force was being sent up to reinforce him. The first reinforcements, McCall's division, arrived on the 11th of June. The fine spirit of McDowell is made clear in a letter to McClellan at this time: "For a third time I am ordered to join you, and hope this time to get through. In reference to the remarks made with reference to my leaving you and not joining you before, by your friends, and of something I have heard as coming from you on that subject, I wish to say, I go with the greatest satisfaction, and



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

**GEORGE CUSTER, McCLELLAN'S AIDE**

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hope to arrive, with my main body, in time to be of service.”

Things were looking more favorable now for McClellan. McDowell showed a desire to co-operate, and even Stanton telegraphed McClellan expressing his sympathy with him in his difficulties, and telling him how he was striving to help him in every way. Was it the promptings of the guilty conscience, or was it the sincere desire to remove misunderstandings, that made Stanton say in this telegram, “Be assured, General, that there never has been a moment when my desire has been otherwise than to aid you with my whole heart, mind and strength, since the hour we first met; and whatever others may say for their own purposes, you have never had, and never can have, any one more truly your friend, or more anxious to support you, or more joyful than I shall be at the success which I have no doubt will soon be achieved by your arms?”

When he wrote this avowal of friendship and loyalty, Stanton had been guilty of acts of gross disrespect to McClellan, and had done and said things of a nature to affect seriously his standing with the President and with the government.

## V

### THE SEVEN DAYS' BATTLE

In contrast with Johnston, who was never a favorite with Davis, Lee when he took command was at once permitted to assemble the largest army that ever fought under the Stars and Bars. Lee's plan was to bring Jackson and his army from the Shenandoah Valley and attack that portion of the Union army lying north of the Chickahominy River, and, if possible, cut it off from its base of supplies and from the rest of the Union army. McClellan fully realized the faulty location of his army, divided as it was by the Chickahominy, a position into which he had been forced by the repeated assurances that McDowell's corps would come in on his right wing; an assurance which was maintained up to the 26th of June, the very day on which the Confederates launched their assault. McClellan knew that the weakness of his position would be noted by General Lee. If there was any doubt in the mind of Lee as to the position of McClellan, it was cleared away by "Jeb" Stuart's spectacular raid around the Union army on June 14th. The cavalry commander with the right wing of the Union army was Brigadier General P. St. George Cooke, Stuart's father-in-law. When Stuart was a lieutenant in the First Cavalry, he was stationed for a time at Fort Leavenworth, where Cooke was the colonel commanding the Second United States Dragoons. Colonel Cooke had three beautiful daughters, Flora, Mariah, and Julia. The young lieutenant stormed the heart of the first daughter, Flora, with an ardor and dispatch which later was to characterize his dashing cavalry raids, and in two weeks arrangements were being made for the wedding.

Stuart's raid around McClellan did little damage, but furnished Lee with the information that McClellan's extreme right was in a dangerous position, "in the air," as military men say, and that there was a good chance for a successful attack at that point. The raid probably

played a part, too, in McClellan's change of base; for it was after this that he began to talk and plan with his quartermaster, Ingalls, about a change of base to the James River. Ingalls displayed conspicuous courage and resolution when the base at the White House was threatened by Stuart's raiders. He mustered teamsters, clerks, roustabouts, and every man who could pull a trigger. Instead of sending appeals to McClellan, he said, "I have not been pressing for troops, because I hoped we could defend the depot with the force provided, and because I knew the General Commanding wishes every good soldier with him in front of Richmond." \*

Seriously ill during the battle of Seven Pines, although he managed to be in the saddle most of the time, McClellan was indisposed until June 11th, when he mounted his horse for the first time since the battle. This sickness was a relic of the Mexican War; "My old Mexican enemy," he called it.

On the 12th of June, McClellan moved his headquarters south of the Chickahominy to Dr. Trent's house. Always a man of tender feeling, McClellan was shocked by the sights of the battlefield, with "its mangled corpses and poor suffering wounded." Anxious because of the still flooded state of the Chickahominy, pouring like a torrent between his divided army, he takes confidence in Providence: "I regret all this extremely, but take comfort in the thought that God will not leave so great a struggle as this to mere chance. If He ever interferes with the destinies of men and nations, this would seem to be a fit occasion for it."

The advance of McClellan's army was now within a few miles of Richmond. On a still night the outposts could hear the bells strike the hours, and on a clear day they could make out the spires and the towers of the Confederate Capital.

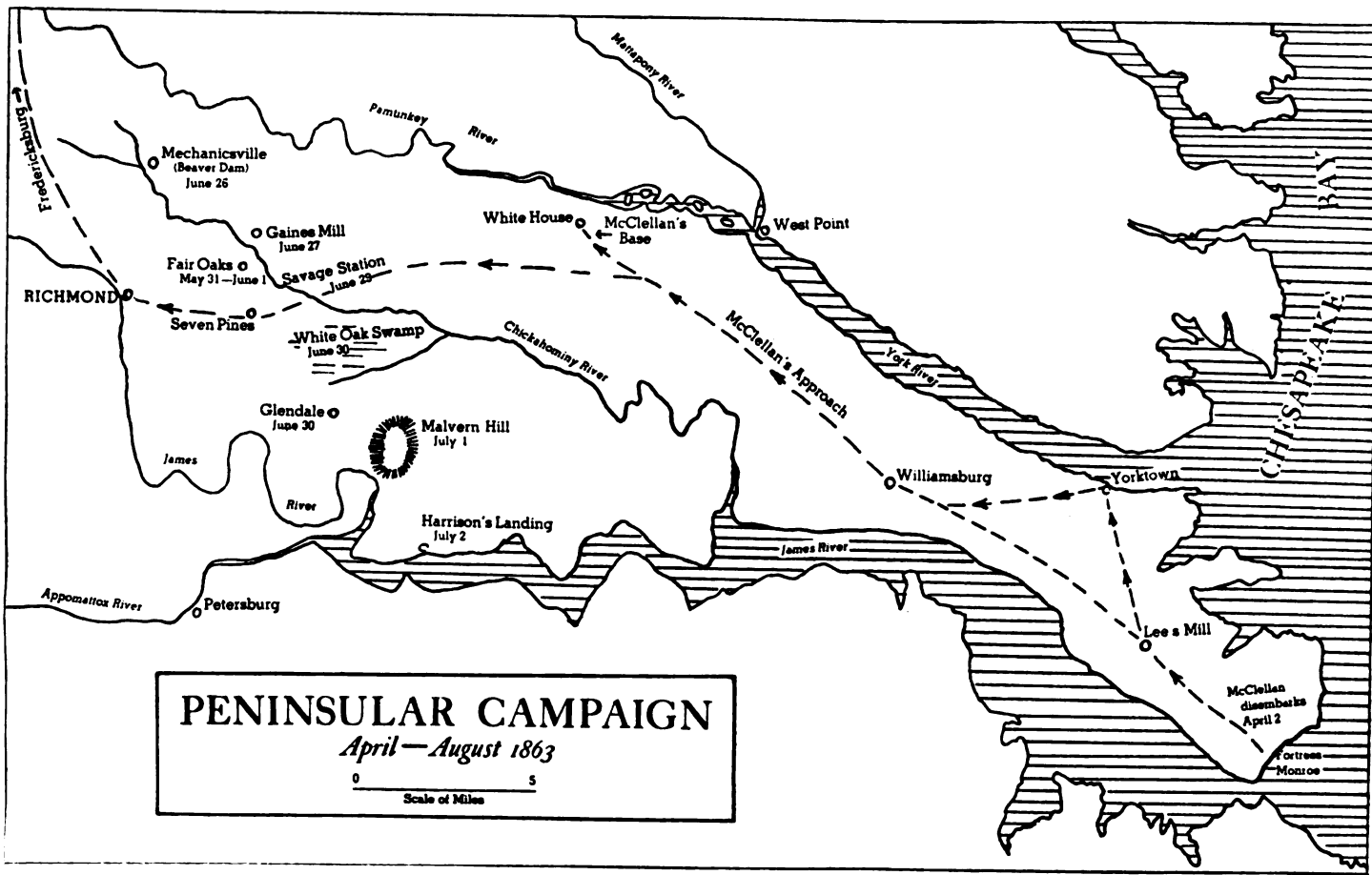
Meanwhile, within the Confederate lines, Lee was forging the thunderbolt which was soon to be launched against McClellan's host. On June 23rd, at the Dabb House, two miles from Richmond, Lee outlined his plan of campaign to his chief officers, the two Hills, D. H. and A. P., Longstreet, and Stonewall Jackson. Jackson had

\* John W. Thomason, Jr., *Jeb Stuart*, 148. New York, London, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930.



ridden almost sixty miles during the night, and was weary, and covered with red dust. He refused the refreshments offered him by Lee, but drank a glass of milk, and then sat grasping his sabre hilt and listening with austere countenance to Lee's plan. This, in brief, was as follows: Jackson was to march clear around McClellan's right wing, while the two Hills and Longstreet attacked that wing on the front. With a massed superiority in men of two to one, the chances looked good for success. But everything depended on the proper timing and co-ordination of the attacking columns. Jackson thought he could be up and in position by the 25th; but Longstreet suggested the morning of the 26th, and this was finally agreed to. As a matter of fact, Jackson did not get his men into position until late on the afternoon of the 26th, too late to be of any help to the Hills and Longstreet in their assault upon Porter. Operating by himself, Jackson moved like a whirlwind; but when operating under the command of another he was often a laggard.

The first intimation McClellan had of the storm that was soon to break over him, was when a deserter from Jackson's force brought word that Jackson's troops were on the march northwest of Richmond, and moving to a position in the rear of the Union right. McClellan reported this by telegram to Stanton, who replied, on June 25th, that although many false reports were out, it did look now as if Jackson were moving towards Richmond. On that day, McClellan advanced his forces south of the Chickahominy to a more desirable position, planning to make a serious attack on the 26th; but at 6 o'clock that night Negroes brought in word that Jackson was in the neighborhood of Hanover Courthouse. McClellan rightly surmised that Jackson was going to attack his right and rear. He then wired to Stanton, "I regret my great inferiority in numbers, but feel that I am in no way responsibility for it. . . . I will do all that a general can do with the splendid army I have the honor to command, and, if it is destroyed by overwhelming numbers, can at least die with it and share its fate. But if the result of the action, which will probably occur to-morrow, or within a short time, is a disaster, the responsibility cannot be thrown on my shoulders; it must rest where it belongs.



. . . I feel that there is no use in my again asking for reinforcements."\*

McClellan truly analyzed his critical situation. Yet, with a battle about to commence, we could wish that there had been more of the victory note in his voice. We do not like to hear a general just about to go into battle say, "If the result is a disaster." McClellan felt too much the burden of responsibility upon him, and was rendered over-cautious by the reflection that the hope of the country and the cause rested with his army. "When I see such insane folly behind me, I feel that the final salvation of the country demands the utmost prudence on my part, and that I must not run the slightest risk of disaster; for if anything happened to this army, our cause would be lost." His use of the Army of the Potomac may be compared with Admiral Jellicoe's use of the Grand Fleet during the World War. Jellicoe felt that Britain's safety lay with her fleet, and although his cautious policy dissatisfied many, he refused to jeopardize the safety of the fleet by attacking the German ships in their stronghold.

McClellan had taken every precaution to put his right wing in a position of defense. Very strong lines had been taken, facing on Beaver Creek, and the artillery posted in every advantageous position. At two P.M. the roar of a cannon echoed through the forests north of the Chickahominy. This was the signal to the Union troops that the Confederate soldiers were crossing the Chickahominy and that the attack would soon be made. Clouds of dust floating to the north and northwest let Porter know as he sat by the telegraph operator at his headquarters that Jackson also was coming in on his flank. The battle was joined at three o'clock and raged with fury until nine in the evening. The Confederates had no knowledge of the formidable position they were attacking, and the two Hills and Longstreet flung themselves against Porter's front, only to be repulsed with great loss. McClellan joined Porter on the battlefield during the afternoon and left him about one A.M. on the morning of the 27th. At three A.M. McClellan sent orders to Porter to withdraw to a new position in front of the bridges over the Chickahominy near Gaines' Mill. This was accomplished without loss before sunrise on the 27th.

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 392.

At two o'clock on the 27th, the Confederates came rushing again to the attack at Gaines' Mill. Just at hand was Cold Harbor, where two years later Grant was to meet the most bloody repulse of his career, when he attacked Lee's army. In Grant's battle, however, the positions of the Union and Confederate armies were reversed, Grant attacking Lee from the north; whereas in McClellan's battle, Lee was attacking Porter from the north. It was after the repulse at Cold Harbor that Grant, baffled and disappointed, changed his plan of campaign, and throwing his army across the James, attacked Richmond from the south. By six o'clock in the evening Jackson finally got his men into position, and the whole Confederate line swept forward, compelling Porter to withdraw his men across the Chickahominy.

A dramatic incident in the Gaines' Mill battle was a charge into the Confederate lines by the 5th United States Cavalry. The purpose of the charge was to check the Confederate infantry while the Union batteries were being brought off and taken over the Chickahominy. It was as hopeless a charge as that of the Light Brigade at Balaclava. Driven back from the Confederate lines, the cavalry horses broke, and galloping through the Union lines, created the impression that the batteries were being attacked by Confederate cavalry. In the confusion a number of the Union guns were lost.

One of the Union division Commanders, John Reynolds, one of the ablest officers in the army, who afterwards fell in the woods near the Seminary on the first day at Gettysburg, went to sleep on the battlefield and awoke to find his troops gone and the bridge over the Chickahominy broken down. He was captured and taken to the headquarters of his friend and messmate in the old army, D. H. Hill. In great distress, Reynolds, covering his face with his hand, exclaimed, "Hill, we ought not to be enemies!" This was only one of many such meetings in the brothers' war. Classmates at West Point, men who had fought together in Mexico, and together chased the Indians on the plains, were now opposing one another in a cruel and deadly combat.

Porter's magnificent stand north of the Chickahominy at Beaver Dam Creek and Gaines' Mill was inspired by the thought that if he successfully resisted the attack of

the major portion of Lee's army, McClellan would march on Richmond. McClellan's orders to Porter on the 23rd of June clearly intimate the possibility of such a move. "The troops on this side [south side of the Chickahominy] will be held ready either to support you directly or to attack the enemy in their front. If the force attacking you is large the general would prefer the latter course, counting upon your skill and the admirable troops under your command to hold their own against superior numbers long enough for him to make the decisive movement which will determine the fate of Richmond."\* The rank and file of the whole army under Porter was inspired with the thought that their resistance, and, if need be, their sacrifice, would make possible the capture of Richmond. In this account of the battle Porter says:

Though in a desperate situation, I was not without strong hope of some timely assistance from the main body of the army, with which I might repulse the attack and so cripple our opponents as to make the capture of Richmond by the main body of the army, under McClellan, the result of any sacrifice or suffering on the part of my troops or of myself. I felt that the life or death of the army depended upon our conduct in the contest of that day, and that on the issue of that contest depended an early peace or a prolonged, devastating war—for the Union cause could never be yielded. Our brave and intelligent men of all grades and ranks fully realized this, and thousands of them freely offered up their lives that day to maintain the sacred cause which they had voluntarily taken up arms to defend to the last extremity.†

During the night of the 27th McClellan withdrew Porter's troops to the south of the Chickahominy, and with a united army began the movement for his new base across the Peninsula on the James River. Answering the question why he did not march on Richmond, McClellan says that he was expecting to have his communications with his base at White House severed, and therefore must

\* *War Records*, I, II, pt. 3, p. 247.

† Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 336.

have a new base on the James. If in attacking Richmond he had been defeated, he would have lost his trains before reaching the James; and if he had taken Richmond, he still would have been without supply communications, and the victory would have been turned into disaster.

On the night of June 27th, in his headquarters at the Trent House, McClellan assembled his corps commanders and informed them of his plans for a change of base. When Lee and Davis had discussed the plans for the attack, Davis had said that if McClellan was the man he took him for when he promoted him to a new regiment of cavalry, and sent him to Europe during the Crimean War, he would attack Richmond as soon as he found that the bulk of the Confederate army was attacking his army north of the Chickahominy. But if, on the other hand, he acted like an engineer officer, and would deem it his first duty to protect his line of communication, he thought Lee's plan would be a success.\* Lee, an engineer himself, did not like Davis' reference about engineers, saying that he did not know that they were more likely than others to make mistakes, and told Davis that if McClellan should attack Richmond he would be on his heels before he got there. It was here that McClellan outwitted both Davis and Lee. He neither acted like a Napoleon, striking at Richmond the moment his right wing was attacked, nor, like an engineer, protecting his line of communication; but took a third course, apparently unforeseen by his adversaries, and started across the Peninsula for his new base on the James.

McClellan's headquarters were now moved from the Trent House to Savage Station two miles southeast. There it was, that at half past twelve on the morning of June the 28th, the day following the battle at Gaines' Mill, he sent his famous telegram to Stanton. In this telegram he said,

I now know the full history of the day. . . . The loss on both sides is terrible. I believe it will prove to be the most desperate battle of the war. The sad remnants of my army behave as men. . . . Had I twenty thousand (20,000), or even ten thousand

\* Jefferson Davis, *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, II, 132. Richmond, Garrett & Massie, 1938.

(10,000), fresh troops to use to-morrow, I could take Richmond; but I have not a man in reserve, and shall be glad to cover my retreat and save the material and *personnel* of the army.

If we have lost the day we have yet preserved our honor, and no one need blush for the Army of the Potomac. . . . I again repeat that I am not responsible for this, and I say it with the earnestness of a general who feels in his heart the loss of every brave man who has been needlessly sacrificed to-day. I still hope to retrieve our fortunes . . . you must send me very large reinforcements, and send them at once.

I know that a few thousand more men would have changed this battle from a defeat to a victory. . . . *I feel too earnestly to-night. I have seen too many dead and wounded comrades to feel otherwise than that the government has not sustained this army. If you do not do so now, the game is lost.*

*If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I owe no thanks to you or any other persons in Washington.*

*You have done your best to sacrifice this army.\**

The concluding paragraph of this extraordinary message to Stanton was deleted in the telegraph department of the War Department by Colonel E. S. Sanford. Sanford told the Assistant Secretary, Eckert, that the charge in McClellan's telegram was a charge of treason, an infamous untruth, and that he, as telegraphic censor, would not hand it to the Secretary of War. Eckert and Sanford regarded the telegram as an effort to show that Stanton, rather than McClellan, was responsible for the defeat. The telegram as sent by McClellan was not made public till it appeared in his official report a year later, when he was no longer with the army.

From now on, until it was drawn up intact at Harrison's Landing on the James River, the Army of the Potomac fought and floundered through the swampy wildernesses of the Peninsula, turning, ever and anon, like a wounded tiger, to spring on the pursuing foe. To

\* Author's italics. *McClellan's Own Story*, 424-25.

know the difficulty of this undertaking one must travel through the country. Here, where in those June days of '62 the flower of the youth of the North and South stabbed and hacked at one another, the country is still an abomination of desolation. The soil is a mixture of clay and quicksand, the rains quickly turning the roads into impassable morasses. The roads wind through growths of stunted oaks and pines, crossing innumerable streams, which, when at flood, overflow all their banks and carry away the bridges. In the more remote regions, the few roads lead through dismal swamps and bayous, noisome and pestilential with their vapors, infested by poisonous reptiles and dark with the shadows of low branching trees, covered with melancholy vines. Never did two armies fight in a country so dismal and so difficult for marching and manoeuvring. The first thought of McClellan was to get his enormous trains, winding like huge serpents through the defiles of the jungles and swamps, safely down to the James River. Along with the supply wagons went 2,500 beef cattle, bellowing before the host, now weary, and lying down in the roads, blocking the march of the army, regardless of the blows and oaths of their drivers, or, stricken with panic, rushing forward in a stampede which scattered the soldiers.

Through the whole of the 28th of June McClellan was able to get a day's start on Lee in his plunge through the jungles of the Peninsula, for Lee was not yet sure that McClellan was retreating towards the James, instead of down the York. On the night of the 28th, a Colonel Douglas, of A. P. Hill's division, lying on the ground heard what he thought to be the rumble of moving wagons, the sound being carried by some feature of the earth's structure. He sent an officer for General Hill. Hill lay down on the ground, listened a moment, and rising up, exclaimed, "Wagons! That's McClellan's whole wagon train, and it's moving towards the James. General Lee must know this at once!" Presently, Lee came up, and kneeling down, listened for a moment. Then rising, and brushing the stain of the leaves from his knees, he struck his hands together and exclaimed, "I fear McClellan is escaping me!" But there was still hope of destroying at least a part of his army before it could get through the swamps and labyrinths which lay between the Chicka-



hominny and the James. To accomplish this, Lee exerted all his energies and threw in all his troops.

At one o'clock on the morning of Sunday the 29th, General McCall arrived at McClellan's headquarters. After greeting him with the words, "Here is General McCall, the hero of Mechanicsville," McClellan took McCall apart and said to him: "General McCall, it is my desire to reach the James River before I am attacked by the enemy. If I destroy all the trains, including the private baggage, we can reach the James River in twenty-four hours. But if I attempt to take the trains with me, it will take us forty-eight hours to gain the river. What do you advise me to do?" If his thought was that McCall would be glad to have the roads cleared of the trains for the passage of the artillery which he was guarding, he was mistaken, for that officer, shaking the rain from his waterproof coat, and removing his cap from his head, and looking down on McClellan's upturned face, said: "General McClellan, I don't know that I sufficiently understand the situation of the army to advise you; but from what I do know, I would fight over every inch of the ground from here to the James, before I would destroy a wagon. The moment you destroy your trains, you demoralize the army."\* McClellan decided to take his trains with him, but ordered all trunks, private baggage, and camp equipage abandoned and destroyed, but not burned, so as not to notify the Confederates.†

The battles fought during the period of the Army of the Potomac's change of base are generally referred to as the Seven Days' Battle. Actually, however, these battles lasted through six days, from June 26th through July 1st. Five engagements took place at the following places and on the following dates: June 26th, Beaver Dam Creek; June 27th, Gaines' Mill; June 29th, Savage Station; June 30th, Glendale, or Frazier's Farm; July 1st, Malvern Hill. A singular thing about these battles, in contrast with many of the great battles of the Civil War, was that they were all fought in the afternoon, and several of them in the late afternoon. With the exception of the second

\* J. R. Sypher, *History of the Pennsylvania Reserve Corps*, 250. Lancaster, Pa., Elias Barr & Company, 1865.

† James F. Rusling, *Men and Things I Saw in Civil War Days*, 29. New York, Eaton & Mains, 1899.

battle, that of Gaines' Mill, all the battles resulted in severe and bloody repulses for the Confederate Army.

June 28th was a battleless day, with McClellan's columns getting a big start in the race for the James. On the 29th, the Confederate advance came in contact once more with that part of the Union Army under Franklin and Sumner at Savage Station, and a severe engagement took place, the Union army beating off Lee's assaults. On this day Jackson failed to take the part that was planned for him by Lee. Southern writers have attributed his lack of enterprise to the fact that it was a Sabbath Day, and Jackson, a strict Sabbatarian, did not exert himself. On his way to confer with Lee on June 23rd to plan for the great attack, Jackson and his Chief of Staff, the Presbyterian theologian, Dr. R. L. Dabney, left the train at dawn on Sunday, the 22nd, and spent the Sabbath attending camp meeting preaching. During the Savage Station engagement on Sunday, the 29th, Jackson reported to one of the Confederate commanders that he had other important duties to perform than to support Jones of Magruder's command. The "other important duty," to him the most important duty, was evidently attendance upon divine service.\*

When Franklin, at the close of the fighting at Savage Station, suggested to Sumner that they now carry out McClellan's orders and continue their retreat and cross the White Oak Swamp, the old hero, whose battle ardor was aroused, answered, "No, General, you shall not go, nor will I go—I never leave a victorious field. Why! if I had twenty thousand more men, I would crush this rebellion." Candles were then brought and Franklin read McClellan's order. But Sumner, in great excitement, exclaimed, "General McClellan did not know the circumstances when he wrote that note. He did not know that we would fight a battle and gain a victory." †

McClellan was obliged to leave behind him 2,500 sick and wounded in his field hospital at Savage Station. After that battle the army continued its retreat across the treacherous White Oak Swamp and took a new rear guard position at Glendale, or Frazier's Farm, where a battle

\* E. P. Alexander, *Military Memoirs of a Confederate*, 145. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910.

† Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 375.

with the usual result, the repulse of the attacking Confederate force, ensued. The Prince de Joinville, who was about to leave the army with his two nephews and return to Europe, enthusiastic over the repulse of Lee at Glendale, said to Franklin, "Advise General McClellan to concentrate his army at this point, and fight the battle to-day; if he does, he will be in Richmond to-morrow." \*

During the fighting near Glendale, General Meade, who commanded a brigade in the Pennsylvania Reserves Division, was painfully wounded, a ball entering his side and coming out at the back, and another ball penetrating his arm. When the surgeons were making their first hurried examination, he was told, or heard someone say, that he had been struck in the back. This worried him more than the painful wound itself, for as he lay tossing in the field hospital all through the night, he constantly reverted to the thought, saying to the surgeon, "Just think, Doctor, of my being shot in the back!" †

From Frazier's Farm, the army withdrew to a carefully selected position on Malvern Hill, close to the James River. With great skill McClellan placed his army so that the open spaces in front of it could be swept by the tiers of his superior artillery. Before the assault was made on the late afternoon of July 1st, one of Lee's commanders, D. H. Hill, who had learned from a minister living in the vicinity the strength of the position at Malvern Hill, convinced that an assault upon McClellan's army so posted would be fatal, sought to dissuade Lee from attacking, saying, "If General McClellan is there in great force, we had better let him alone." Longstreet, who was present, laughed and said, "Don't get scared now that we have got him whipped." Yet it was this same Longstreet who, the next summer at Gettysburg, tried to dissuade Lee from attacking a similar position held by Meade's army.

At Malvern Hill, as at Gettysburg, Lee was the victim of over-confidence. His ill-timed and disjointed attack was thrown back with a bloody repulse. Speaking of the attack of a section of Lee's army, D. H. Hill says: "As each brigade emerged from the woods, from fifty to one

\* Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 382.

† George Meade, *The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade*, I, 299. Edited by George Gordon Meade, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

hundred guns opened upon it, tearing great gaps in its ranks; but the heroes reeled on and were shot down by the reserves at the guns, which a few squads reached. Most of them had an open field half a mile wide to cross, under the fire of field-artillery in front, and the fire of the heavy ordnance of the gun-boats in their rear. It was not war—it was murder.” \* During the battle the Union gun-boats in the James River threw great shells into the forests where the Confederate soldiers were massed. Lee had given instructions to the attacking units that when the Confederate batteries had broken the Union lines, Armistead’s men, who were in a position to observe the effect of the cannonade, were to give a yell and charge. At the sound of the yell the other brigades also were to charge. In the roar of artillery, D. H. Hill, thinking he had heard the shout of Armistead’s men, went forward into battle only to meet a bloody repulse.

When the Confederate lines had reeled backward, broken and decimated by the fire of the Union artillery on Malvern Hill, McClellan’s army commenced its final withdrawal to the position he had chosen for his new base at Harrison Landing under the protection of the gunboats. It was hard on officers and soldiers to retreat again after so notable a victory. One of the chief protestants was the fiery Philip Kearny, who had won laurels on the battle fields of Europe and Africa, fighting with the French. Tempted almost to insubordination, Kearny, when McClellan’s order was read, exclaimed to a group of his fellow officers: “I, Philip Kearny, an old soldier, enter my solemn protest against this order for retreat. We ought, instead of retreating, to follow up the enemy and take Richmond. And, in full view of all the responsibility of such a declaration, I say to you all, such an order can only be prompted by cowardice or treason.” †

It was a somewhat depressed and perplexed army which went into bivouac on Wednesday, the 2nd of July, under the protection of the Union gunboats at Harrison Landing. Only an army magnificently drilled and organized, and with unbounded confidence in its commander, could have endured the ordeal of the Seven Days’ Battle, fighting by day, generally winning a victory, then re-

\* Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 394.

† Sypher, *Pennsylvania Reserve Corps*, 306.

treating by night through gloomy swamps and forests and over bottomless roads to a new position, there to fight another battle and again withdraw. Whatever may be said of the military effect of these battles, they demonstrated that the Army of the Potomac under McClellan was an organization which could not be shaken or broken by hardship, suffering, or disaster. The results of the Seven Days' fighting are not to be measured merely by a glance at the map and the temporary relief of Richmond. Pursued by the largest Confederate army ever under one commander, McClellan had inflicted heavy losses upon that army. The Union losses were 1,734 killed, 8,062 wounded, and 6,053 missing; in all, 15,849. Of those reported missing, half, perhaps, were killed or wounded. The total Confederate losses were 3,286 killed, 15,909 wounded, and 940 missing—in all, 20,135.\* The Confederate killed numbered almost twice as many as the Federal. This was due to the fact that the Confederate army was constantly attacking. The total Confederate loss was much heavier than the Federal. The South rejoiced when it heard how McClellan had retreated from one line to another, clear across the Peninsula; but the mathematics of casualties were on the side of the North. The heavier Confederate losses become significant when one remembers that the North was drawing on a population of over 22,000,000, and the South on a population, exclusive of slaves, of something over 5,000,000. The South could not afford to have the mathematics of war against it.

In his movement towards the James, and in his steadfast refusal to be tempted to halt that movement, even after repeated repulses of the pursuing Confederates, McClellan was motivated by the feeling that the fate of the Union depended upon his army, and that he must in no way risk its defeat or destruction. Franklin, one of his commanders, said, "General McClellan believed that the destruction of the Army of the Potomac at that time would have been ruin to our cause, and his actions, for which he alone is responsible, were guided by that belief and by the conviction that at any sacrifice, the preserva-

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\* John C. Ropes, *The Story of the Civil War*, II, 208. New York, London, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898.

tion of that army, *at that time*, was paramount to every other consideration."\*

The last words penned by General McClellan, and found on his desk the morning after his sudden death in 1885, were a tribute to his army during those trying days:

So long as life lasts the survivors of those glorious days will remember with quickened pulse the attitude of that army when it reached the goal for which it had striven with such transcendent heroism. Exhausted, depleted in numbers, bleeding at every pore, but still proud and defiant, and strong in the consciousness of a great feat of arms heroically accomplished, it stood ready to renew the struggle with undiminished ardor whenever its commander should give the word. It was one of those magnificent episodes which dignify a nation's history and are fit subjects for the grandest efforts of the poet and the painter.†

The northern public, however, was somewhat confused as to this change of base, and hardly knew whether to think of it as a victory or a defeat. Seward tells of a witty newspaper correspondent who summed up the situation by saying, "We have had a great victory, my boy! And now, what we want to know is, who's to blame for it?"‡

McClellan, although more than once in his despatches he had hinted at the danger of destruction during the successive engagements of the Seven Days, once his army was concentrated at Harrison Landing, had no misgivings about its discipline and spirit, and says that after a few days' rest the army was "in condition to make any movement justified by its numbers, and was in an admirable position for an offensive movement." At last, he had the army where he had always wanted it, on the James River, and although the change of base had been secured with a great loss of life and treasure, he had inflicted a much heavier loss upon the Confederate army, and safe

\* Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 382.

† *McClellan's Own Story*, 439.

‡ Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington*, III, 100. New York, Derby & Miller, 1891.

now at Harrison Landing, he was still only twenty miles from Richmond. On the 4th of July, McClellan informed the President that the movement of his army was "unparalleled in the annals of war," and that his present position could be carried "only by overwhelming numbers." Relieved by this message, Lincoln telegraphed him, "A thousand thanks for the relief your two despatches of twelve and one P.M. yesterday gave me. Be assured the heroism and skill of yourself, officers, and men is and forever will be appreciated. If you can hold your present position, we shall have the enemy yet."\*

After the Seven Days' Battle, Jefferson Davis, addressed Lee's army in words of gratitude and praise:

You marched to attack the enemy in his intrenchments; with well-directed movements and death-defying valor, you charged upon him in his strong positions, drove him from field to field, over a distance of more than thirty-five miles, and, despite his re-enforcements, compelled him to seek safety under cover of his gun-boats, where he now lies cowering before the army so lately divided and threatened with entire subjugation.

On the 4th of July, McClellan addressed his army in like terms of praise and gratitude:

"Your achievements of the past ten days have illustrated the valor and endurance of the American soldier. Upon your march, you have been assailed, day after day, with desperate fury, by men of the same race and nation, skillfully massed and led. Under every disadvantage of number; and necessarily of position also, you have in every conflict beaten back your foes with enormous slaughter. Your conduct ranks you among the celebrated armies of history. None will now question that each of you may always, with pride, say, 'I belong to the Army of the Potomac.' "†

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 486.

† *Abbott, History of the Civil War in America*, II, 112.

During the daily battles of the Seven Days, McClellan was rarely with any portion of the army actually engaged in battle. He did visit Porter on the afternoon of the fight at Beaver Dam Creek; but during every battle he was in the advance of the army, selecting a new position for the next stand. Referring to this, bitter and sarcastic Ben Wade said, in a speech at Cincinnati, during McClellan's campaign for the presidency in 1864: "In the retreat General McClellan for the first time in his life was found in the front."

McClellan showed unbounded confidence in the corps commanders to whom he left the management of the actual battle after he had once placed the army and outlined the general plan. In his testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, General Heintzelman was asked, "Do you consider that a general who posts his troops in the morning, and then goes off and leaves the corps commanders to take the direction of the movements of the troops under them during the day's fighting, can be said to himself direct the battle?" Heintzelman answered, "Well, sir; he was the most extraordinary man I ever saw. I do not see how any man could leave so much to others; and be confident that everything would go just right."

McClellan's wisdom in giving his special attention to the placing of his army was justified by the results. Yet, one wonders why he did not make more use of his marvelous influence and personal magnetism with his soldiers. Whenever he did appear, wild cheering greeted him; yet, generally, it was not McClellan that the soldiers, fighting by day and marching by night, saw, but Porter, his chief, and trusted, and very capable lieutenant; or Sumner, Franklin, and the other corps commanders. The soldiers rarely saw McClellan near the firing line; yet they loved and trusted him nevertheless. At Williamsburg he was twelve miles in the rear. At Seven Pines, he was across the river at Gaines' Mill. At Malvern Hill, after a tour of inspection of his line of battle, he left things in charge of Porter and sat smoking on the gun boat *Galena* with the thunders of the battle rolling about him, and Heintzelman sending messages that his absence depressed the men and that disastrous results might ensue.



Today, in one of the loneliest places in that lonely and forlorn country over which the armies fought, on the very edge of the White Oak Swamp, there is a National Cemetery. The fine brick walls of the Cemetery, with the ivy trailing over it, and the well kept lawns within the walls, contrast strangely with the desolate wilderness of tangled thickets and malarial swamps which surround it. Here lie the dead who fell in the Seven Days' fighting, collected from swamp, bayou, thicket, and sandy field. In that lonely spot, a grave that is marked with name, regiment, and state, seems just as solitary and forgotten as "No. 10; Unknown." Few today ever pass the gates of the Cemetery by that road through the swamps, and fewer still pause to enter the gate and look upon the graves of the dead, where the wind, like a spirit out of the past, makes sad music through the melancholy oaks and the lonely pines.

While McClellan's "magnificent episode" was being staged, Lincoln was in deep anxiety and distress. The telegram sent to Stanton by McClellan on the early morning of the 28th of June, just after the fierce battle of Gaines' Mill, in which he reproached the government for its lack of support, hinted at the possibility of the complete destruction of the Army of the Potomac. Greatly alarmed at this, Lincoln sent a message of encouragement to him: "Save your army at all events. Will send reinforcements as fast as we can. Of course, they cannot reach you to-day, to-morrow, or next day. . . . I feel any misfortune to you and your army quite as keenly as you feel it yourself." As if to protect himself against the charge that McClellan's present situation was due to the fact that the government had held back from him McDowell's corps, and evidently somewhat troubled in conscience, Lincoln said, "If you have had a drawn battle or a repulse it is the price we pay for the enemy not being in Washington. We protected Washington and the enemy concentrated on you. Had we stripped Washington, he would have been upon us before the troops could have gotten to you."\*

On the 1st of July, the last day of the Seven Days' Battle, McClellan was still talking about the possibility of his army being destroyed, saying in his message to the gov-

\* *War Records*, I, II, pt. 3, 269.

ernment, "If none of us escape, we shall at least have done honor to the country. I shall do my best to save the army." Stanton wired him that reinforcements were on the way and told him, "Hold your ground, and you will be in Richmond before the month is over." Lincoln, before hearing the results of the battle of Malvern Hill, sent another message exhorting McClellan to maintain his ground if he could, but to save the army at all events, "even if you fall back to Fort Monroe. We still have strength enough in the country—and will bring it out."

That was the very thing Lincoln now began to do—bring out the strength of the country. Lincoln now does what he can to correct Stanton's colossal blunder in stopping recruiting for the army, just when McClellan was setting out on the Peninsula Campaign. On June 28th, the very day on which he had received the alarming telegram from McClellan at Savage Station, Lincoln wrote a letter to Seward, for use in confidential intercourse with prominent men of the North. In this letter he speaks of the difficulty of reinforcing McClellan with the troops from Washington, or from the western army, without jeopardizing the places so stripped of troops. What he wants is a new levy of 100,000 men. "Then let the country give us a hundred thousand new troops in the shortest possible time, which, added to McClellan, directly or indirectly, will take Richmond without endangering any other place which we now hold, and will substantially end the war. I expect to maintain this contest until successful, or till I die, or am conquered, or my term expires, or Congress or the country forsake me; and I would publicly appeal to the country for this new force, were it not that I fear a general panic and stampede would follow, so hard it is to have a thing understood as it really is."

A new Lincoln has emerged. Lincoln, the drifter, the hesitator, the compromiser, has disappeared. Henceforth, it is the Lincoln whom history will ever associate with the preservation of the Union. He will still make blunders in military management, blunders which, at this distance, seem incredible; but there will be no faltering, no delaying, no turning back in his great task of preserving the Union. Often he will tread his winepress alone; but never will he turn back. Lincoln has found himself.

## VI

### LINCOLN TAKES A LOOK FOR HIMSELF

McClellan's Chief of Staff and father-in-law, General Marcy, was sent up to Washington to explain personally the situation to the President. In his interviews with men at Washington, Marcy had spoken of the possibility of a capitulation within a few days.\* Irritated at this, Lincoln sent for Marcy and said, "General, I understand you have used the word 'capitulate.' That is a word not to be used in connection with our army." It was at this time that Lincoln said to Bigelow, that if by magic he could reinforce McClellan with 100,000 men, he would "go into ecstasy over it, thank him, and tell him he would go to Richmond tomorrow, but that when tomorrow came, he would telegraph that he had certain information that the enemy had 400,000 men, and that he could not advance without reinforcements." This was in line with Stanton's jibe, that if McClellan had 1,000,000 men "he would swear that the enemy had 2,000,000 men, and then would sit down in the mud and holler for another 1,000,000."

Lincoln determined to visit the army and see for himself what the situation was. On the 8th of July the President arrived at Harrison Landing, and in a short time, McClellan, mounted on his bay horse, and with his coat open at the neck, disclosing a gray shirt and suspenders, came riding down to the dock. Soon they were sitting together on the deck, and McClellan with the end of his cigar was pointing out on a map the positions occupied by the army.

No sooner had Lincoln reached Harrison Landing, than McClellan presented to him a lengthy epistle on the state of the country and the prosecution of the war. The letter is dated July 7th; but it seems hardly possible that McClellan could have composed this letter in the midst of the excitement and anxiety of the Seven Days' Battle,

\* Schuckers, *Chase*, 447.

or in the week that had passed since he established the army at Harrison Landing. As early as the 20th of June, McClellan had expressed the desire to lay before Lincoln his views as to the "present state of military affairs throughout the whole country."\* If the letter had been prepared before the opening of the Seven Days' Battle, circumstances had now greatly changed. Those unfriendly to McClellan have taken the view that he intended to hand this letter to Lincoln after he had taken Richmond, when, coming from a victorious general, it would have had considerable influence. Nevertheless, whether composed before the Seven Days' Battle opened, or on the date it bears, July 7th, the fact that McClellan presented such a letter to the President shows that he did not in any way consider himself a defeated or discredited general, for one who thought of himself as defeated or discredited would hardly have dared to address the President of the United States as he did. In this very earnest, but very extraordinary, communication, McClellan gives the President the following advice:

1. Our cause must never be abandoned; it is the cause of free institutions and self-government. The Constitution and the Union must be preserved, whatever may be the cost in time, treasure, and blood.

2. The time has come when the government must determine upon a civil and military policy covering the whole ground of our national trouble. The responsibility of determining such policy must now be assumed and exercised by you, or our cause will be lost.

3. The rebellion has assumed the character of war; and it should be conducted upon the highest principles known to Christian civilization. It should not be a war looking to the subjugation of the people of any state in any event. It should not be at all a war upon population, but against armed forces and political organizations. Neither confiscation of property, political executions of persons, or forcible abolition of slavery should be contemplated for a moment. Military power should not be allowed to interfere with the relations of servitude, either by supporting or impairing the authority of the master, except for repressing disorder.

\* *War Records*, I, II, pt. 1, p. 48.

4. Unless these principles shall be known and approved, the effort to obtain requisite forces will be almost hopeless. A declaration of radical views, especially upon slavery, will rapidly disintegrate our present armies.

5. The national forces should be collected into masses and brought to bear upon the armies of the Confederate States, and not dispersed in expeditions, posts of occupation, and numerous armies.

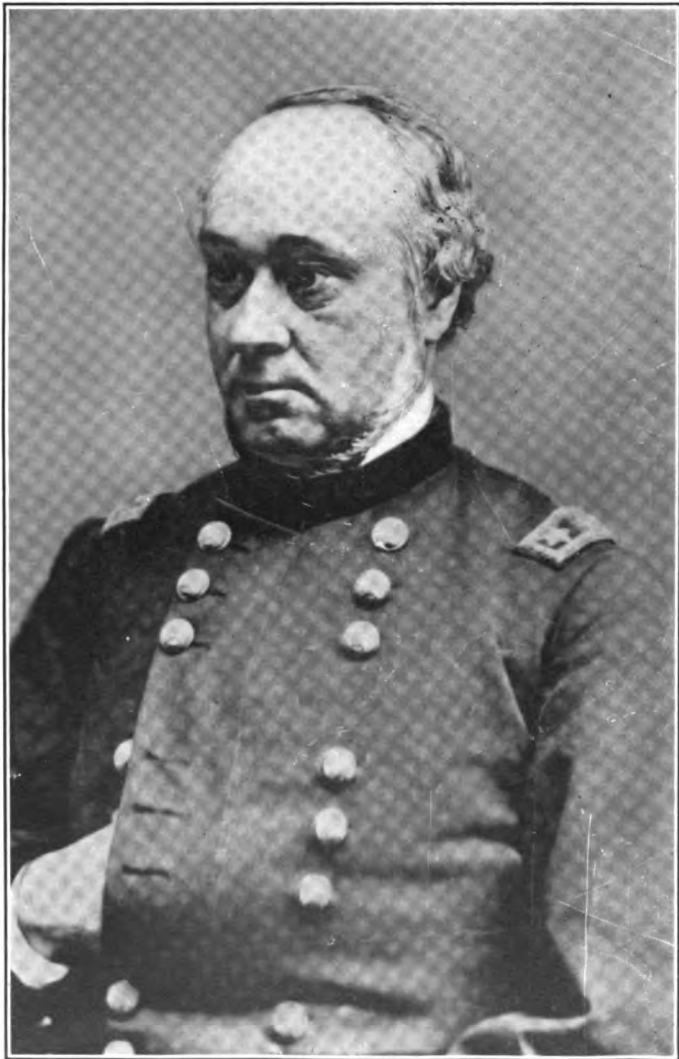
6. In carrying out any system of policy, you will require a commander-in-chief of the army, one who possesses your confidence, understands your views, and who is competent to execute your orders. I do not ask that place for myself. I am willing to serve you in such position as you may assign me, and I will do so as faithfully as ever subordinate served superior.

This amazing document comes to a close with this earnest avowal of sincerity: "I may be on the brink of eternity; and as I hope forgiveness from my Maker, I have written this letter with sincerity towards you and from love for my country."\*

There is much in this letter which reminds one of the celebrated "Thoughts for the President's Consideration," which Seward presented to Lincoln a month after his inauguration, particularly in what McClellan says about the necessity of some kind of policy, and in his volunteering to execute the chosen policy for the President, just as Seward did when he wrote, "Either the President must do it himself, or devolve it on some member of his Cabinet. It is not now my special province; but I neither seek to evade nor assume responsibility."

Lincoln read the letter through, put it in his pocket, and never again spoke to McClellan about it. So far as military advice was concerned, there could be no offense; but for even the most successful general in the world to tell the Chief Executive just what he was to do in political matters was an astonishing procedure. The sentence about the forcible abolition of slavery, and the effect of radical views about slavery on the army, was especially unfortunate for the future of McClellan. Lincoln, no doubt, showed this letter to his friends and members of the Cabinet. We can imagine how Chase must have felt when he read McClellan's views on slavery. It is signifi-

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 488.



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

HENRY WAGER HALLECK

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cant that on July 22nd, Chase, in conference with the President, urged an immediate change in the command of the Army of the Potomac. "I said," writes Chase, "that I did not regard General McClellan as loyal to the administration, although I did not question his general loyalty to the country." \*

When at Harrison Landing Lincoln conversed freely with the chief officers of the army. Two of the corps commanders favored the withdrawal of the army from the Peninsula, while three opposed it. Lincoln was perplexed about the statistics of McClellan's army, and could not understand what had become of the reinforcements which had been sent. In his jocular way he said that sending reinforcements to McClellan was like "shoveling fleas across a barnyard—not half of them got there."

McClellan advised the President that the armies of the country must have a commander-in-chief. This part of McClellan's counsel Lincoln took to heart, but not in the way that McClellan had hoped for; for had he known who was to be selected as the commander-in-chief, he would hardly have given the advice. The new Commander-in-Chief, appointed on the 11th of July, after Lincoln's return to Washington, was the man of whom McClellan wrote, "Of all men whom I have encountered in high position, he was the most hopelessly stupid." This "most hopelessly stupid" man, now, by the President's order commander-in-chief of all the armies of the nation, was none other than General Halleck.

Halleck, as we have already seen,† was Scott's first choice for commander-in-chief to succeed himself, and he had hoped to hold on at Washington until Halleck took his place. The first intimation we have that Halleck might be appointed the grand marshal of the war is contained in a telegram to Halleck of July 2, 1862, in which the President says, "Please tell me, could you not make a flying visit for consultation, without endangering the service in your department?" Two days later, Lincoln wants to know of Halleck if it would not be possible for him to send 10,000 troops to reinforce McClellan's army. A few days after this, Lincoln sent a personal ambassador to see Halleck, who was with his army at Corinth,

\* Warden, *Chase*, 440,

† Page 80,

Mississippi. This messenger was the governor of Rhode Island, William Sprague. In the letter which Sprague carried to Halleck Lincoln said: "He wishes to get you and part of your force, one or both, to come here. You already know I should be exceedingly glad of this, if, in your judgment, it could be done without endangering positions and operations in the southwest; and I now repeat what I have more than once said by telegraph, do not come or send a man, if in your judgment it will endanger any point you deem important to hold, or endanger or delay the Chattanooga expedition."

After Sprague had reached Corinth, Halleck telegraphed, "If I were to go to Washington, I could advise but one thing—to place all the forces in North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington under one head, and hold that head responsible for the result." Lincoln acted at once on this suggestion, and on the 11th of July issued an order, that "Major General Henry W. Halleck be assigned to command the whole land forces of the United States as General-in-Chief, and that he repair to this Capital as soon as he can with safety to the positions and operations within the department now under his charge." The distressed and perplexed President looks forward to the coming with great hopes, hopes, alas, doomed to be sorely disappointed. Three days after his appointment, July 14th, Lincoln telegraphed Halleck, "I am very anxious, almost impatient, to have you here." The wish of the President was gratified when, on July 23rd, Halleck made his appearance at Washington.



## VII

### A GENERAL WITHOUT AN ARMY

On the 26th of June, Lincoln had appointed Major General John Pope to command the Army of Virginia, made up of the three armies then operating in Northern Virginia, or the forces of McDowell, Fremont, and Shields. Pope, undoubtedly, played a part in bringing Halleck to Washington. At a meeting at the War Department late in June Chase said to Lincoln, as they were studying a map of McClellan's operations, that the whole movement upon Richmond was wrong, and that nothing could be accomplished until the army was recalled and started for Richmond by the land route, with Washington as the base. "What would you do?" said Lincoln to Chase. Chase answered, "Order McClellan to return and start right." Then General Pope, who also was present, looking up, said to Lincoln, "If Halleck were here, you would have, Mr. President, a competent adviser who would put this matter right."\* If Chase was an advocate of Halleck, it must have been something of a disappointment to him to hear Halleck say at one of the Cabinet meetings, in reply to a question by the President as to what use he could make of the black population on the borders of the Mississippi, "I confess I do not think much of the negro." †

In the selection of Halleck the aged and retired Lieutenant General of the Army, Winfield Scott, also played a part. In the latter part of June, the perplexed Lincoln went to West Point and had an interview with General Scott. Scott advised Lincoln to reinforce McClellan with McDowell's command, and there is little reason to doubt that at the same time he advised the President to make Halleck commander-in-chief of all the armies in the field. ‡

It is an ill wind that blows no one good; and if the

\* Welles, *Diary*, I, 108.

† Warden, *Chase*, 448.

‡ John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, VI, 2. New York, Century Company, 1917.

coming of Halleck to take command of Washington was a calamity for McClellan and the eastern armies, it proved to be a blessing for General Grant and the western armies. How this came about is related by General Sherman. After the battle of Shiloh, which had been won by General Grant, Halleck, who was the chief commander in the Mississippi Valley, joined Grant's army in person. This left Grant in an intolerable position. He was the commander of an army, and yet, because of the presence of a superior officer, had nothing to do with the operations of that army. Grant had suffered affront at the hands of Halleck when he was removed from command for a brief period after the capture of Fort Donelson, and he probably found close association with him very distasteful. "For myself," says Grant, speaking of the advance upon Corinth, "I was little more than an observer. Orders were sent direct to the right wing or reserve, ignoring me, and advances were made from one line of intrenchments to another without notifying me. My position was so embarrassing in fact that I made several applications during the siege to be relieved." \*

Sherman rode up to Grant's headquarters one morning and found his baggage and camp chests piled up in front of his tent, all ready for a start in the morning. Entering the tent, Sherman found Grant seated on a camp stool tying up packages of letters with red tape. Sherman asked him if he was going to leave the army, and when Grant said yes, asked the reason. "Sherman," said Grant, "you know. You know that I am in the way here. I have stood it as long as I can, and can endure it no longer." Grant said he was going to St. Louis. Sherman asked if he had any business there, and he answered, "Not a bit." Then Sherman, taking a leaf out of his own bitter experience, reminded Grant of how he had been discouraged and cast down by the newspaper charge that he was crazy, but that a single battle, Shiloh, had given him new life, and he was now in high feather. He told Grant that if he went away, "events would go right along, and he would be left out; whereas, if he remained, some happy accident might restore him to favor and his true place." Grant thanked Sherman for his advice and promised that he would not leave the army without first communicating

\* Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 377,

with him. In a short time the "happy accident" came along in the shape of Halleck's promotion to be the grand marshal at Washington, and thus Grant was relieved of the incubus of Halleck, and his genius had free scope.

One of the most unaccountable things in Lincoln's military relationships is his retention in high office of this man Halleck, of whom Chase said, "Halleck was good for nothing, and everybody knew it but the President." Yet others besides Lincoln had been misled as to Halleck, for none other than the brilliant Sherman said of him, "General Halleck was a man of great capacity, of large acquirements, and at the time possessed the confidence of the country, and of most of the army. I held him in high estimation, and gave him credit for the combinations which had resulted in placing this magnificent army of a hundred thousand men, well equipped and provided, with a good base, at Corinth, from which he could move in any direction." \* How unwarranted this high estimate was, the next two years would show. Sherman's estimate is in striking contrast with the true verdict passed by Gideon Welles, the Secretary of the Navy, after he had observed Halleck in action, or rather, inaction. "In this whole summer's campaign, I have been unable to see, hear, or obtain evidence of power, or will, or talent, or originality on the part of General Halleck. He has suggested nothing, decided nothing, done nothing, but scold and smoke, and scratch his elbows. Is it possible the energies of the nation could be wasted by the incapacity of such a man?" †

During these days when plans were being made for shelving him, McClellan was not unaware of the drift of events. He sits in his tent on the James, sewing buttons on his shirt, and writes to his wife to inquire about his new baby and her new teeth. But while he plies the needle, he is anxious for his future. "I fear that my day of usefulness to the country is past—at least under this administration. . . . I accept most resignedly all He hath brought upon me. Perhaps I have really brought it upon myself; for while striving conscientiously to do my best, it may well be that I have made great mistakes that my vanity does not permit me to perceive." † Again, sur-

\* *Sherman, Memoirs, I, 282.*

† *McClellan's Own Story, 450.*

missing that Halleck will be brought to Washington, and perhaps supersede him in command of the Army, he says, "If they supersede me in the command of the Army of the Potomac, I will resign my commission at once. If they appoint Halleck commanding general I will remain in command of this army as long as they will allow me to, provided the army is in danger and likely to play an active part." \* At the same time, McClellan wrote to his friend in New York, William H. Aspinwall, telling him that he feels there is a plan to remove him from the command of the army, the plan being to deprive him of the means of moving forward, and then cut his head off for not doing so. He wants Aspinwall to cast his eye about him for some possible work for him in New York, whereby he can support his family. When it becomes evident that Halleck is to be made commander-in-chief, McClellan says he will stick to the army as long as it needs him. In a philosophic and affectionate mood he reminds his wife that he has learned at least one thing, "to despise earthly honors and popular favor as vanities. I am sick and weary of all this business. I am tired of serving fools. God help my country. He alone can save it." None of McClellan's enemies ever charged him with being a fool; but they were making it plain that they did not propose to be served longer by a general who held McClellan's views on slavery, emancipation and the prosecution of the war.

On July 25th, General Halleck appeared at McClellan's headquarters at Harrison Landing to discuss with him the next move of the Army. Asked his plans, McClellan said that he proposed to cross the James River and attack Petersburg. That this was a sound military idea was demonstrated two years later, when Grant, after his futile and sanguinary efforts to batter his way into Richmond "by the left flank," abandoned the direct attack and took his army across the James to attack Richmond by way of Petersburg. McClellan thought that he would require 30,000 more men. Halleck felt that he could not provide that number, and that McClellan must choose between an attack upon Richmond with the force he had, or the union of his army with that of General Pope in northern Virginia. After Halleck's return to Washington, McClellan and he continued their exchange of mes-

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 450.

sages, McClellan asking for more reinforcements and Halleck answering that they could not be sent. Finally, on the 3rd of August, McClellan received the telegram from Halleck which blasted all his hopes. "It is determined to withdraw your army from the Peninsula to Acquia Creek. You will take immediate measures to effect this, covering the movement the best you can." The next day McClellan sent a long and earnest protest and appeal to Halleck. In this he said:

Your telegram of last evening is received. I must confess that it has caused me the greatest pain I ever experienced, for I am convinced that the order to withdraw this army to Acquia Creek will prove disastrous to our cause. I fear it will be a fatal blow. . . . The army is now in excellent discipline and condition. . . . We are twenty-five miles from Richmond. . . . At Acquia Creek, we would be seventy-five miles from Richmond, with land-transportation all the way. . . . Here is the true defense of Washington; it is here, on the banks of the James, that the fate of the Union should be decided. Clear in my convictions of right . . . knowing that no ambitious or selfish motives have influenced me from the commencement of this war, I do now what I never did in my life before—I entreat that this order may be rescinded.\*

McClellan's prediction came true. In the campaign under Grant the fate of the Union was decided on the banks of the James River.

McClellan was convinced that the removal of the army was not merely a mistake as a military operation, but the result of a conspiracy to prevent him from capturing Richmond and thus end the war. There is no doubt that there was a conspiracy to remove McClellan from the command of the army, or, if not that, to take his army away from him. What part did Stanton play in that conspiracy? Until the conspiracy had actually succeeded, McClellan had reason to think that the relationship between himself and Stanton had improved. Burnside had written to McClellan, "I don't know what it means, but

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 496-97.

I do know, my dear Mac, that you have lots of enemies." McClellan thought so, too, and knew that Stanton was one of those enemies. Yet he must have been moved to take a better opinion of Stanton, when the latter telegraphed him on July 5th: "Be assured you shall have the support of this department and the government as cordially and faithfully as was ever rendered by man to man, and if we should ever live to see each other face to face you will be satisfied that you have never had from me anything but the most confiding integrity."

Perhaps it was the annealing effect of an experience by the death bed of one of his children that had for a moment softened the heart of Stanton, for on July 5th he sent, through General Marcy, the following letter to McClellan:

Dear General: I have had a talk with General Marcy, and meant to have written you by him, but am called to the country, where Mrs. Stanton is with her children, to see one of them die.

I can therefore only say, my dear general, in this brief moment, that there is no cause in my heart or conduct for the cloud that wicked men have raised between us for their own base and selfish purposes. No man had ever a truer friend than I have been to you and shall continue to be. You are seldom absent from my thoughts, and I am ready to make any sacrifice to aid you. Time allows me to say no more than that I pray Almighty God to deliver you and your army from all peril and lead you on to victory.

At the very time Stanton wrote this letter in which he avows devoted friendship to McClellan, he was denouncing him to members of Congress as a traitor, and incapable of commanding an army. Touched by this letter, McClellan responded in a like spirit, saying:

Your letter of the 5th instant by Gen. Marcy has made a deep impression on my mind. Let me, in the first place, express my sympathy with you in the sickness of your child, which I trust may not prove fatal.

McClellan then goes on to review their past relationship and tells Stanton that his conduct towards him from the time he became Secretary of War "was marked by repeated acts done in such manner as to be deeply offensive to my feelings and calculated to affect me in public estimation. . . . Your letter compels me to believe that I have been mistaken in regard to your real feelings and opinions, and that your conduct, so unaccountable to my own fallible judgment, must have proceeded from views and motives which I did not understand. . . . It is with a feeling of great relief that I now say to you that I shall at once resume on my part the same cordial confidence which once characterized our intercourse. . . . Let no cloud hereafter arise between us."

But within five days, McClellan had reason to return to his former opinion of Stanton, for, writing to his wife on July 13th, he says:

So you want to know how I feel about Stanton, and what I think of him now? I will tell you with the most perfect frankness, I think . . . [what he thought and wrote has been deleted from the published letter] I *may* do the man injustice. God grant that I may be wrong! For I hate to think that humanity can sink so low. But my opinion is just as I have told you. He has deceived me once; he never will again. . . . Enough of the creature! \*

Stanton's earnest protestations of loyalty and friendship to McClellan reveal a treacherous spirit, and an altogether different conception of friendship and loyalty than that generally held by men of honor, for it is a matter of record that this same Secretary of War who protests to McClellan that no man could have been a truer friend to him than he had been, had asked another general to take McClellan's place, even before McClellan started on the Peninsula Campaign, and had openly expressed scorn and contempt of McClellan's whole plan of campaign.

General H. M. Naglee, when at Washington after the Seven Days' battle, was surprised to hear members of

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 447-48.

Congress say that at the time of the battle Stanton had denounced McClellan as a traitor, and incapable of commanding a regiment. McClellan was amazed when Naglee reported this to him when he returned to the army on the James River, and taking out of his folio Stanton's letter of July 5th, in which he had declared, "No man ever had a truer friend than I have been to you," gave it to Naglee to take back with him to Washington to show to the members of Congress to whom Stanton had denounced McClellan.†

One of the chief witnesses against Stanton is Gideon Welles. In his deadly Diary he writes, "The introduction of Pope here, followed by Halleck, is an intrigue of Stanton's and Chase's to get rid of McClellan. A part of this intrigue has been the withdrawal of McClellan and the Army of the Potomac from before Richmond, and turning it into the Army of Washington under Pope."\* Again, in an entry for August 17th, Welles writes, "Stanton is so absorbed in his scheme to get rid of McClellan that other and more important matters are neglected."

One of the most powerful and one of the most courageous of the Radical Republicans was Senator Zachariah Chandler, of Michigan. Drunk at the Willard Hotel one night, Chandler loudly abused McClellan and called him a coward. General S. D. Sturgis, one of McClellan's officers, was present, and walking up to Chandler, said, "Sir, I don't know who you are, nor care. But hearing you talk in this abusive way against an absent man, I make brief to tell you that it is you who are the liar and the coward, and I am responsible for all I say." Chandler's abuse was characteristic of many strong supporters of the government. The wonder is that McClellan, in spite of all, was able to maintain his hold upon the affections and the confidence of his army.

No doubt McClellan's political letter which he gave to Lincoln at Harrison Landing had come to the knowledge of Stanton. In his review of the relationships of Lincoln and Seward, Welles writes, "On coming to Washington, Pope, who was ardent, and I think courageous, though not always discreet, very naturally fell into the views of

\* Gideon Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 192. New York, Sheldon & Company, 1874.

† Naglee, *McClellan vs. Lincoln*.



Secretary Stanton, who improved every opportunity to denounce McClellan and his hesitating policy." \* This was at the end of June, some days before Stanton wrote to McClellan avowing loyal friendship.

Lincoln tried to create the impression that there was no serious difference of opinion between his war minister and his general. In a speech at a Union meeting on August 6, 1862, he said, "There has been a very widespread attempt to have a quarrel between General McClellan and the Secretary of War. . . . General McClellan's attitude is such that, in the very selfishness of his nature, he cannot but wish to be successful, and I hope he will—, and the Secretary of War is in precisely the same situation. If the military commanders in the field cannot be successful, not only the Secretary of War, but myself, for the time being the master of them both, cannot but be failures. . . . General McClellan is not to blame for asking for what he wanted and needed, and the Secretary of War is not to blame for not giving when he had none to give." Thus Lincoln sought to dismiss the serious quarrel between Stanton and McClellan. But all the while his righteous soul must have been sorely perplexed and grieved. After the second battle of Bull Run, Stanton came out in the open and led the Cabinet clique which demanded the removal of McClellan.

McClellan was convinced that he was plotted against and attacked in the rear by the Republican Radicals, with whom Stanton, although he was more of a Democrat than a Republican, had associated himself. McClellan says of these men that they "committed a grave error in supposing me to be politically ambitious and in thinking that I looked forward to military success as a means of reaching the presidential chair. At the same time, they knew that if I achieved marked success my influence would necessarily be very great throughout the country. . . . They therefore determined to ruin me in any event and by any means; first by endeavoring to force me into premature movements, knowing that a failure would probably end my military career; afterwards by withholding the means necessary to achieve success." \* In support of his contention McClellan quotes a Major Charles Davies, once

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 150.

a professor of mathematics at West Point. According to Davies' story, corroborated by General Joseph E. Johnston, Davies was sent with a committee from New York to urge more vigorous action in support of McClellan, then in the midst of the Peninsula campaign. Calling upon the President, they found Stanton with him, and when they had stated to Lincoln the purpose of their visit, Stanton declared that the great end of the war was to abolish slavery. "To end the war before the nation was ready for that would be a failure. The war must be prolonged, and conducted so as to achieve that. That the people of the North were not yet ready to accept that view, and that it would not answer to permit me to succeed until the people had been worked up to the proper pitch on that question. That the war would not be finished until that result was reached, and that, therefore, it was not their policy to strengthen Gen. McClellan so as to insure his success." \*

An eminent scholar, John W. Burgess, for many years professor of Constitutional Law at Columbia University, plainly intimates that in his judgment Stanton and the group around him at Washington conspired to prevent McClellan winning a great victory on the Peninsula, so that the war might not be concluded before slavery was destroyed. He says: "Whether a crushing victory over the Confederates, ending at once the Rebellion, before slavery was destroyed, was wanted by all of those who composed the Washington Government may well be suspected. And it is very nearly certain that there were some who would have preferred defeat to such a victory with McClellan in command. It was a dark, mysterious, uncanny thing, which the historian does not need to touch and prefers not to touch." †

In a letter to a friend of his youth, and his former teacher at Kenyon College, the Reverend Herman Dyer, not made public until 1886, Stanton, writing on May 18, 1862, before the battle of Seven Pines and the Seven Days' Battle, attributes the accusation that he was interfering with General McClellan to "plunderers who have been driven from the department where they were gorging millions. . . . Scheming politicians whose designs are en-

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 151.

† John W. Burgess, *The Civil War and the Constitution*, II, 105. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906.

dangered by an earnest, resolute, uncompromising prosecution of this war—as a war against rebels and traitors.” He disavows any purpose on his part to thwart McClellan. “What motive can I have to thwart General McClellan? I am not now, never have been, and never will be a candidate for any office. . . . If I wanted to be a politician or a candidate for any office, would I stand between the Treasury and the robbers that are howling around me? Would I provoke and stand against the whole newspaper gang in this country, of every party, who to sell news would imperil a battle? I was never taken for a fool, but there could be no greater madness than for a man to encounter what I do for anything else than motives that overleap time and look forward to eternity.” \*

Stanton did not have the capacity to understand and appreciate the plans of a scientific campaign such as McClellan always followed. But he could understand the knock-down and drag-out tactics of General Grant. And commenting on Grant one day to General Meigs, Stanton exclaimed, “Grant is splendid; he takes secession by the throat, not like some of our Potomac milliners, by the tail.”

McClellan claimed that the Radical Republicans purposely interfered with him to prevent quick and decisive victory, lest the war should end without the abolition of slavery; whereas the Radical Republicans claimed that McClellan was delaying and postponing a decisive battle, “lingering” out the war with the hope that some sort of a compromise would be effected whereby the Union would be saved without the abolition of slavery. But a higher wisdom than that of either McClellan or the Radical Republicans was at work. This is recognized by one who, at the time, was most impatient with McClellan and his delays and the little success which had fallen to the Union army. Horace Greeley, looking back, thus recognized the wisdom that was shaping the nation’s ends. He says:

That “Divinity that shapes our ends” was quietly working out for us a larger and fuller deliverance than I had dared to hope for, leaving to such short-sighted mortals as I no part but to wonder and adore. We have had chieftains who would have crushed out the Rebellion in six months, and

\* Doyle, *Stanton*, 147-48.

restored "the Union as it was"; but God gave us the one leader whose control secured not only the downfall of the Rebellion, but the eternal overthrow of Human Slavery under the flag of the Great Republic.\*

The news that the army might be withdrawn from the Peninsula created great discontent among the officers and soldiers. One evening, while Halleck and McClellan were in conference at McClellan's headquarters at Harrison Landing, General M. C. Meigs and other officers of high rank were gathered around the camp fire. There were expressions of almost mutinous feeling, and mutterings about a march on Washington, "to clear out those fellows." Just then, Burnside, McClellan's chief friend, moved into the circle about the fire and said, "I don't know what you fellows call this talk, but I call it flat treason, by God!" "Come, fellows, let's go," said one of the officers, "and the circle melted away without another word." †

McClellan makes even his horse, the famous bay charger, Daniel Webster, or "Devil Dan," as his aides called him, share his disapproval and disappointment. Full of sadness, he says, "at length I mounted and rode out to join the escort; as I passed through the abandoned works Dan, for the first time in his life, gave vent to his feelings by a series of most vicious plunges and kicks. It was possible that the flies, who had enjoyed a whole army to feed upon, concentrated all their energies upon Dan; but I have always more than suspected that, in his quiet way, Dan understood the condition of affairs much better than the authorities at Washington, and merely wished to inform me in his own impressive manner that he fully agreed with my views as to the folly of abandoning the position, and that he, at least, had full confidence in his master."

On a calm August evening, almost five months after he had first landed on the Peninsula, McClellan boarded the transport which was to carry him and his staff to Acquia Creek, whither his army had preceded him. The smoke of the transport trailed across the darkening sky.

"The magnificent episode" was over.

\* Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life*, 409. New York, J. B. Ford & Company, 1868.

† Meigs in *American Historical Review*, II, 26, January, 1921.

**Book Four**  
**ANTIETAM**

## I

### THE WHIRLWIND

“Their game is to force me to resign; mine will be to force them to place me on leave of absence, so that when they begin to reap the whirlwind that they have sown I may still be in position to do something to save my country.”

McClellan wrote that during the days when his army was being taken away from him on the Peninsula. The opportunity “to do something to save my country” came to him sooner than he, or anyone else, expected. After the disastrous second battle of Bull Run, Lincoln, aghast at the whirlwind, turned to McClellan to save the country.

The whirlwind began to move in the shape of a bold attack by Lee on the Army of Virginia under General John Pope, then concentrated in the vicinity of the Rappahannock River. As soon as Lee was satisfied in his mind that McClellan would not move at once on Richmond, and that his army would be withdrawn if Washington were again threatened, he sent the major portion of the army at Richmond to attack Pope. This new general, Pope, had achieved considerable success under Halleck in the west. Pope was by no means the fool or gasconade that he has been rated. He was unfortunate in being assigned to the command of an eastern army to which he was a stranger. True, this was done two years later in the case of Grant; but Grant came east as the General-in-Chief, and with the immense prestige of Donelson, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga back of him. But Pope's army never took kindly to him, and in particular, the soldiers of McClellan's army who were sent to reinforce him. Pope commenced his career in Virginia with an unfortunate address to his troops. In this address he said:

I have come to you from the west, where we have always seen the backs of our enemies, from an army whose business it has been to seek the

adversary and to beat him when found, whose policy has been attack and not defense. I desire you to dismiss from your minds certain phrases which I am sorry to find much in vogue amongst you. I hear constantly of "taking strong positions and holding them," of "lines of retreat," and of "bases of supply." Let us discard such ideas.

Nothing could have been more unfortunate. The officers and soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, upon whom this order seemed to reflect, and who had been fighting and bleeding in the dismal swamps of the Peninsula, deeply resented this address, and at the very outset conceived a deep prejudice against Pope. Pope is credited, too, with heading his orders and dispatches, "head-quarters in the saddle." This was a libel, for Pope denies that he ever so dated any of his orders. Pope had desired that McClellan should move north towards his army, instead of south across the James, and made a generous proposal of assistance and co-operation. This evoked little response from McClellan. Lincoln tried to solve the problem of two armies operating at cross purposes by the appointment of Halleck as general-in-chief. But, as events soon proved, Halleck was capable of anything but the direction of great armies in a crisis.

Pope was expected to make some kind of a demonstration against Richmond from the north to relieve the pressure on McClellan. He told Lincoln and the Secretary of War that he would march his army towards Richmond on one condition only, this being that peremptory orders be given to General McClellan, so as to make it certain that he would make a vigorous attack as soon as Pope's army was engaged. He told the President, too, that he would not risk the destruction of his army in any movement, "if it were left to the discretion of General McClellan, or anyone else, to withhold the vigorous use of his whole force when my attack was made." Realizing the difficulties confronting him, Pope was not hopeful as to the outcome of his campaign. "I accordingly took the field," he says, "with grave forebodings of the result."\*

When the decision was finally made to withdraw McClellan's army from the Peninsula, it was the expectation

\* *War Records*, I, 12, pt. 3, 473-74.

of Pope that Halleck himself would take command of the united armies. But McClellan was given the impression that he would have the command of all the troops in Virginia. He received his orders to withdraw from the Peninsula August 6th, and at once proceeded to carry them out. In the campaign which followed he took no part, save that of forwarding several corps of his army from the Peninsula to northern Virginia where they could reinforce Pope. McClellan left the Peninsula on August 23rd, and arrived at Alexandria on the 26th. The charge has been brought against him that he trifled and delayed in this work of sending up his army, so that only a small portion of it, some 20,000 troops, was up in time to take part in the second battle of Bull Run, August 29th and August 30th. There is no evidence to show that McClellan deliberately withheld his troops; nor, on the other hand, is there any evidence of an enthusiastic energy in pushing his men to the relief of the hard-pressed Pope. General Jacob Cox puts the thing well when he says, "Since August 4th, McClellan had been giving a continuous demonstration how easy it is to thwart and hinder any movement, while professing to be accomplishing everything that is possible. McClellan had written that Pope would be beaten before the Army of the Potomac could be transferred to him, and Pope was beaten." \* If it had been Porter instead of Pope, who was commanding the Army of Virginia, and was in danger, it is safe to say that McClellan would have had his army up sooner. But the chief blame for the disaster of the second Bull Run campaign lies, not with Pope, nor with McClellan, but with the General-in-Chief, Halleck, who leaves both Pope and McClellan in the dark as to what is going on, gives McClellan no orders, and as one in a daze, seems to have no idea of what is happening.

What was happening was this. Moving his army up from Richmond to confront Pope, Lee sent his two lieutenants, Jackson and Longstreet, on a long detour around the right flank of Pope's army, until they were between Pope and Washington. This brought on the second Battle of Manassas, or Bull Run, August 29th and August 30th. The Union troops fought with bravery, but

\* Jacob D. Cox, *Military Reminiscences of the Civil War*, I, 156. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900.



in the greatest confusion, for neither their General, Pope, nor the corps commanders seemed to know the positions of the enemy, or what was going on. The result was a disastrous repulse of the Union army, and its retreat, broken and disorganized, to the fortifications of Washington.

When McClellan reached Acquia Creek on the 24th of August and telegraphed Halleck for orders, the general-in-chief sent this extraordinary, yet characteristic, reply: I do not know either where Gen. Pope is or where the enemy in force is. These are matters which I have all day been most anxious to ascertain." On August 29th, the first day of the battle at Manassas, Lincoln telegraphed McClellan, "What news from the direction of Manassas Junction? What generally?" McClellan in his reply said: "I am clear that one of two courses should be adopted: 1st, to concentrate all our available forces to open communications with Pope; 2nd, to leave Pope to get out of his scrape, and at once use all our means to make the capital perfectly safe."\*

The phrase, "leave Pope to get out of his scrape," was unwise and the worst interpretation, namely, that McClellan did not want to do anything to help Pope, was put upon it by his enemies after the defeat of Pope's army. Commenting on this reply of McClellan, Seward said to John Hay, Lincoln's secretary: "What is the use of growing old? You learn something of men and things, but never until too late to use it. I have only just now found out what military jealousy is. . . . It never had occurred to me that any jealousy could prevent these generals from acting for their common fame and the welfare of the country." Hay replied to Seward: "It never would have seemed possible to me that one American general should write of another to the President, suggesting that Pope 'should be allowed to get out of his own scrape in his own way.'" Seward answered him slowly and sadly: "I don't see why you should have expected it. You are not old. I should have known it."†

Hearing at Alexandria the thunder of the guns of Second Manassas, McClellan, chafing at inaction, telegraphed Halleck: "I cannot express to you the pain and

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 515.

† Thayer, *John Hay*, I, 138.

mortification I have experienced today in listening to the distant sound of the firing of my men. As I can be of no further use here, I respectfully ask that, if there is a probability of the conflict being renewed tomorrow, I may be permitted to go to the scene of battle with my staff, merely to be with my own men, if nothing more; they will fight none the worse for my being with them." The troops, and especially those who had been with McClellan in the Peninsula, were fighting doggedly and fiercely under Pope, but not with enthusiasm, and not with any expectation of victory. Letters of Porter to Burnside during the Second Bull Run campaign reveal a spirit which would make effective co-operation with Pope difficult. Porter says: "I believe they [the enemy] have a contempt for this army of Virginia. I wish myself away from it, with our old Army of the Potomac, and so do our companions." In another letter, he writes: "I hope McClellan is at work and will soon get us ordered out of this. It would seem from proper statements of the enemy, that he was wandering around loose; but I expect they know what they are doing, which is more than anyone here or anywhere knows." \*

In his report of the battle Pope spoke of this lack of co-operation on the part of officers who had served under McClellan: "You have hardly an idea of the disaffection among officers in high rank in the Potomac Army, arising in all instances from personal feeling in relation to change in Commander-in-Chief. Every word and act is designed and calculated to break down the spirit of the men and produce disaster." An officer who served in this campaign noted the expressions of delight in the faces of some of the high officers of the Army of the Potomac when word came in of General Pope's reverses: "It is interesting, but saddening to witness the brightening of countenances among some of the staffs of the Army of the Potomac while listening to or reading the reports of the repulse of General Pope." † With this state of mind among the officers, it is not strange that many of the soldiers were disgruntled and disaffected. Convinced that they had a poor leader, and wishing McClellan back with

\* *War Records*, I, 12, pt. 3, 700.

† Alfred L. Castleman, *The Army of the Potomac*. Milwaukee, Strickland & Company, 1863.

them again, they fought stubbornly, yet sullenly and moodily, with such expressions on their lips as, "To h—l with Pope," and "D—n Pope." This being the condition of affairs, Pope, had he been a military genius of the first order, could hardly have won a victory.

Pope attributed his defeat to the delay and disobedience of Porter, McClellan's chief friend and counsellor, at a critical stage of the battle on the 29th. "His forces were permitted by him to lie idle on their arms within sight and sound of the battle during the whole day. So far as I know, he made no effort to comply with my orders. I do not hesitate to say that if he had discharged his duty as became a soldier, and had made a vigorous attack on the enemy at any time till 8 o'clock that night, we should have utterly crushed or captured the larger part of Jackson's force."

For this alleged disobedience, Porter was tried by court martial a few months after the battle, cashiered, and forbidden ever again to occupy a position of trust in the United States service. Thus came to a conclusion the career of one of the most brilliant generals of the war. In 1886, after almost a quarter of a century had passed, the hero of Beaver Dam Creek and Gaines' Mill was restored to the United States Army as Colonel and placed on the retired list without compensation. General Grant defended his cause and wrote a magazine article entitled, "An Undeserved Stigma." Grant told President Arthur, that if Porter had commanded at Second Bull Run, there would have been no Chancellorsville, Antietam, Gettysburg, or Appomattox. He gave it as his opinion that it was impossible for Porter to execute Pope's order, and that if Porter *was* guilty, the punishment was not commensurate with the offense committed.

## II

### THE ARMY CHEERS AGAIN

Wild was the rage of Stanton and those in his clique when the news came in of the defeat of Pope, for it meant also the defeat of their plot to get rid of McClellan. "The introduction of Pope here is an intrigue of Stanton's and Chase's to get rid of McClellan. "The defeat of Pope and placing McC. in command of the retreating and disorganized forces after the second disaster at Bull Run interrupted the intrigue which had been planned for the dismissal of McClellan, and was not only a triumph for him but a severe mortification and disappointment for both Stanton and Chase." \*

Fearful now that Lincoln would restore McClellan to the command of the army,† Stanton, on Sunday, August 31st, wrote out a protest to the President against the retention of McClellan in any command whatsoever. Chase declared that McClellan ought to be shot, and that were he President, he would be brought to summary punishment.‡ Stanton said that after this there ought to be "one court martial, if only one." Those who saw Stanton at the War Office when the news of Pope's defeat came in, said that his rage was so great, that if McClellan had appeared in person he would have assaulted him. In the first draft of the protest against McClellan, Stanton wrote:

The undersigned feel compelled by a profound sense of duty to the government and the people of the United States, and to yourself as your constitutional advisers, respectfully to recommend the immediate removal of George B. McClellan from any command in the armies of the United States. We are constrained to urge this by the con-

\* Welles, *Diary*, I, 109.

† McClellan had never actually been removed from command, but had had his troops taken from him and sent to Pope.

‡ Welles, *Diary*, I, 102.

viction that after a sad and humiliating trial of twelve months and by the frightful and useless sacrifice of the lives of many thousand brave men and the waste of many millions of national means, he has proved to be incompetent for any important military command, and also because by recent disobedience of superior orders, and inactivity, he has twice imperiled the fate of the army commanded by General Pope, and while he continues in command will daily hazard the fate of our armies and our national existence, exhibiting no sign of a disposition or capacity to restore by courage and diligence the national honor that has been so deeply tarnished in the eyes of the world by his military failures. We are unwilling to be accessory to the destruction of our armies, the protraction of the war, the waste of our national resources, and the overthrow of the government, which we believe must be the inevitable consequence of George B. McClellan being continued in command, and seek, therefore, by his prompt removal to afford an opportunity to capable officers under God's providence to preserve our national existence. \*

Chase, who at the beginning of the war secured for McClellan his Ohio Commission, and for a time had been one of his most enthusiastic supporters, read the paper and suggested some modifications, which Stanton approved. Both of them signed the paper, and Chase took it to Welles to secure his signature. Welles declined to sign it. "I declined," he says, "to sign the paper, which was in the handwriting of Stanton, not that I did not disapprove of the course of the general, but because the combination was improper and disrespectful to the President, who had selected his Cabinet to consult and advise with, not to conspire against him." † Chase, with characteristic searchings of heart, acquits himself of all personal animus in the matter: "I am now thoroughly satisfied that he ought no longer to be intrusted with the command of any army of the United States; and I do not see how I can reconcile my duty to the country with sharing the

\* Gorham, *Stanton*, II, 38.

† Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 193.

responsibilities of the administration, if it continues to allow its military actions to be guided in any considerable degree by his counsel or control. My heart acquits me of all personal hostility to him. My country requires me to look only to capacity and will to serve her. He is my best friend who is her best friend."\*

No further effort was made to obtain signatures to the protest as drafted by Stanton; but another document was drawn up by the more pacific and cautious Attorney-General, Edward Bates. This document was as follows:

The undersigned, who have been honored with your selection as a part of your confidential advisers, deeply impressed with our great responsibility in the present crisis, do but perform a painful duty in declaring to you our deliberate opinion that at this time it is not safe to intrust to Major-General McClellan the command of any army of the United States.

And we hold ourselves ready at any time to explain to you in detail the reasons upon which this opinion is founded.†

This paper was signed by Stanton, Chase, Bates, and Caleb Smith, the Secretary of the Interior. Seward, Lincoln's chief adviser and Secretary of State, was absent from Washington at the time; "I never doubted, purposely absent," says Welles, who charges him with absenting himself so as to evade a committal on the subject of McClellan.‡ When it was presented to Welles, he again refused to sign. Welles says that his refusal prevented the matter from going further, and that the President never saw the paper, although he was not unaware of the popular indignation against McClellan,\* a feeling which he shared, for on the evening of August 30th, the day of the defeat at Manassas, Lincoln said to one of his secretaries, John Hay, "Unquestionably he [McClellan] has acted badly towards Pope. He wanted him to fail."†

\* Warden, *Chase*, 457.

† Gorham, *Stanton*, II, 40.

‡ Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 194.

\* Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 194.

† Thayer, *John Hay*, I, 129.

Lincoln was facing a greater crisis and was in deeper distress than at any time during the war. The army, broken and dispirited by the defeat at Second Manassas, was drifting back to the fortifications of Washington. His General-in-Chief, Halleck, of whom he had expected so much, had proved utterly incompetent. Pope and McDowell were both thoroughly discredited; McDowell so much so, that his own men would have killed him had he appeared among them.† McClellan was bitterly opposed by the strong men of the Cabinet, such as Stanton and Chase, and in the country at large there was deep indignation against his supposed refusal to go to the aid of Pope. Quartermaster-General Meigs tells how Lincoln, on one of these anxious days, dropped into his room on his way to see Stanton, and drawing himself down into a big chair, with a mingled groan and sigh, exclaimed, "Chase says we can't raise any more money. Pope is licked and McClellan has the diarrhoea. What shall I do? The bottom is out of the tub; the bottom is out of the tub." Meigs told him to meet with his generals and Stanton, fix the bottom back into the tub, rally the army and order another advance at once. "This seemed to brace him up a little and he went on to the War Department; but for the moment he was completely discouraged and downhearted."

When Halleck received Pope's dispatch of September 1st, charging brigade and division commanders of the Army of the Potomac, and specifically, Porter and Griffin, with disobedience and disloyalty to the Commander, McClellan, at Lincoln's request, wrote to Porter, "I ask of you for my sake, that of the country, and of the old Army of the Potomac, that you and all friends will lend the fullest and most cordial cooperation to General Pope in all the operations now going on. The destinies of our country, the honor of our arms are at stake, and all depends now upon the cheerful cooperation of all in the field. Say the same thing to all my friends in the Army of the Potomac, and the last request I have to make of them is that for their country's sake they will extend to General Pope the same support they ever have to me." To this Porter, not knowing charges had been made against him, answered in kind: "You may rest assured

† *McClellan's Own Story*, 568.

that all your friends, as well as every lover of his country, will ever give, as they have given, to General Pope their cordial cooperation and constant support in the execution of all orders and plans. Our killed, wounded, and enfeebled troops attest our devoted duty." \*

Meanwhile, when Stanton and Chase were raging and plotting, and the people were imagining a vain thing, Lincoln acted promptly and bravely for the salvation of the republic. At 7:30 o'clock on the morning of September 2nd, McClellan, who on the day previous had been ordered by General Halleck to take charge of the defenses at Washington, was eating his breakfast at his house in Washington, when two visitors knocked at his door. These were none other than the General-in-Chief, Halleck, and the President of the nation. Lincoln told McClellan that he regarded Washington as lost, and asked him if, under the circumstances, as a favor to him, he would resume command and do what he could. "Without one moment's hesitation," says McClellan, "and without making any conditions whatever, I at once said that I would accept the command and would stake my life that I would save the city." † Lincoln then, by verbal order, gave McClellan command, not only of the forces in Washington, but of all the troops then falling back upon the city. Showing much feeling, and with heartfelt thanks, the President departed.

This early morning interview on that September day is a memorable date in the history of the Republic. Never did Lincoln show higher courage or deeper wisdom than on that day, when, swallowing his own pride, and in the face of the determined opposition of most of his Cabinet, and in spite of the popular clamor against McClellan, he called on him to reorganize the army and save the Capital and the cause. McClellan is hopeful and humble, yet with a full realization of the difficulties and dangers of his task. "A terrible and thankless task. Yet I will do my best, with God's blessing, to perform it. . . . I assume it reluctantly, with a full knowledge of all its difficulties and of the immensity of the responsibility. I only consent to take it for my country's sake." ‡

\* P. S. Michie, *General McClellan*, 308. New York, D. Appleton & Company, 1915.

† *McClellan's Own Story*, 535.

‡ *McClellan's Own Story*, 566.



The meeting of the Cabinet on the afternoon of the day of McClellan's restoration was the stormiest and most dramatic in the history of Lincoln's administration. When the Cabinet assembled, rumors were rife that McClellan was again in command of the army. Stanton, coming in late, and before the arrival of the President, said in a voice shaking with emotion that he had just learned that McClellan had been placed in command of the forces in and around Washington. To most of the Cabinet this news was surprising, and, in view of the popular feeling against McClellan, alarming. While they were discussing the matter, Lincoln came in and confirmed what Stanton had said. When Stanton remarked that no order had issued from the War Department restoring McClellan to command, Lincoln replied that it had been done at his order, and that he would be responsible for it to the country. Chase declared that McClellan's history as a military commander had been "little else than a series of failures"; that his behavior in the matter of Pope showed a spirit which rendered him "unworthy of trust," and that to give him command again was "equivalent to giving Washington to the rebels." Although Stanton was the most agitated and excited of all, it was Chase who was the chief spokesman for those opposed to McClellan. Both Chase and Stanton had come into the meeting ready to make an issue of the matter and resign their places, unless McClellan was dismissed.\* The withdrawal of Chase from the Cabinet at that time would have been a serious matter, and Lincoln realized it to the utmost. When he asked Chase and Stanton to name some other general who could do the work for the hour, Chase mentioned the names of Hooker, Sumner, and Burnside. Lincoln, showing the greatest distress, said it grieved him to find himself differing from the Secretary of War and the Secretary of Treasury, and that he would gladly resign his place. He had restored McClellan to power, he said, because, with a "retreating and demoralized army tumbling in upon us," something had to be done, and there seemed no one to do it. He was conscious of the infirmities of McClellan, who had "the slows," was "never ready for battle, and probably never would be." Yet, for the immediate emergency, when organization

\* Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 196.

and defense were needed, he considered McClellan the best man available. In facing the angry Stanton and the aroused Chase, the two lions of his Cabinet, Lincoln manifested a calm firmness and determination. His language, especially towards these two men, was kind and affectionate, and yet there was the ring of finality, authority, and unalterable purpose, "as if given out with the imperious command and determined will of Andrew Jackson."\* Here we have Lincoln at his best. The storm passed. Lincoln had showed himself the master of his Cabinet. Chase laid before him on the table some taxation papers to sign, and the meeting, memorable in the history of our country, was over.

On the Friday following, the Secretary of the Navy, Welles, had a long interview with Lincoln. In this interview the President unburdened his mind freely and gave his reasons for restoring McClellan to power. Lincoln was sure that Pope had not been sustained as he ought to have been. Perhaps, he confessed, he had made a mistake in discarding McClellan and placing Pope in command of the army before Washington; but even if the administration had erred, "the country should not have been made to suffer, nor our brave men cut down and butchered." In view of all that had transpired, he felt it a humiliation to reward McClellan "and those who failed to do their whole duty in the hour of trial." But facts had to be faced as they were. The army was undoubtedly with McClellan, who had so skillfully handled the troops "in not getting to Richmond" as to retain their confidence. Personal feelings must be laid aside for the public good. He had tried to keep aloof from the disputes about McClellan, and the army; "but," he said, "I must have McClellan to reorganize the army and bring it out of chaos. There has been a design, a purpose in breaking down Pope, without regard to the consequences to the country that is atrocious. It is shocking to see and know this, but there is no remedy at present. McClellan has the army with him."†

"McClellan has the army with him." There was no doubt about that. While the members of the Cabinet were

\* Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 196.

† Welles, *Diary*, I, 124; Welles, *Lincoln and Seward*, 197-98; Warden, *Chase*, 459.

indulging in angry recriminations at the restoration of McClellan, a far different scene was being enacted a few miles from Washington in the ranks of the retreating army. Riding out from Washington with one of his aides, McClellan had received a wild ovation from the disheartened and defeated troops, who crowded around him, shouting and cheering, embracing his horse, and beseeching him not to leave them again. The object of this remarkable demonstration was a man who rode quietly through the ranks of his soldiers, an altogether different type of leader from those with whom we generally associate these demonstrations; such as a Richardson, with his ardent profanity leading his corps into battle at Antietam; or the venerable Sumner, with his white hair waving in the wind, swinging his hat, and calling on his men to follow him at Savage Station; or "Fighting Joe" Hooker, seated on his white war horse, his handsome face flushed with the battle ardor, and leading his division into the forefront of the hottest battle; or picturesque Jeb Stuart, with his scarlet cape and red whiskers and waving sabre, leading a charge of his cavalry; or Phil Sheridan, coming on "Rienzi" like a thunderbolt from Winchester to Cedar Creek, or, in the wild enthusiasm of victory, galloping across the field and trailing Confederate standards behind his horse at Appomattox. It is not difficult to understand how leaders and actors like these roused their men to transports of excitement and enthusiasm. But of all this McClellan was utterly devoid. Rarely was he seen near the front or on the firing line. No shout, no oath, no wild hurrah ever broke from his lips. Yet, when this quiet man rode his horse through the ranks of the retreating army as it was falling back on Washington after the rout of Second Bull Run, the soldiers shook the stars with their cheering.

A soldier who had been mortally wounded at Second Bull Run was carried to Alexandria, where he died in one of the hospitals. His wife and daughter reached Alexandria before he died and were with him in his final moments. But the soldier's last words were not the names of his wife, his daughter, nor his mother, nor the name of his country, but these—"Little Mac." Somewhere in the compass of those two words is bound up the secret of this man's marvelous magnetism and popularity with the Army of the Potomac,

### III

#### McCLELLAN PURSUES LEE

Lee had won a great victory at Second Manassas. But the question was what to do with that victory. He had no idea of battering his head against the formidable defenses of Washington which had been so skillfully constructed by McClellan in the fall of 1861. He had neither the heavy artillery for a siege nor the supplies for his army. To attack Washington, therefore, was out of the question. Yet something must be done. The only response of the North to the Confederate victory at Second Bull Run, as after First Bull Run, was the long roll of the drums of the new regiments which the loyal states kept pouring into Washington. There were only two courses open to Lee and his victorious army. One was to draw back from Washington and establish the army again around Richmond. This would have been discouraging to his victorious soldiers and disheartening to the South, hoping now for great things. The other course was to cross the Potomac and carry the war into northern territory. Lee was too good a soldier and too sound a thinker to imagine that in any prolonged contest the South could be victorious. "I have never believed," he said, "we could, against the gigantic combination for our subjugation, make good, in the long run, our independence, unless foreign powers should directly or indirectly assist us." When General E. P. Alexander, who rose to distinction in Lee's army, but then at Alcatraz Island, San Francisco, was about to leave the United States service at the beginning of the war, his friend and comrade, Lieutenant McPherson, afterwards the distinguished Commander of the Army of the Tennessee, and who fell at Peach Tree Creek in 1864, cutting short a career which, in the opinion of Grant, was marching on to the loftiest heights, wrote to him urging him not to resign. The thing which he emphasized was the inevitable issue, the defeat of the South. McPherson said: "Both sides are

in deadly earnest, and it is going to be fought out to the bitter end. If you go, as an educated soldier, you will be put in the front rank. God only knows what may happen to you individually, but for your cause there can be but one result. *It must be lost.*" Alexander, greatly impressed by this appeal, answered—and his answer was that of scores of officers who had espoused the cause of the Confederacy—"What you say is probably all true. But my situation is just this. My people are going to war. They are in deadly earnest, believing it to be for their liberty. If I don't come and bear my part, they will believe me to be a coward."\* Lee did not expect the South to win in a prolonged war. Just before the surrender at Appomattox, John S. Wise, son of Governor Wise, who had gone with Jefferson Davis and the Confederate government into North Carolina, came to Lee with a message from Davis. He brought the tidings, too, of the defeat of Ewell at Sailor's Creek. Speaking more to himself than to others, Lee ejaculated, "A few more Sailor's Creeks, and it will be all over—ended—just as I expected it would end from the first." †

Whatever hope Lee entertained of success must have been based upon the political effect of some brilliant victory or a bold invasion of northern soil. This was what actuated him in his invasion of Maryland after the battle of Second Manassas. Three days after that battle he wrote to President Davis, saying that the Federal armies were demoralized, and that the present moment was the most propitious time since the commencement of the war for the invasion of Maryland. Such an invasion would transfer the armies from the soil of devastated Virginia to northern soil, would furnish abundant forage and provisions, and would give the citizens of Maryland an opportunity "of throwing off the oppression to which she is now subject." The great contrast in the easy and confidential relationship between Lee and his government and McClellan and his, is illustrated by the fact that Lee at once put his army in motion without waiting to hear from Davis, taking for granted his acquiescence in this critical and hazardous movement. He had no Stanton and

\* Alexander, *Memoirs of a Confederate*, 7.

† John S. Wise, *The End of an Era*, 429. Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1899.

no Halleck or Lincoln to badger him and harass him in his movements.

Hazardous, indeed, the invasion of Maryland was to prove; but for the moment everything looked favorable. The Federal army, although not demoralized, was defeated and confused. There seemed to be nothing to stop Lee's invasion. "Our chief," wrote Longstreet, "could have safely ordered the ranks to break in Virginia and assemble in Fredericktown." \* When Lee expressed some anxiety about his food supplies, Longstreet related to him his Mexican War experiences, and how his division marched around the city of Monterey on two days' rations of roasting ears and green oranges. The fields of Maryland, at that time laden with ripening corn and fruit, thought Longstreet, could do as much for them as those of Mexico. Soon Lee's ragged and shoeless veterans were fording the shallow waters of the Potomac. Thousands of these men had never seen the Potomac, and as their bare feet went down into its waters their spirits were exultant, for they marched for the other shore confident that by some great victory they would now bring the North to her knees, or if not that, at least would let the North feel something of the blight of war, which for the past year had withered the fair fields of Virginia. As the army forded the Potomac, everybody, from high officers to privates, was singing lustily the stanzas of "My Maryland"—

"She is not dead, nor deaf, nor dumb!  
Hurrah, she spurns the northern scum!  
She breathes, she burns, she'll come, she'll come!  
Maryland, My Maryland!"

But the army had no sooner planted its feet on Maryland's soil, than it began to experience a great disillusionment. At the direction of Davis, Lee delivered a proclamation "To the people of Maryland." In this proclamation he informed the citizens of Maryland that the Confederate States had "long watched, with deepest sympathy, the wrongs and outrages" that had been inflicted upon them. The army had entered their state to

\* James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 199. Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott Company, 1896.

give them an opportunity to throw "off the foreign yoke" and regain the "rights of which you have been dispoiled." "It is for you to decide your destiny freely and without constraint."\* Maryland lost no time in deciding. It was at once apparent that her people were not conscious of liberties lost or freedom of thought and speech forfeited. The advance of Lee's army met with closed doors, empty stalls, and the silence of the graveyard. In the trim brick houses of the little hamlets, and in the gray stone houses of the thrifty farmers, the blinds were drawn as if death or plague had visited the neighborhood. The sleek Holsteins and the pot-bellied Percherons were driven over the line into Pennsylvania. Where were the cheering recruits who were going to rush to enlist under the Stars and Bars?

At Frederick, where the army established itself on the 7th of September, Stonewall Jackson, since there was no service in the Presbyterian Church, went to worship at the German Reformed Church, and, as usual, went to sleep; and this time slept more soundly than was his wont, his cap dropping to the floor and his head sinking upon his breast. The minister of the church, unawed by the presence of Jackson, prayed loudly and earnestly for the President of the United States. Jackson had not heard the prayer, and if he had, he would no doubt have answered what Ewell did at Carlisle, during Lee's invasion of the next summer. Asked if he would permit the usual prayer for President Lincoln, Ewell replied, "Certainly; I'm sure he needs it."† A Confederate bishop who was entertained at Sherman's headquarters when he was at Atlanta, remarked that in the South McPherson was considered the kindest of the Union generals. To this Sherman assented, but said that McPherson, too, had made people behave themselves, citing as an instance how he expelled from Vicksburg certain women who had interrupted divine service by leaving the church when the prayer for the President of the United States was offered. This Sherman followed up by saying that he was for letting people pray as they chose; but

\* Lee, *Proclamation*, Sept. 8th. James D. McCabe, *Life and Campaigns of General Robert E. Lee*, 239-40. New York and New Orleans, Blelock & Company, 1867.

† Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 621.

he could not see why people could not pray for Lincoln, or, he added, "even for me." \*

"She'll come! She'll come!" sang the ragged veterans of Lee as they forded the Potomac. But no; Maryland did not come. Yet Lee was still sanguine; so sanguine, indeed, that he addressed a communication to President Davis, suggesting that he propose to the United States Government the recognition of Southern independence. Such a proposal, he said, could not be regarded as suing for peace, "but, being made when it is in our power to inflict injury upon our adversary, would show conclusively to the world that our sole object is the establishment of our independence and the attainment of an honorable peace." If the North rejected this offer, it would place the responsibility for the prolongation of the war upon them and would supply a rallying issue for those in the North who wished the war brought to a termination. The plan was for Davis himself to join Lee and make the proposal for "peace and independence from the head of a conquering army." † Little did Lee, flushed with his recent victories, and rashly overconfident, imagine that in less than two weeks' time he would be leading his defeated and depleted army across the Potomac again to Virginia, without having gained a single recruit, but leaving behind him thousands of graves filled with Confederate soldiers.

A Union force, 9,000 strong, occupied Harper's Ferry. McClellan had urged that these troops be withdrawn; but Halleck permitted them to remain. This gross military blunder turned out, in the end, to the good of the North, for it was one of the causes of the failure of Lee's invasion. Moving in a northwesterly direction into Maryland, and with Pennsylvania in mind, Lee was tempted to turn aside and capture the Harper's Ferry garrison. To accomplish this he gave orders at Frederick for the division of his army. The main force, under his immediate command, was to march westward to Hagerstown, while Stonewall Jackson turned off to the southeast to capture the garrison at Harper's Ferry, after which he was to join the main army on its march into Pennsylvania.

\* Henry C. Lay, "Sherman in Georgia," in *Atlantic Monthly*, CXLIX, 168 (February, 1932).

† Longstreet, *Manassas to Appomattox*, 204.



Just before Lee had reached Frederick, Longstreet, riding by his side, heard firing coming from the direction of Harper's Ferry, indicating that the Union forces in that section were concentrating for the defense of that post. Lee then made the proposal to Longstreet that he surround and capture these troops. Longstreet warned him against such a move, reminding him, that although the Union army had been beaten, it was not disorganized; but that as long as he kept his army united he was master of the situation. Longstreet thought that Lee had dismissed the subject from his mind. But the next day at Frederick, when he reported at headquarters, he found Lee's tent closed and tied. Informed that Jackson was in conference with Lee, he turned to go away, when Lee, recognizing his voice, called him in and outlined to him the plan for the division of the army and the capture of Harper's Ferry. Seeing that their minds were made up, Longstreet interposed no further remonstrance.

On September 7th, in conference with General John G. Walker, one of his division commanders, Lee again outlined his plan for the capture of Harper's Ferry: "In ten days from now, if the military situation is then what I confidently expect it to be after the capture of Harper's Ferry, I shall concentrate the army at Hagerstown, effectually destroy the Baltimore and Ohio road, and march to this point," (pointing his finger at Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.) After that he would destroy the Pennsylvania Railroad bridge over the Susquehanna, and then would be in a position to "turn my attention to Philadelphia, Baltimore, or Washington." Seeing Walker's ill-disguised astonishment at this announcement, Lee said to him, "You doubtless regard it hazardous to leave McClellan practically on my line of communication, and to march into the heart of the enemy's country!" When Walker confessed to such an opinion, Lee asked him if he were acquainted with McClellan. Walker replied that he had known him in the Mexican War. Lee then said: "He is an able general, but a very cautious one. His enemies among his own people think him too much so. His army is in a very demoralized and chaotic condition, and will not be prepared for offensive operations—or he will not think it so—for three or four weeks. Before that time I hope to be on the Susquehanna." \*

\* Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 605-606,



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*  
**MCCLELLAN PASSING THROUGH FREDERICKSBURG**

Lee was laboring under a great delusion as to the state of the Union Army and the speed with which McClellan was moving. "The hallucination that McClellan was not capable of serious work seemed to pervade our army, even to this moment of dreadful threatening." † In pursuance of his plan for the division of his army, the reduction of Harper's Ferry by Jackson, and the reunion of the army at Hagerstown, whence it would march into Pennsylvania, Lee issued his famous order, No. 191. This order, ever afterward to be known as the "Lost Order," gave a complete account of the proposed movements of Lee's army. Longstreet memorized his copy and then chewed it up; Walker pinned his copy on the inside of his coat. The copy intended for D. H. Hill, a duplicate of the one given to Jackson, never reached Hill. The momentous issue of this lost dispatch we shall soon see. Meanwhile, confident of success, and almost rashly indifferent to the pursuing Union army, Lee put his columns in motion along the National turnpike over the South Mountain towards Hagerstown, while Jackson marched to capture Harper's Ferry.

At the opening of the Maryland campaign both Lee and Jackson were so seriously injured that neither one could mount a horse. The day after the second battle of Manassas, Lee was standing in a group of officers, when a squadron of Federal cavalry appeared on the brow of a nearby hill. A sudden movement among the officers frightened Lee's horse, "Traveller," which made a quick leap, and Lee, who had his arm in the bridle, was flung violently to the ground, breaking some of the bones of his right hand. Jackson was in an equally unfortunate plight. As soon as the army entered Maryland, one of its few citizens who were enthusiastic over the advent of the Confederates to their state presented him with a gigantic gray mare. When Jackson mounted her the next morning and touched her with the rowel, the animal reared into the air and then threw herself backward, both horse and rider falling to the ground. Jackson was severely bruised and had to ride in an ambulance for some time. Longstreet also was on the invalid list with a bruised heel, and during the fight at Antietam was seen riding his horse with his feet in a pair of enormous red carpet slippers.

† Longstreet, *Manassas to Appomattox*, 220.

Meanwhile, where was McClellan's army, the army which Lee had described as in "very demoralized and chaotic condition," and which would not be ready for offensive operations until he was on the Susquehanna? Lee had missed it sadly in his estimate of the state of the Union army and the probable movements of McClellan, whom he thought he knew so well. Instead of the three or four weeks which Lee was sure would pass before the Union army was ready for the march, it was only three or four days; and the Confederate banners had hardly disappeared over the South Mountain passes in the direction of Harper's Ferry and Hagerstown when McClellan's army marched into Frederick. The army was greeted with the greatest enthusiasm by the people of Maryland. The blinds that had been drawn when Lee's army marched by were now raised; the people appeared in the galleries and on the porches with flags in their hands and cheers on their lips. The smoke-houses, spring-houses and pantries, which had been empty and bare to the eyes of the hungry Confederates, now displayed their choicest stores and sent forth a pleasing aroma of welcome to the marching columns of the Union army. McClellan received a great ovation when he entered Frederick, the loyal citizens crowding around him, weeping, shouting and praying, clinging to his horse's neck and decorating its mane with flags, and everywhere the Stars and Stripes were waving.

Whittier in his famous poem, "Barbara Frietchie," gave wide currency to an incident alleged to have taken place when Stonewall Jackson rode at the head of his men through the streets of Frederick. The established facts, however, seem to be the following: Barbara Frietchie, ninety-six years old, stood leaning on a cane on her porch as the Union troops came into the town after the Confederates had marched out. In the enthusiasm of the moment her daughter brought out a Union flag which was kept between the leaves of the family Bible, and gave it to the aged woman, so that she could wave it in welcome to the Union soldiers. General Reno afterwards dismounted and went into the house and tried in vain to secure the flag which the patriotic octogenarian had waved. But when Stonewall Jackson rode through Middletown, some distance west of Frederick, a little girl did

wave the Stars and Stripes before him, and the stern warrior lifted his cap to salute the damsel, saying to one of his staff as he did so, "It is evident we have few friends here."

In March, 1862, after the long winter's drilling of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan had written to Halleck in the west, "I have, or expect to have, one great advantage over you as the result of my long and tedious labors—troops that will be demoralized neither by success nor disaster." \* The Army of the Potomac fully justified the confidence of its organizer and first leader. The troops were not so much demoralized after Second Bull Run, as confused, dazed, and bewildered. The chief and fatal difficulty had been the lack of confidence in their commander, Pope. But now, like an excited horse which refuses all obedience to a stranger, but at once becomes quiet and obedient when it hears the voice and feels the touch of its master, the Army of the Potomac, the moment McClellan took command again, was changed from a bewildered and confused host to an orderly and disciplined army. McClellan wrote to his wife on September 8th—"Commanding such an army as this, picked up after a defeat, is no very easy thing." It was, indeed, no easy task to reorganize an army, and at the same time march it against a victorious enemy; and, but for the personality of McClellan, it would have been not only a difficult, but an impossible task.

McClellan's orders went no further than authorizing him to take command of the troops in Washington and the soldiers of Pope's army which were falling back upon the city after Second Bull Run. He had no orders to lead the army on an offensive campaign. Indeed, Lincoln had given Chase the impression at the dramatic meeting of the Cabinet on September 2nd, when he was so severely criticized for restoring McClellan to command, that it was only a temporary appointment, and for the purpose of reorganizing the defeated army. But McClellan solved the difficulty himself by leaving Washington with his army on September 7th. As he was riding down Pennsylvania Avenue on that Sunday evening, he stopped to shake hands with the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, who said to him, "You go up the river?" Mc-

\* *War Records*, I, II, pt. 3, p. 8.

Clellan answered that he had just started to take charge of the army. "Well," answered Welles, "Onward, General, is now the word. The country will expect you to go forward." "That," said McClellan, "is my intention."

Hitherto, the complaint of the government against McClellan had been that he moved too slowly, or waited too long before moving at all. But now the complaint was the very opposite. Halleck had the fear that the movement of Lee into Western Maryland from Pennsylvania was only a feint, and that when McClellan had been drawn away from Washington, Lee would turn and get between him and the Capital. But McClellan moved steadily onward, carefully guarding his flanks, and yet keeping in close contact with the Confederate army. If when he took command of the defeated and disorganized army after First Bull Run, in the summer of 1861, McClellan felt the weight of the responsibility upon him, and if he felt this weight again when he was moving his army through the tangles of the Peninsula during the Seven Days' Battle, how much more must he have felt it as he rode through the cheering ranks as his army followed hard after the victorious invading host of Lee. The army, too, felt that it was carrying the destiny of the Republic on its bayonets, and that the leadership of McClellan was the hope of the nation. When the van of the army left Washington, instead of marching past the White House, it marched past McClellan's house and cheered him instead of Lincoln.\*

McClellan divided his army into three parts: the left wing under Franklin, the center under the veteran Sumner, and the right under his old friend, comrade and admirer, Burnside, who for the first time was fighting under McClellan, and who was greatly to disappoint McClellan before the campaign was over. General John Gibbon describes the atmosphere of efficiency and order at McClellan's headquarters during the march. Colburn, one of McClellan's staff, is reading the names of possible officers for a vacant division. As each name is mentioned, McClellan comments on it, and finally, when the name, John Sedgwick, is read, McClellan says decisively, "He will do. Publish an order assigning Sedgwick to command the division." While this was going on, one of the foreign aides-de-camp, Radowitz, a Prussian, came in

\* Welles, *Diary*, I, 111.

to report that the enemy's cavalry had been forced back and had gone down the pike, turning to the left. "Not the left, Radowitz," interjected McClellan. "If they had gone to the left, they would have run into Franklin." Gibbon rode back to his camp that night in better spirits than he had been in for a month, feeling confident that the army had at its head a General "who knew his business and was bound to succeed."

## IV

### SOUTH MOUNTAIN AND HARPER'S FERRY

Before Gibbon left headquarters that night of September 13th, and with only two other staff officers present, McClellan took from his pocket a folded paper, saying as he did so, "Here is a paper, with which if I cannot whip 'Bobbie Lee,' I will be willing to go home. . . . I will not show you the document now, but there (turning down one of the folds) is the signature . . . and it gives the movement of every division of Lee's army. Tomorrow we will pitch into his centre, and if you people will only do two good, hard days' marching I will put Lee in a position he will find hard to get out of." \*

The paper which McClellan showed to Gibbon was Lee's lost Order No. 191. On that afternoon, a corporal in an Indiana regiment, lying on the ground in a meadow near Frederick, saw an envelope on the grass. He handed it to his captain, and as he did so, two cigars and a paper fell out. The captain sent for a match to light one of the cigars, and while he was waiting for the match to be brought, glanced carelessly at the paper. In a moment he had forgotten all about the cigar and was on his way to General Kimball, who, as soon as he had scrutinized the paper, mounted his horse and galloped to McClellan's headquarters. This Order No. 191 gave the movements of Lee's army, and revealed to McClellan Lee's critical situation, with Jackson on his way to Harper's Ferry, and the rest of the army exposed to a Union attack. To leave false orders in the way of an enemy has been a common *ruse de guerre*; but from the very first glance, McClellan and his staff accepted this, as it proved to be, a bona fide order, and that night McClellan issued orders to his army corps to prepare to march westward towards the passes of the South Mountain. His purpose was to relieve the threatened garrison at Harper's Ferry before

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\* John Gibbon, *Personal Recollections of the Civil War*, 78. New York and London, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1928.



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Jackson could capture it; but chiefly, and first of all, to fall upon Lee before Jackson could get back to join him. As the army left its encampments at daylight on that Sunday morning September 14th, they could hear distinctly the roar of the artillery where the Confederate Army was attacking Harper's Ferry. McClellan had given orders to Franklin to fire his cannon as he marched on Crampton Gap, whether he met an enemy or not, so that the Union Army at Harper's Ferry would know he was coming. Meanwhile, McClellan with the main body of the army, pressed forward along the National Pike towards the pass over the South Mountain known as Turner's Gap, at that time held by a force of not more than 5,000 men, the Confederate rear guard, under General D. H. Hill.

The night before, the 13th, Lee, then at Hagerstown, had got word from a scout that McClellan was approaching the eastern slope of South Mountain. He sent for Longstreet, and examining the map, asked for his opinion. Longstreet thought it was too late to try to hold the pass over the mountain, and suggested that they concentrate behind the Antietam Creek at Sharpsburg. But Lee preferred to make a stand at Turner's Gap, and ordered Longstreet to march back the thirteen miles to check McClellan at that pass. Longstreet retired to his tent; but so anxious was he that was unable to sleep. At length he arose, struck a light, and wrote a letter to General Lee, appealing again for the concentration of the Army at Sharpsburg, instead of marching back to the South Mountain. But no order came, and in the morning Longstreet set out on the hot march to Turner's Gap. Arriving there at three o'clock in the afternoon, he at once saw that it would be impossible to check McClellan, and sent word to Lee to prepare his mind for a disappointment and to choose a new position.

Confederate officers who were watching from the top of South Mountain the approach of McClellan's army describe the splendor of the panorama which unfolded itself at the foot of the mountain on that September Sabbath. Perhaps never before or afterwards in the war could four great army corps be plainly discerned on the march. In the center roads were the trains, with the infantry and artillery next in order, and the cavalry riding on the flanks. The soldiers marched four abreast, so as

to leave room for the aides and orderlies who galloped past with McClellan's orders for his generals. Slowly the mighty host approached the mountains, and soon columns of smoke rising from the forests, and the reverberation of the artillery, told where Franklin, on the left, at Crampton Gap, and Burnside on the right, at Turner's Gap, were engaging the enemy. Wherever the troops pressing forward towards the battle saw McClellan, they burst into wild and spontaneous cheering, throwing their caps high into the air and dancing and frolicking like school boys in their joy at a sight of their old commander, ready for his sake to go to death and perdition. Near Middletown, McClellan reined in his horse by the roadside and watched the regiments march by. The moment the soldiers recognized him they shouted their greeting, and hundreds left the ranks to embrace the legs of his horse and caress its head and mane, while the troops far in the rear knew by the sound of the cheering that came rolling down the advancing columns that McClellan was with the army. While the cheering troops were surging by, McClellan kept pointing with his hand to the smoking gaps of the South Mountain, where the advance of the army had already gone into battle. An army so inspired could not be denied. By sunset on the 14th, both passes had been carried by McClellan, and Lee fell back beyond the Antietam.

One of Lee's hardest fighting generals was J. B. Hood, who commanded a brigade of Texas troops. After the Second Battle of Bull Run, Hood refused to obey an order of Major-General Evans to turn over captured Union ambulances to his brigade. He felt it was unjust to take the ambulances from him and give them to another brigade of the same division, which had done nothing to capture them. Because of this insubordination Hood was placed under arrest, and on the march to Frederick was ordered by his corps commander, Longstreet, to go to the rear at Culpepper Court House, Virginia, to await trial by a court martial. When General Lee learned of this, he sent instructions that Hood was to remain with his brigade and accompany the army; but he did not release him from arrest, and he accompanied the army as a spectator, an officer without a command. When the troops of Longstreet marched back from Hagerstown to Turner's Gap

during the battle of South Mountain, Hood accompanied the division of which his brigade was a part. As he neared the summit of the mountain he heard the men of his brigade crying out along the line, "Give us Hood!" He did not comprehend what it meant till he came up to where General Lee was standing by a fence at the side of the pike. Lee's chief of staff, Colonel Chilton, accosted Hood and told him General Lee desired to speak with him. Dismounting, Hood came over to Lee, who said, "General, here I am just upon the eve of entering into battle, and with one of my best officers under arrest. If you will merely say that you regret this occurrence, I will release you and restore you to the command of your division." The determined Hood replied that he could not do so, since he could not admit the justice of General Evans' demand for the ambulances which his brigade had captured. Lee again urged him to make some kind of a declaration of regret, and again Hood refused. Then in a voice showing great emotion, Lee said, "Well, I will suspend your arrest till the impending battle is decided." Hood immediately remounted his horse, galloped to the front, and was greeted by the cheers of his men as he led them into battle. In the battle which followed at Antietam on the 17th, Hood played a glorious part. Nothing ever was heard of his arrest and court martial again, and instead of being brought to trial he was soon promoted to the rank of major-general.\* Hood lost an arm at Gettysburg, a leg of Chickamauga, and after Joseph E. Johnston was relieved by Davis, led the army in Georgia. In his daring raid from Georgia into Tennessee, Hood's army was broken and dispersed on the icy hills outside Nashville by the Union army under Thomas, who for a brief period had been Hood's superior in the old army, when he was a major in the famous Second Cavalry, the regiment in which both Albert Sidney Johnston and Robert E. Lee had served as Colonel and Lieutenant-Colonel.

While the passes of the South Mountain were smoking with the battles at Turner's Gap and Crampton Gap, the noble gorges of the Potomac and Shenandoah at Harper's Ferry were reverberating with the thunder of Jackson's cannonade. 9,000 troops were stationed at Harper's

\* John B. Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 39-40. New Orleans, Hood Orphan Memorial Fund, 1880.

Ferry under command of Colonel D. Miles, and 2,500 were with General Julius White at Martinsburg. Before McClellan left Washington, he made a midnight visit to Halleck with Seward, the Secretary of State, and urged Halleck either to withdraw the garrison and unite it with his army, or post it in the much higher and stronger position on the Maryland side of the river at Maryland Heights. Halleck declined to take either course and ordered Colonel Miles to hold Harper's Ferry to the last. Jackson and his columns left Frederick on the 10th of September on the expedition for the capture of Harper's Ferry. Walker, with one division, crossed the river south of Harper's Ferry at Point of Rocks, and by the 14th, was in position on Loudon Heights, just across the Shenandoah from Harper's Ferry. General McLaws with two divisions marched through Crampton Gap on the South Mountain, and across Pleasant Valley, and by the 14th had established himself at the base and on the summit of Maryland Heights. In this movement, McLaws was threatened in his rear by the advance of Franklin towards Crampton Gap. In order to protect himself, while at the same time investing Harper's Ferry, McLaws sent General Cobb back to Crampton Gap with instructions to hold the pass to the last man if necessary, until Harper's Ferry had been captured. McLaws was in a very dangerous position, and a quicker pursuit and a more determined attack on the part of Franklin would have destroyed his two divisions.

Meanwhile, Stonewall Jackson, after going over the South Mountain at Boonsboro, had marched through Sharpsburg and crossed the Potomac at Williamsport. Williamsport and Shepherdstown were the two fords on the Potomac which were most used by the Confederate Armies in their invasions of 1862 and 1863; Williamsport a little further up the river than Shepherdstown. As soon as Jackson appeared on the Virginia side, White withdrew his small force from Martinsburg and united it with Miles' command at Harper's Ferry. Jackson pushed on towards Harper's Ferry and took a position on Bolivar Heights, some distance back from Harper's Ferry, where a part of the Union army was posted.

The last time Jackson had passed through this neighborhood was when he commanded a company of cadets

of the Virginia Military Institute at the execution of John Brown at Charlestown, and prayed earnestly for the salvation of the abolitionist's soul. Harper's Ferry had dramatic memories, too, for General Lee and his cavalry commander, Jeb Stuart. At the time of the John Brown raid in October, 1859, Lee, then a Colonel, happened to be in Washington, on furlough from his cavalry regiment in Texas. He was dispatched to Harper's Ferry with a company of marines to protect the government property, the armory and the rifle factory, which had been seized by Brown. The marines attacked the engine house of the arsenal where John Brown with his hostages had taken refuge. The assault was led by Lee's aide, Lieutenant Jeb Stuart. Stuart had served in Kansas and had known Brown, and recognized him at once as "Ossawatimie" Brown. In the preliminary fighting Lee narrowly escaped death at the hands of one of the Negroes with Brown in the engine house. The Negro had leveled his rifle at Lee, and was about to fire, when one of the hostages warned him to desist, telling him that he was about to fire on an officer of the United States Army. Little could Lee, Jackson, or Stuart have thought that within less than three years from that memorable autumn, they would meet again in that beautiful mountain country as they led southern soldiers to battle in the midst of a great Civil War.

Few places on the American continent surpass Harper's Ferry in historic interest and grandeur of mountain and river scenery. There the two rivers, the Potomac flowing from the north, and the Shenandoah coming down from the south, break a passage through the vast barrier of the Blue Ridge, and mingling their waters at the point of land where the quaint old town now lies, go rushing over the rocks towards the sea. Standing on the tilting rock below the old cemetery at Harper's Ferry, and looking across the Shenandoah to the south, one can see the heavily wooded summit of Loudon Heights on the Virginia side, which rises to an elevation of nine hundred and fifty-four feet. Turning to the north, one can see across the Potomac, on the Maryland side, the towering mountain known as Maryland Heights, which looks down upon the river and Harper's Ferry from an elevation of 1,060 feet. Behind one, to the south and west,

is Bolivar Heights, not nearly so high as the other two mountains, but several hundred feet higher than the town. It will thus be seen that Harper's Ferry was a death trap for a defending army, if the surrounding heights were seized by an attacking force. For it was within easy range of cannon posted on Loudon Heights or Maryland Heights. Jackson crowned all three summits with his artillery, and the bombardment which commenced on the 14th, for Jackson here did not show his old Peninsula habit of holding back the battle on the Sabbath, made it clear that the Union army, unless help came immediately from McClellan, was doomed.

On the night of the 14th, after angry recriminations at a Council of War, the cavalry, led by two courageous and heroic Colonels, B. F. Davis of New York and Hasbrouck Davis of Illinois, made its escape, crossed the Potomac to the Maryland side, and capturing one of Longstreet's wagon trains on the way, joined McClellan before the battle of Antietam. The feat of the two Davises in getting away with the cavalry before the surrender took place may be likened to that of General Nathaniel Forrest at the surrender of Fort Donelson to Grant. Donelson was under the command of Floyd, who, at the Council the night before the surrender, turned the command over to Pillow, who in turn gave it to Simon Bolivar Buckner, an old comrade of Grant in Mexico, and to Buckner fell the task of making the surrender. But Forrest refused to surrender his cavalry, and cut his way out in the night by riding through the ice of the backwash of the Cumberland River near the fort.

On the morning of the 15th, the river canyons began to echo with the roar of the Confederate artillery on Maryland Heights and Loudon Heights, and Jackson's infantry was getting ready to storm the works held by the Union army on Bolivar Heights. At 8.30 o'clock, during a lull in the artillery fire, Colonel Miles visited General White at Bolivar Heights, and expressing the opinion that their situation was hopeless, said they might as well surrender without further useless sacrifice of life. General White replied that such a step should be taken only after a Council of War. Miles then summoned the brigade commanders, who, seeing that their commanding officer had lost all confidence in his ability to defend the place,

acquiesced in the surrender. The white flag was then raised, but was not at first seen by the Confederate gunners, who continued firing, killing Colonel Miles as he was waving the emblem of surrender. Had he lived, he would have been brought before a court martial. The almost hopeless position in which he found himself was due in part to the foolish instructions which he had received from Halleck. But even so, a courageous fight for even half a day might have held the place until help came from McClellan.

The spoils of Harper's Ferry were 12,000 troops, 73 cannon, 13,000 stands of arms, and valuable stores. Leaving A. P. Hill to arrange for the surrender and take over the prisoners and the booty, Jackson, started at once on the return journey, and marching all through the night of the 15th, recrossed the Potomac, and early on the 16th was in position on the left of Lee's army at Antietam. McLaws, too, got safely back, having crossed the Potomac, first to the Virginia side, and then to the Maryland side near Shepherdstown, and on the 16th was in position on Lee's battle line. Franklin's advance was only three or four miles from Harper's Ferry when the white flag was raised. McClellan had given orders to Franklin to keep his artillery firing whether he engaged the enemy or not, so as to let the garrison at Harper's Ferry know that he was coming, and sent courier after courier to Miles, urging him to hold on to the last. Miles' conduct at Harper's Ferry was in striking contrast with that of General J. M. Corse, when Hood attacked his post at Allatoona, one of the links in Sherman's connection with Chattanooga in the campaign against Atlanta. Sherman, hurrying back to the rescue, heliographed Corse from the top of Kenesaw Mountain that he was on the way. Corse withstood Hood's attack, and the next day Sherman received a dispatch from him saying, "I am short a cheek bone and an ear, but am able to whip all h—l yet." When Hood made a demand upon Corse, that he surrender so as "to avoid a needless effusion of blood," Corse replied, "Your communication demanding surrender of my command I acknowledge receipt of, and respectfully reply that we are prepared for the 'needless effusion of blood' whenever it is agreeable to you."\* But Harper's Ferry

\* Sherman, *Memoirs*, II, 148.

had no Corse within its garrison, and when the sound of firing ceased on the morning of the 15th, McClellan knew that his efforts to save the garrison had been in vain.

In the advance into Maryland, and at the battle of South Mountain, the prelude to bloody Antietam, McClellan ignored Stanton completely, and communicated with Halleck and Lincoln. Lincoln beseeches him not to let Lee "get off without being hurt." When the news came in of the South Mountain victory, Lincoln telegraphed McClellan, "God bless you and all with you! Destroy the rebel army, if possible." From West Point, too, flashed a message from McClellan's old commander in Mexico, the retired Lieutenant General of the army, Winfield Scott, who, forgetting the hurt which he felt he had received at the hands of McClellan, and stirred with the news of victory, telegraphed, "Bravo, my dear General! Twice more and it's done."



## V

### DRUMS ON THE ANTIETAM

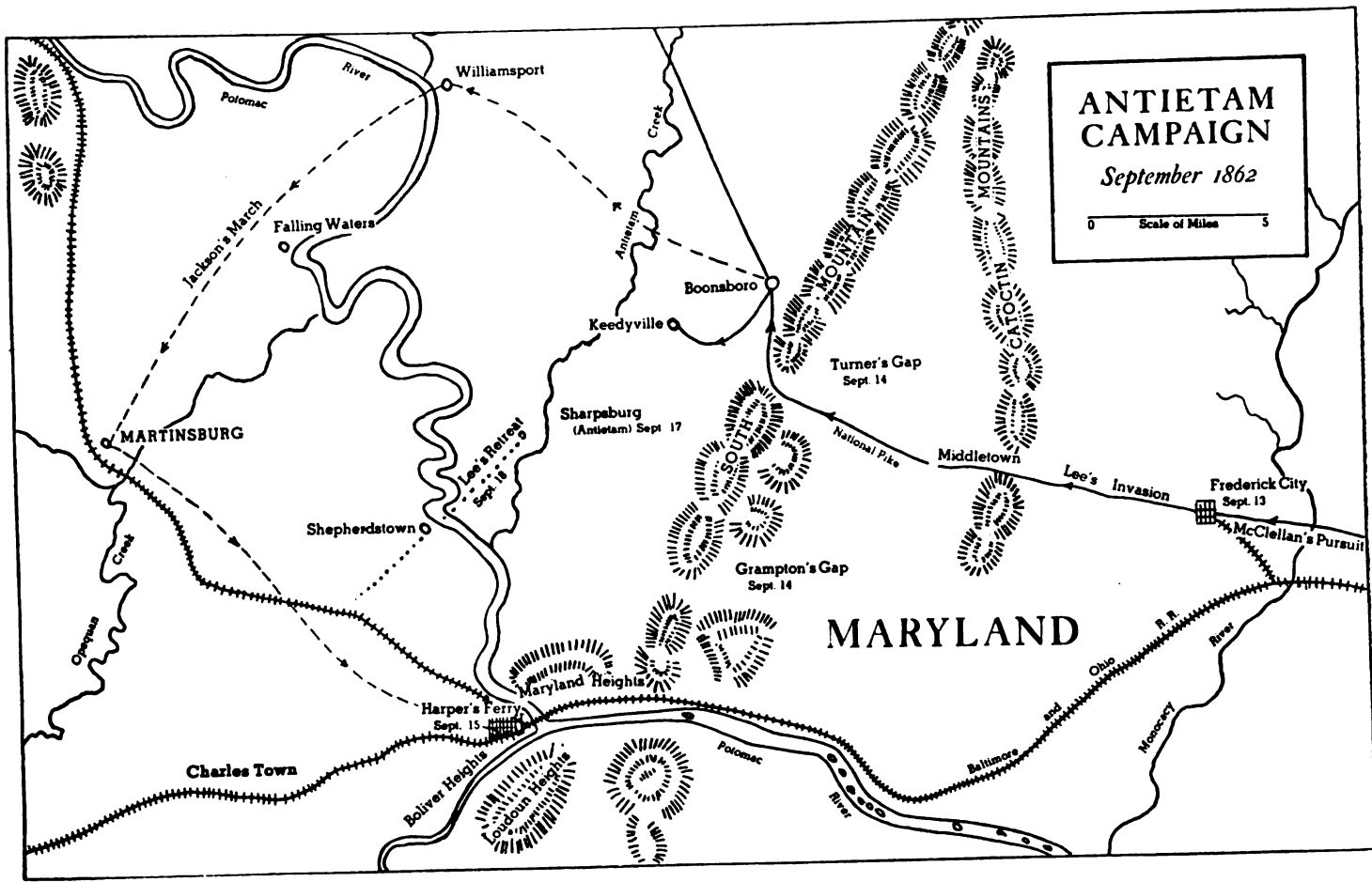
Lee's defeat in the battle at Turner's Gap and Crampton Gap on the South Mountain left him no choice but to retreat. Yet he did this very reluctantly. At 10 o'clock on the evening of the battle, September 14th, General Hood, whose men had been fighting on the right of the Confederate position, rode through the gap to the town of Boonsboro, where he found General D. H. Hill and other officers on the gallery of a tavern near the pike, discussing the outlook. In an ordinary tone of voice, Hood inquired as to the condition of affairs on the left, and, to his surprise, was warned in a whisper, "The enemy is just there in the cornfield. He has forced us back." Hood then suggested that they go at once to Lee's headquarters and report the situation. With Hill and the other officers he rode down to the foot of the mountain, where they found Lee in conference with Longstreet. After a long and earnest debate, it was decided to retire and fall back towards Sharpsburg. Every military consideration demanded such a retirement; but after their succession of victories, it was hard for the Confederate commanders to realize that it was now their turn to retreat. At the close of the second battle of Bull Run, General Hood, finding Lee reading dispatches near a campfire, and in high spirits, told him that it was a beautiful sight to see the Confederate battle flags dancing after the Federals as they ran in full retreat. Lee exclaimed, "God forbid I should ever live to see our colors moving in the opposite direction!"\* Now, on this September Sabbath night, both Lee and Hood had the unpleasant experience of seeing their colors moving away from the victorious Union army.

Lee's first thought after his reverse on South Mountain was to cross the Potomac into Virginia without trying the fortune of another battle; and at eight o'clock that

\* Hood, *Advance and Retreat*, 38.

night he wrote to McLaws, who was at Maryland Heights, telling him to abandon his position and cross the river, leaving the ford at Shepherdstown for the main army. But within two hours, he changed his mind, decided to wait for McClellan to attack, and ordered McLaws to join him at Sharpsburg. This was before he had word of the fall of Harper's Ferry. It was a bold and hazardous stand that Lee took. Under the circumstances, one wonders why he took such a chance. His army was still divided, Harper's Ferry had not yet fallen, and McClellan's powerful army had carried the mountain passes and was ready for another blow. Why did he take such a chance? The most plausible answer is that he was still laboring under the delusion that the Union army could be beaten by his army under *any* conditions. He realized also what the moral effect of a retreat into Virginia without fighting another battle would be, after his invasion had raised such high hopes in the South.

By the early morning of the 15th, Lee drew up his army, or that portion of it which was then with him, on the hills west of the Antietam Creek. The Antietam, flowing generally north to south, is spanned in that vicinity by several stone bridges. The bridge nearest the Potomac, and which was to be known after the battle as Burnside's Bridge, was at the end of Lee's line, on his right, and the little white Dunkard Church was near the end of his line on the left. The distance from the bridge to the church was three miles. Back of the position taken by Lee ran the Hagerstown turnpike. This road afforded an easy means of communication between the two corps of Lee's army, and he made great use of this advantage during the stress of the battle. In front of the Confederate line, and between it and the Antietam, the country is rolling, and was under cultivation. Toward Burnside's Bridge, the hills along the stream are higher and steeper. On the extreme Confederate left, not far from the Potomac, Stuart was stationed with the cavalry. Jackson's corps, which came up on the 16th, formed the left wing of Lee's army and Longstreet's the right. The distance from the Antietam to South Mountain is seven miles, and as the Confederates lay in their lines on the hills back of the Antietam, they could see the long columns of McClellan's army come marching down the mountain slope



**ANTIETAM  
CAMPAIGN**  
*September 1862*  
0 Scale of Miles 5

and take position opposite them on the east side of the Antietam. The battle which was to follow was unique among the battles of the war fought thus far, and, indeed, among all the battles of the war, in that before and during the battle both armies were in plain view of one another.

Lee's choice of a battlefield, except for the advantage of having a stream in his front, could hardly have been worse. Had he won the battle, he would have had to cross a river in pursuit, and if he lost the battle, the Potomac was just in his rear. His artillery officer, Alexander, thus describes their position: "We were backed up against it [Potomac River], within two miles, and there was no bridge and but a single ford accessible, and that a bad one, rocky and deep. On the Maryland side, a mile of hilltops, some of them beyond the Antietam, offered sites for rifle guns to rake the ford and entirely cut off any retreat, should we meet with a reverse. . . . The most sanguine hope which Lee could reasonably entertain, with his inferior force, was to fight a drawn battle, and then safely withdraw what was left of his army. Against it he risked its utter destruction, which would have been the speedy end of the Confederacy."\* What Lee evidently hoped for, in spite of the odds against him, was a decisive victory, and if he were victorious, the defeated Union army would have no works behind which it could take refuge, as it had done after Second Bull Run. It was the gambler's chance that Lee took, and he lost.

All the afternoon of the 15th, the Confederates had been watching the awe-inspiring spectacle as regiment after regiment of McClellan's army marched into position on the hills and fields on the eastern side of the little stream. By evening McClellan's army was well up. His right extended almost to the Potomac River; his left was opposite Burnside's Bridge. Dissatisfied with the slow movement of Burnside, who up to this time had commanded the right wing of the army, McClellan withdrew Hooker's corps from Burnside's command and put Burnside with his Ninth Corps on the left of the army. This displeased Burnside, and may have had something to do with his dilatory movements during the battle on the 17th. Porter's Fifth Corps lay in reserve in the center; and in the center, too, McClellan posted his cavalry. This was

\* Alexander, "Military Memoirs of a Confederate," 247.

contrary to the orthodox use of cavalry, which is generally placed on the flanks of an army. Hooker and his corps lay on the right, and next to him Mansfield's corps, and then Sumner's. The plan of McClellan in the battle was to attack the Confederate left with Hooker and Mansfield, supported by Sumner and Franklin if necessary. Then Burnside was to attack the Confederate right; and when the two flank movements were well under way and successful, attack in the center. The plan was not bad, and the victory might have been greater had the battle been fought according to this plan. But instead of co-ordinated attacks, the battle was fought in a series of successive and disconnected assaults. Burnside did not get into action until the battle was practically over at the other end of the line.

One of the reasons for McClellan's disjointed battle on the 17th, was the fact that part of his army, the right wing under Hooker, lay west of the Antietam, and the rest of the army on the east side of the creek. Before his lamented death at Bull Run, General Philip Kearny, one of the few officers of the Army of the Potomac who did not think highly of McClellan, had criticized his management of the Army in the Peninsula campaign, saying that he "fought in driblets." This was the trouble at Antietam—McClellan fought the battle "in driblets."

Even on the 15th, McClellan might have used some of the hours of daylight remaining to him for a successful assault, for Jackson had not yet returned from Harper's Ferry. But McClellan made no move; the sun went down over the western hills. Soon camp fires were burning over the fields, and the rumbling of wheels was heard as both armies changed and improved their respective positions. While this was going on, and all through the night, clouds of dust were rising from the road leading to the ford at Shepherdstown as Jackson's men came marching back to join Lee's army. The 16th dawned, but still McClellan made no move, beyond that of reconnoitering the Confederate position and altering his own lines. The soldiers of both armies lay about in the fields in the warm September sunlight, smoking, sleeping, writing letters to their families, while the staff officers galloped here and there with their orders. Like two giant wrestlers, the hostile armies waited, surveying one another and waiting for the

first blow. The Union soldiers could see very distinctly the Confederate lines with their gay flags and guidons and the brass guns of the artillery shining in the sunlight.

It was a beautiful arena that war had chosen for its passion and carnage on that September day. Standing near the monument which marks the spot where General Reno fell on South Mountain, one can see far to the west the spires of Sharpsburg, the white limestone pikes traversing the country, and the winding Antietam. Still further off, on the western horizon, is the rampart of the mountains which mark the course of the Potomac. Far to the left, is a break in the mountains where the Shenandoah and the Potomac mingle their floods at Harper's Ferry. Immediately in front of one, and a little to the left, is a ridge of hills known as Elk Ridge. On this ridge the Union Army had a signal station. In that vicinity, too, several thousand spectators gathered, well out of the range of the cannon, to witness the battle. Elk Ridge is two miles from the Antietam. In front of Elk Ridge, and to the right of it, the mountains break away into a rolling country, mostly farmland, with here and there a copse of forest. Coming down the slope from the South Mountain passes, one can make out the huge stone barns and the spirals of smoke going up from the chimneys of the substantial brick or stone houses. On the day on which the battle was fought, the corn in the fields stood as high as a man, and the orchards had taken on a faint flush of red with the ripening apples. Today one sees cattle and sheep grazing in the meadows. But at the time of the battle the barns and fields were empty, for the farmers had driven their stock northward into Pennsylvania. Some distance north of Sharpsburg, and towards the left of the Confederate position, a little white church stood among the trees. Here the Dunkards worshiped, for most of the farmers in the vicinity belonged to that foot-washing and non-resisting sect. Across this panorama of rural peace and prosperity the little Antietam went murmuring under the graceful stone bridges on its way to the Potomac. Such was the amphitheater where now was to be staged the bloodiest drama of the Civil War. Into this beautiful picture the winding columns of the hostile armies came crawling like enor-

mous dragons whose fiery breath was soon to blast the fair prospect.

The quiet of the 16th was broken on the late afternoon, when Hooker crossed the Antietam with his corps and felt out the Confederate position. Soon the sound of the guns died away and the peace of the September night came down on friend and foe. Yet both armies knew that on the morrow the peace would end, for the two hosts lay close to one another, waiting for the dawn of the day, which for thousands of them was to be the last day of their life on earth.

## VI

### THE CIVIL WAR'S BLOODIEST DAY

At five o'clock on the morning of the 17th, as the mists were lifting from the Antietam, Hooker advanced with his corps, marching far to the right of the Confederate position and coming down on them from the northeast. His attack was carried out with his customary drive and dash. Some thought that he moved too rapidly and got too far off from the rest of the army, and that he was trying to win the battle all by himself. This was a trait in Hooker which both Grant and Sherman were to note when he fought under them in the West. Grant said of him that his disposition when engaged in battle was to get detached from the main body of the army and exercise a separate command, gathering to his standard all he could of his juniors. Sherman also mentions this tendency, and says that his other corps commanders, Thomas, McPherson and Schofield, all complained to him of this habit of Hooker "to switch off, leaving wide gaps in his line, so as to be independent and to make glory of his own account." But however that may have been, Hooker, until he was wounded in the foot and had to leave the field, fought a grand battle. Always a handsome man, Hooker was transfigured in the battle, his fine face flushed, and his blue eyes radiant, as he jumped his white horse over the rail fences and urged his men into battle. Back on the hills at Elk Ridge thousands of spectators were watching the sight. They could see the long lines of infantry swaying to and fro, with the columns of smoke rising from the muskets, and the red flashes and white puffs of smoke from the artillery, and here and there riderless horses dashing wildly across the field.

As Hooker advanced he came to a thirty acre corn field. The sun was now up, and its moving rays disclosed the bayonets of Confederate infantry projecting above the tassels of the corn which were waving to and fro in the soft morning wind. Hooker ordered up his batteries,



and in a few minutes the thirty acre field of corn lay as flat as if it had been cut with a knife, and the rows of the dead lay just where they had stood in their ranks a few minutes before.

After Hooker's assault had spent itself, the 12th Corps, under command of the aged General Mansfield, came into action to support him. This inaugurated the second stage of the battle. Mansfield was riding down his lines within sight of the Confederates, when one of his officers remonstrated with him for taking unnecessary risks. Mansfield replied, "Yes, you're right," and almost instantly was struck with a bullet. He tried to put his horse over the rails of a fence, but the horse, also severely wounded, was unable to make the jump. Mansfield then dismounted, and a gust of wind blowing open his coat displayed a wound in the breast. Some of his soldiers made a litter of their muskets and carried him to the rear.

With both Hooker's and Mansfield's corps badly cut up by the attack, Sumner's corps now came crashing into the battle on their left. Of Sumner's three divisions, two of the commanders, Sedgwick and Dana were wounded, and Richardson mortally so. Richardson led his division, in which was the famous Irish Brigade, into battle on foot, with a bare sword in his hand and his face as black as a thundercloud. The Colonel of a New Hampshire regiment heard Richardson cry out, "Where is General \_\_\_\_\_?" Some of the men in the regiment turning their heads cried out, "Behind the haystack!" "God d—n the field officers!" roared Richardson, as he strode into the smoke of battle, for even at bloody Antietam, as in all battles, there were "behind the haystack" officers and soldiers. Richardson was mortally wounded as he was helping his men to locate a battery. His soldiers were deeply grieved and depressed as they saw their General carried from the field. But soon a heavy blue-eyed and fair-haired brigadier-general came riding up to take command of the division. They were glad when they learned that this new general was Winfield S. Hancock, Hancock "the superb," as McClellan had named him on the Peninsula.

In front of Lee's line, near the center, a sunken road or lane led from the Hagerstown pike towards the Antie-

tam. The bed of this lane lay from one to three feet below the surface of the crest along which it ran. On a summer day one can walk down this lane for the distance of half a mile on a carpet of clover and dandelions and wild roses. But by noon on this September day the lane was so heaped with the dead and dying that one might have walked its entire length without treading upon the ground. This position was held by Rodes' brigade of Lee's army. When the attack of Sumner's corps threatened to flank the lane, orders were sent to a colonel of the 6th Alabama Infantry to throw back his lines on the right so as to protect his general position. Instead of executing this order, he moved to the rear of his regiment and shouted, "Sixth Alabama, about face! Forward, march!" A Major of another regiment, seeing the Sixth Alabama move out, asked if the order was intended for the whole brigade. The Colonel replied, "Yes," whereupon all the other troops abandoned the position. This withdrawal, due to a misunderstanding of orders, threatened for a moment the ruin of Lee's army, and a strong aggressive movement by McClellan at that time would have ended the battle.\* The gap thus left by Rodes was speedily filled by the Federal troops and the whole position had to be abandoned. Rodes was struck in the thigh with a piece of a shell and was unable to do anything to rally his men. Officers of McClellan's reserve corps, the Fifth, looking on from a distance, saw the opportunity in this part of the line and exclaimed, "Now is the time!" But the opportunity was allowed to pass by unused. Although not as disastrous in its effects, the withdrawal of the Confederates from Bloody Lane may be likened to the withdrawal of a brigade of troops through mistaken orders from the Union line at the battle of Chickamauga. It was through the gap thus made that Longstreet poured his troops and cut the Union army in two, sweeping the right under McCook and the center under Crittenden off that field.

The soldiers of Richardson's division took a position in the lane, kneeling on the Confederate dead and wounded who covered its floor from one end to the other. In the ferocity of the fight, the colonel of one of the New Hampshire regiments shouted to his men, "Put on the

\* Alexander, *Memoirs of a Confederate*, 262.

war paint"! Looking up from their rifles, they saw him standing erect with a red handkerchief tied about his bare head and the blood which flowed from wounds on his forehead making red furrows down his powder-blackened face. Inspired by this spectacle, the men rubbed the torn ends of cartridges over their faces, streaking them with powder, and then joined their colonel in an Indian war whoop which rang out above the crash of the muskets and the roar of the artillery. Here was war in all its fascination, its madness, and its stark horror.

Among the hard fighting Confederate generals whose soldiers bore the brunt of McClellan's attack that day, was D. H. Hill, Jackson's brother-in-law. He had served with distinction in Mexico and then taught mathematics at Davidson College, the Carolina Military Institute, and the Virginia Military Institute. He had also tried his hand at theology, and was the author of two works, *The Sermon on the Mount* and *The Crucifixion*. Now, on foot, and with a musket in his hand, the author of the commentary of the Sermon on the Mount leads his brigade into battle. Lee kept in close touch with his two corps commanders, Jackson and Longstreet, and skilfully reinforced his threatened left with troops from his right, for Burnside's long delay at the bridge made such a transfer possible. As the Rockbridge Artillery galloped into action near where Lee was standing, his youngest son, Robert E., Jr., a private with the guns, his face black with the grime and smoke of battle, stopped for a moment to salute his father. "Old Peter" Longstreet, the "bulldog of the Confederacy," with his great red carpet slippers in the stirrups, holds the bridle reins of the horses of his staff, while they with their own hands sight the pieces of a battery. Under an apple tree, with one leg thrown easily over the pommel of the saddle, Stonewall Jackson sits eating an apple. When the Union attack ceased early in the afternoon, Jackson directed General Walker to take a force of several thousand men, give them to Stuart, and attack and turn McClellan's right. Despite the fearful losses the Confederate Army had sustained, Jackson still entertained the idea of victory. Replacing his foot in the stirrup, he exclaimed to Walker, "We'll drive McClellan into the Potomac!" The real danger, however, was that Jackson himself, and

the whole Confederate Army, would be driven into the Potomac; and this might have been effected, had there been a united and vigorous Union assault in the afternoon.

At a critical stage of the battle, between twelve and one o'clock, General Franklin, marching with two of his divisions from Crampton Gap at the South Mountain arrived upon the field, and was at once sent to the assistance of Sumner on the right. After staying the Confederate attack and re-establishing the Union line, Franklin was for another assault. But Sumner, appalled and shocked at the losses he had suffered, would not permit the attack to be made. Although it was Sumner who, more than any of the subordinate commanders, was responsible for the withholding of another assault, he was, by common consent, the grand figure and personality on this hard fought field. For two hours in the early morning of the 17th, while Hooker's battle was raging, Sumner paced restlessly up and down in front of McClellan's headquarters at the Pry House, waiting for the word to throw in his corps. In the Mexican War he had won the sobriquet, "Old Buffalo," by reason of the fact that a bullet which struck him square in the forehead fell flattened to the ground. Although not a West Pointer, he had served long in the army and was highly esteemed. His advanced age, sixty-four, probably put him out of the running for consideration as an army commander; but not the youngest lieutenant surpassed him in dash and vigor on the field of action. If he had any fault, it was his habit, acquired as a cavalry officer, of throwing himself into the very thick of the fight. This interfered with his taking a calmer view of the general battle situation. Although never scheming for a place, Sumner once said to Howard, who had told him that he did not aspire to be the commander of a corps, "General, you surprise me. I would command the world if I could." Sumner's son, "Sammie," then a captain, and afterwards a major general in the army, was on his father's staff and always at his side, and men noted the beautiful affection which existed between the old war horse and the young captain.

As he draws near to the scene of action, Sumner takes out his artificial teeth, places them carefully in one of his pockets, raises his spectacles on his forehead so as to get

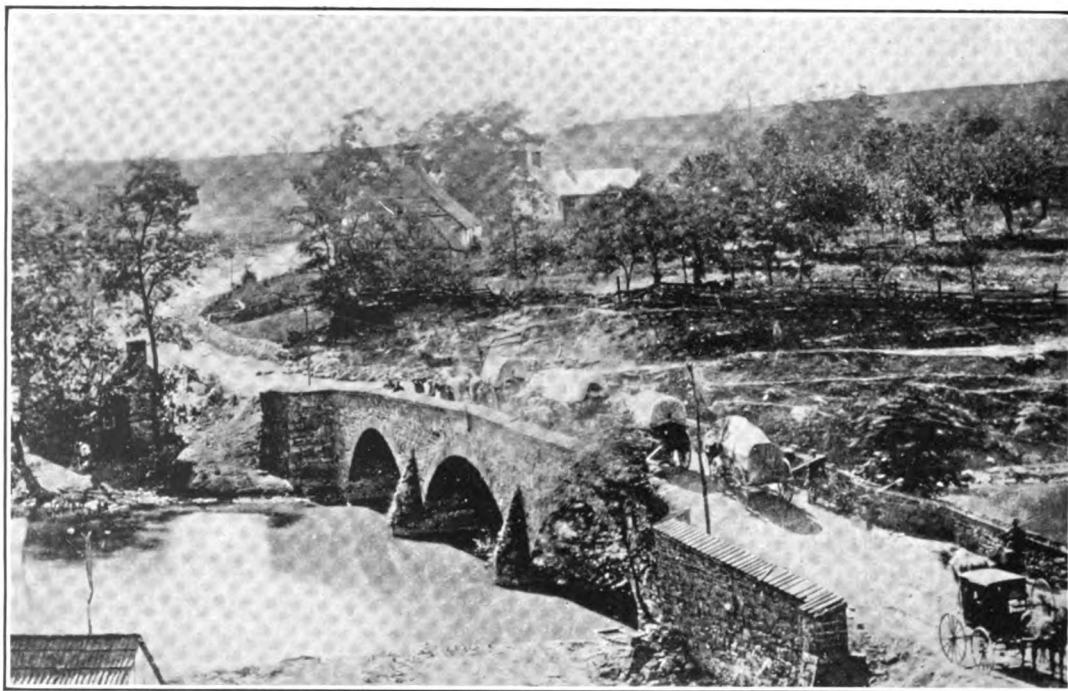
a better vision of the field, gives an order to a staff officer, and then, waving his hat, and with his white hair and beard streaming in the breeze, rides into the forefront of the hottest battle, always well up with the field officers. In his eloquent oration at West Point, delivered in 1863, in honor of the officers and men of the regular army who had fallen in the war, McClellan related how Sumner had often told him that it was his hope to end his career in the roar of battle. He was not granted his desire, but died of sickness in March, 1863, when on his way west to take command of the Department of Missouri. His last words, a fitting summary of his splendid service, were "May God bless my country, the United States of America."

Sitting in his arm chair under the trees at the Pry House, McClellan waited in vain for the sound of battle on Burnside's front. Burnside, probably offended that the right wing had been taken away from him, left the actual handling of his corps to General Jacob Cox, who had only recently arrived from Western Virginia and was a stranger to the army. McClellan had visited Burnside's position on the 16th, and directed him to make a careful reconnaissance of the Confederate position beyond the bridge, so as to be ready for an attack on the following morning. Again, on the morning of the 17th, he sent orders to Burnside to form his troops in line and hold them in readiness to attack the bridge. At eight o'clock in the morning, McClellan sent Lieutenant Wilson to Burnside with orders to carry the bridge and the heights beyond and advance along their crest towards Sharpsburg and into the rear of Lee's army. When no word came of this attack, McClellan sent an aide galloping down to the river again to see what had been done. The aide returned with the word that no progress had been made, and was sent back with an order to Burnside to assault the bridge at once and carry it at all hazards. When the aide returned a second time and reported that the Confederates still held the bridge, McClellan sent his inspector-general, Colonel Sackett, to deliver to Burnside his positive order to advance his troops without a moment's delay and, if necessary, take the bridge at the point of the bayonet. Sackett was directed to remain with Burnside until the order was carried out. When he received this third order through Colonel Sackett, Burn-

side, displeased, exclaimed to Sackett, "McClellan appears to think I am not trying my best to carry this bridge. You are the third or fourth one who has been to me this morning with similar orders." The several hours' delay in taking the bridge probably prevented McClellan from winning a crushing victory at that stage of the battle, for had Burnside carried the bridge early in the morning, and taken the hills beyond, he would not have been checked by the division of A. P. Hill which he encountered after the bridge had been carried and the hills taken. The bridge was finally carried about one o'clock by the 51st New York and the 51st Pennsylvania volunteers. This latter regiment was made up of Psalm-singing Presbyterians from the western counties of Pennsylvania. They well deserved the title, "Roundheads," which likened them to Cromwell's infantry at Naseby and Marston Moor. On the hill beyond the bridge there stands today a monument to this regiment. With his rifle across his arm, his back to the Antietam, his head high and lifted up, the bronze figure of the Roundhead sums up and symbolizes the moral earnestness and the religious faith which fought the Civil War through to a successful issue. In a sense, the Civil War was a soldiers' war more than an officers' war; and of the undismayed fortitude and unshrinking courage of the men in the ranks, the Pennsylvania Roundhead was a goodly type.

It was McClellan's misfortune to have Burnside in command of his left wing during those critical hours of the battle. Yet, if Burnside would not move, it was McClellan's business to relieve him and put in command an officer who would carry out his orders. Just as Lee's failure at Gettysburg cannot be excused on the ground that Longstreet sulked and would not quickly carry out Lee's orders, so McClellan must be held responsible, and not Burnside, for the long delay in taking the bridge. The Burnside's Bridge was not more than a mile and a half from McClellan's headquarters, and McClellan himself could easily have ridden over to his left wing and taken personal charge of the operations.

After the bridge had been taken by the 9th Corps, and the Union soldiers had advanced almost as far as the hill where the National Cemetery now is, just east of Sharpsburg, the situation was critical for Lee's army. But just



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

WAGON TRAIN ON ANTIETAM BRIDGE



at this juncture, the troops of A. P. Hill, marching back from the spoils of Harper's Ferry, and led by Hill in his red flannel shirt, came rushing through the cornfields and drove Burnside's men back to the hills near the bridge. Soon two of Burnside's aides came galloping up to headquarters on foaming horses to ask McClellan for reinforcements. Burnside represented that his position on the hills which he had carried beyond the Antietam was in danger, and that he must have troops and guns. McClellan looked at Porter, always his intimate and counsellor. Porter shook his head, and McClellan speaking very slowly, and gazing at the western sky, clouded with the smoke of battle, said to Burnside's aides, "Tell General Burnside, this is the battle of the war. He must hold his ground until dark at any cost." Then, as the aides were riding away, he called them back and said, "Tell him if he cannot hold this ground, then the bridge till the last man; always the bridge. If the bridge is lost, all is lost."

What of McClellan, during this day so fateful for the destinies of the Republic? He had taken up his headquarters at the Pry House, a large, well-shaded brick house on a hill back of the Union center, and from the higher ground in the rear of the house he could survey nearly the whole field of action. At 10 o'clock on the evening of the 16th, having made his dispositions for battle, the man upon whose orders so much was to depend went to bed and slept until eight o'clock in the morning, when the hills around him had been echoing for hours with the roar of Hooker's battle! During a part of the forenoon, McClellan sat calm and collected in his arm chair under a tree in front of the house. Close at hand was his friend and confidant, Fitz-John Porter. Saddled and bridled horses pawed the ground about the trees and fences to which they were fastened, and staff officers were looking at the battle through telescopes fastened to stakes.

From the Pry House McClellan's aides galloped to all parts of the battlefield with orders for the different commanders. None was more dashing or picturesque than "Cinnamon" Custer, a superb horseman, with his long, golden locks streaming in the wind. Another aide who distinguished himself on that bloody day by putting himself at the head of some of the men of Sedgwick's division



who had broken in battle, and leading them back into the fight, was Charles Russell Lowell, nephew of James Russell Lowell, the poet. After the battle, McClellan honored young Lowell by delegating him to carry the thirty-nine Confederate standards captured at South Mountain and Antietam to Lincoln. Young Lowell fell at Cedar Creek in the Shenandoah Valley, when fighting under Sheridan, in October, 1864. Soldiers' Field, the Harvard stadium, is dedicated by the donor, Henry Lee Higginson, to his three kinsmen, Robert Gould Shaw, who fell at Fort Wagner, South Carolina, in 1863, and whose splendid monument stands on Boston Common; James J. Lowell, and Charles Russell Lowell, McClellan's aide. General Sheridan, under whom Lowell fought in the Shenandoah Valley, pays this tribute to him: "I do not think there was a quality which I could have added to Lowell. He was the perfection of a man and a soldier."

A volunteer aide to McClellan, loaned to him for the Antietam campaign, was Lieutenant James H. Wilson, afterwards to become famous as inspector-general on Grant's staff and Commander of a Cavalry corps under Sherman and Thomas. Wilson had already been assigned to Grant's staff, and stopped in Washington on his way from Port Royal, where he had served with distinction in that expedition. He received permission to serve temporarily on McClellan's staff, and was one of a number of enterprising young West Pointers who carried the orders of McClellan during the campaign of South Mountain and Antietam. It was Wilson, leaping his gray horse over the stone fences, who carried McClellan's order to General Sumner to get his men up and hold his position at all hazards. "Go back, young man," said the despondent Sumner, and tell General McClellan I have no command."

Wilson was never troubled with modesty, and although just a lieutenant, and a youth of twenty-five, he took it upon himself to send a message to General Hooker through a correspondent of the *New York Tribune*. Hooker had left the battle line with a slight wound in his foot. Wilson thought that if Hooker would show himself at the front it would be a great thing for the army on that part of the field. When the correspondent, mounting his horse, said to Wilson, "I fear Hooker is too severely

wounded to mount his horse," Wilson sang out, "That makes no difference. Let him get into an ambulance and drive back to the field. Or, what is still better, put him on a stretcher, and with his bugles blowing and his corps flag flying over him, let his men carry him back to the fighting line!" In a short time Wilson's messenger returned and said, "Hooker says he can't go back—his foot is too painful." From that hour Wilson thought "Fighting Joe" was a poor sobriquet for Hooker.

After watching the struggle for two hours, McClellan mounted "Daniel Webster" and rode to the center of his line where Porter's troops were held in reserve. The soldiers, as usual, gave him a tremendous ovation, so loud as to attract the fire of the Confederate artillery. Disregarding the bursting shells, McClellan sat unmoved on his horse, a splendid figure, looking through his field glasses at the enemy's position, and then, turning his head, spoke to an orderly, whose galloping horse was soon lost in the smoke of battle. Watching the fight, McClellan exclaimed to one of his officers, "What terrible neighbors these would be! We must conquer them, or they will conquer us." In a lull of the battle, he met a West Point classmate, then a Massachusetts general, and said to him, "General, how are your men?" The officer replied, "They have behaved admirably, but are somewhat scattered." "Collect them at once," said McClellan. We must fight tonight and fight tomorrow. This is our golden opportunity. If we cannot whip the rebels here, we may just as well all die on the field." \* To "fight tonight and fight tomorrow" was McClellan's first thought; but in the middle of the afternoon he visited his right wing and saw how badly cut up the three corps were that had been in the thick of the fight, Sumner's, Hooker's, and Mansfield's. When he consulted Sumner about another assault, that courageous and hard-hitting officer expressed the most decided opinion that another attempt should not be made that day. McClellan then directed the different commanders to hold their present positions, and there the bloody battle rested.

That night, General Lee mounted on "Traveler," waited in the moonlight on the road to the Potomac west

\* Richardson, *Secret Service*, 387. Hartford, Connecticut, American Publishing Company; Philadelphia, Jones Brothers & Company, 1865.

of Sharpsburg, and as general after general rode in to headquarters, he said to each one of them quietly, "How is it on your part of the line?" Each general told a tale of exhaustion and terrible losses, and said there was nothing left to do but to retreat across the Potomac before daylight. Jeb Stuart, always so jubilant after a victory, sat on his horse, silently fingering his sabre. Hood, of the fighting Texans, unmanned by his losses, said he had no troops left. "Great God!" exclaimed Lee, with what for him was unwonted emotion, "where is the splendid division you had this morning?" "They are lying on the field, where you sent them," answered Hood. "My division has been almost wiped out." When the last of the reports had been given by his generals, Lee was silent for a little. Then, rising in his stirrups, he exclaimed, "Gentlemen, we will not cross the Potomac tonight. You will go to your respective commands and strengthen your lines. . . . I have had the proper steps taken to collect all the men who are in the rear. If McClellan wants to fight in the morning, I will give him battle again. Go!"\* But if Lee had any thought of renewing the battle on the morning, the reports of losses which came in showed him the folly of such a plan, and on the afternoon and evening of the 18th he retreated into Virginia by the Shepherdstown ford over the Potomac, leaving behind him the broken hopes of the great invasion and thousands of dead and wounded. The anxiety of the Confederate commanders is well illustrated by what Jackson said to Hood, before dawn on the 18th. Hood had mounted his horse and ridden to the front, when Jackson came riding up and said to him, "Hood, have they gone?" When Hood answered in the negative, Jackson replied, "I hoped they had." That night, as the last of the rear guard of the Confederate army splashed through the ford at Shepherdstown, Lee was heard to ejaculate, "Thank God!"

While Lee was interviewing his dejected generals on the road leading to the Potomac, McClellan was taking counsel with himself in the shaded brick house where he had established his headquarters. "The night," he says, "brought with it grave responsibility. Whether to renew the attack on the 18th, or to defer it, even with the risk

\* G. F. R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson and the American Civil War*, II, 262-63, New York, Longmans, Green & Company, 1927,

of the enemy's retirement, was the question before me." Weighed down with the burden of his responsibility, appalled at the slaughter of his beloved soldiers who were lying in heaps on the field of battle, McClellan finally decided not to attack the next morning because the success of such an attack "was not certain." That phrase, "was not certain," throws much light on McClellan as a commander. Grant, speaking of Halleck, said he would never take a chance in battle. "A General who will never take a chance in battle will never fight one."\* In the management of an army McClellan would do only that which was reasonably certain to eventuate in victory, and would not take the chance which has always been the mark of the greatest commanders. He gave as the reasons which led him to postpone another battle until the 19th, the exhausted state of his troops, their separation from the supply trains, the losses and disorganization in Sumner's and Hooker's corps, and the fact that heavy reinforcements would be up by the 19th. What was in his mind is best summed up in his own words: "At that moment, Virginia lost, Washington menaced, Maryland invaded . . . the national cause could afford no risks of defeat. One battle lost, and almost all would have been lost. Lee's army might then have marched as it pleased on Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, or New York, and nowhere east of the Alleghenies was there another organized force able to arrest its march."

By daylight on the 19th Lee was over the river in Virginia. Although the complete destruction of the Confederate Army had not been achieved, the invasion of the North had been foiled, and the proud and victorious host, which two weeks before had crossed the Potomac into Maryland with rollicking songs and flaunting banners, and high hopes of offering peace to the North after a great victory had been won, was now driven back across the river defeated, baffled, and bleeding at every pore.

When night fell on that September day, and the harvest moon came out, it looked down upon a scene of misery, sorrow, anguish, and death such as had never been witnessed on the American continent. Twenty-three thousand young men, the flower of both armies, lay dead and wounded on the field. Antietam was by all odds the

\* Young, *Around the World With General Grant*, II, 216.

bloodiest day of the Civil War. Thirty-six thousand were killed and wounded at Gettysburg during three days of fighting; 28,000 at Chickamauga during the three days' battle; 19,000 were killed and wounded in two days at Shiloh, the most sanguinary battle of the war until Antietam; but between five o'clock in the morning and the mid-afternoon on September 17, 1862, 23,481 young men had been killed or disabled by their wounds on the banks of the Antietam Creek.

The large stone houses and barns, the lanes and orchards and fields, which the day before had been the scene of domestic affections and agricultural occupations were now morgues of death and avenues of agony. Along the roads to the Potomac in the rear of Lee's army, and those towards Middletown and Frederick in the rear of McClellan's army, rumbled long lines of ambulances with their cargoes of suffering humanity, leaving behind them the trail of blood which dripped from the wagons. Soon, when the night came on, lanterns began to flash and flicker on the battlefield, as the search for the wounded commenced. Those who were able to walk or crawl, both friend and foe, their deadly enmity forgotten in one elemental craving—water—made their way to the stone spring houses of the farmers, or to the quiet Antietam, where they slaked their thirst and bathed their wounds and wondered at the strange turn of events which had brought them from stores and banks, factories, farms and forests, armed with the deadliest weapons of destruction known to modern science, which they hurled against one another in this Armageddon of slaughter and death on the Maryland hillsides. Others, more desperately wounded, had crawled into the barns, where they lay on the grain floors or in the stalls for cattle, waiting their end.

When the moon came up over the distant mountains, it looked down upon one of those scenes which must ever humble man's vaunted wisdom and pride. The fields of corn, which at sunrise had been waving their tassels in the morning wind, now lay prostrate and trampled, swept by the sleet of lead. The trim hedges and fences were broken down, the orchards mangled and splintered. In the great barns, or at the field hospitals, the army surgeons with bare and bloody arms cut and hacked and

sawed in the flickering light of the lanterns, to the accompaniment of an unceasing moan of anguish, as the terrible pyramids of amputated legs and arms rose higher and higher. Down by the river banks, and in the river, and under the stone bridges, along the roads and lanes, in the trampled cornfields, in the woods and in the orchards, the dead lay in rows and heaps; thousands upon thousands; most of them under twenty; their white faces pleading a mute protest to the autumnal moon.

Less than three years before, John Brown had been led out of his prison at Charlestown, across the river in Virginia, to be hanged by the neck until dead. As he left the prison, he handed to his guards this last message to his countrymen, "I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood." Now, on Antietam's battle field, the thunders of which shook the earth at distant Charlestown where John Brown was hanged less than three years before, 23,000 young men lay dead and wounded. John Brown's prediction about the atonement of blood had come true. Thomas Jefferson is said to have written a portion of his "Notes on Virginia" on a rocky eminence overlooking the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers at Harper's Ferry. It is in these "Notes on Virginia" that Jefferson, after reviewing the enormities and dangers of slavery, said, with inspiration worthy of an Old Testament prophet, "I tremble when I remember that God is just."

## VII

### AFTER THE SWORD, THE PEN—EMANCIPATION

General Hooker was a better fighter than talker. Yet, at the close of the fighting on the evening of the 16th, the prelude to the great battle, speaking to his officers, he had said, "We are through for the night, gentlemen; but tomorrow we fight the battle that will decide the fate of the Republic."

Hooker was more of a prophet than he knew. The further we get away from that September day in 1862, the more decisive the battle seems. In some respects, it looked like a drawn fight; the positions of the armies were much the same at the end of the fierce fighting as they were when the battle commenced. But a great decision had been rendered. The Confederate invasion of the North had been frustrated, and the army of Lee, flushed with its recent victories, was compelled to retreat into Virginia, having lost in the brief Maryland campaign more than 30,000 troops. Never again was a Confederate offensive undertaken with any reasonable chance of success. Gettysburg was a stirring and exciting adventure; but by no means the threat to the Union that came over the Potomac with Lee's invasion in the Antietam campaign. The high tide of the Confederacy was not the stone fence and the clump of trees on Cemetery Ridge at Gettysburg, but the hills about the Antietam. This was because of the great political results which followed the battle.

Lee's invasion of the North had been undertaken with the hope that success in such an invasion would bring a foreign intervention. Lee himself had said, "I have never believed we could, against the gigantic combination for our subjugation, make good in the long run our independence, unless foreign powers should directly or indirectly assist us." It was his idea that the President of the Confederacy should go with the army, and after a notable victory make an address to the North for peace and sepa-

ration. On September 14, two weeks after the disaster of Second Bull Run, Lord Palmerston, the British Prime Minister, wrote to Lord Russell, the Foreign Secretary, that the Yankees had got "a very complete smashing," and that in the probable event of the capture of Baltimore and Washington, the time seemed to have come when the British government and France should "address the contending parties and recommend an arrangement on the basis of separation." \* To this Russell agreed, but urged recognition of the Confederacy in any event. Palmerston replied that in case the Federal Army again met defeat, then would be the time to act. A meeting of the Cabinet to discuss recognition was actually called for October 23rd. This meeting was forever postponed by the battle of Antietam. On October 2nd, Lord Russell wrote to Palmerston, "The condition of things, therefore, which would be favorable to an offer of mediation would be a great success of the South against the North. That state of things seemed ten days ago to be approaching. Its advance has been lately checked." † The "check" to which Lord Russell refers was the Battle of Antietam. It is true that some weeks after the battle, Gladstone, then the Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a speech at Newcastle, October 7th, said, "We may have our own opinions about slavery; but there is no doubt that Jefferson Davis and the other leaders of the South have made an army. They are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made—what is more than either—they have made a nation." But Gladstone had missed it badly, and his declaration received little credence, for the guns of Antietam were beginning to reverberate in the council halls of the British government. Writing to the Confederate Secretary of State, J. P. Benjamin, towards the end of November, the Confederate commissioner at Paris, John Slidell ‡ said: "The regular telegraphic news just received to the 18th instant, gives cause to hope that the reported victories of the Federals on the 16th and 17th will prove to have been defeats. If this hope be realized, even Earl Russell will

\* Spencer Walpole, *Life of Lord John Russell*, II, 349. London, Longmans, Green & Company, 1889.

† E. D. Adams, *Great Britain and the American Civil War*, II, 43. New York, Longmans, Green & Company, 1925.

‡ Slidell and Mason were the two commissioners taken off the steamer "Trent" in December, 1861.



find it difficult to invent an excuse for longer refusing to comply with our just demands.† Here Slidell refers to the possible effects of either a Union or a Confederate victory at Antietam. Earl Russell was advised by the victory of McClellan, and intervention died and was buried on the battlefield on the banks of the Antietam.

“It is the beginning of the end of the rebellion. The beginning of the new life of the nation. God bless Abraham Lincoln!”

The great event to which Horace Greeley referred in the above editorial in the *Tribune*, September 23, 1862, was the Proclamation of Emancipation, which was issued by the President September 22nd. Under the caption, “The Proclamation of Freedom,” Greeley wrote in the *Tribune* of September 24th: “There is no truth more clearly recognized than that in the lives of nations and men there comes sometimes a precious moment, a mere point of time, on the proper use of which depends salvation for that life, whether temporal or eternal. That moment has come for us. The Proclamation of the President which gives freedom to four millions of men is one of those stupendous facts in human history which mark not only an era in the progress of the nation, but an epoch in the history of the world.”

The Proclamation of Emancipation, thought Greeley, saved the life of the American Union. The Battle of Antietam made that Proclamation possible.

Almost up to the very day that he issued the Proclamation, Lincoln’s policy had been one of consistent and determined opposition. He let Cameron go out of his Cabinet, chiefly because of the publication of a report in which the then Secretary of War advocated the arming of the Negroes. When Generals Fremont and Hunter issued what were practically emancipation proclamations in their respective departments, Lincoln promptly revoked the proclamations, in spite of a strong popular sentiment in support of them. The chief reason for his prolonged opposition to emancipation was a mistaken idea that to take such a step would lose the government the support of the Border States. Lincoln overestimated

† James D. Richardson, *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Confederacy*, II, 332. Nashville, United States Publishing Company, 1905.

the harm which might be done to the Union cause in the Border States by an emancipation policy; and when, in March, 1862, he proposed financial aid to those states which should provide for gradual emancipation, with full compensation to the owners, he was chagrined to discover that not a single Border State would take advantage of his offer. A disappointed abolition preacher, leaving the White House after having urged emancipation upon Lincoln, declared that the President "would like to have God Almighty on his side, but must have Kentucky." Lincoln was influenced, too, in his attitude towards emancipation by the foreign policy of Seward, who, at the beginning of the war, instructed Adams, our minister to Great Britain, that he was not even to discuss with the British government "any opposing moral principles which may be supposed to lie at the foundation of the controversy between those states and the Federal union"; and to Dayton, our minister at Paris, he wrote, "The condition of slavery in the several states will remain just the same, whether it succeed or fail."\* With such a policy on the part of the Federal government, it is not to be wondered at that Great Britain and other European nations did not at first see the moral implications of the conflict. It was precisely this failure on the part of the European nations to see the moral implications of the conflict that made recognition of the Confederacy and intervention a real danger to the North. As early as September, 1861, Carl Schurz, then our minister at Madrid, warned Seward that he was making a mistake. He said that there were only two ways by which certain European nations (meaning France and England) could be prevented from taking hostile action. One was a great decisive military success; the other was a policy which would place the war against the South upon a higher moral basis. As soon, he wrote, as it became clear that the war was one against slavery, and, if successful, would result in the abolition of slavery, no European government would side with the Confederacy.† How keenly this was felt by intelligent Americans in Europe is illustrated by what John Lothrop Motley, then United States Minister at Vienna, says in a letter

\* Frederic Bancroft, *Life of William H. Seward*, II, 318. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1900.

† Bancroft, *Seward*, II, 324.

written, August 18, 1862: "There is no doubt, I believe, that Louis Napoleon passes most of his time in urging the English government to unite with him in interfering in behalf of the slave-dealing, negro-breeding confederacy. . . . Thus far the English government have resisted his importunities. But their resistance will not last long. The only thing that saves us as yet from a war with the slaveholders, allied with both France and England, is the anti-slavery feeling of a very considerable portion of the British public. . . . I am entirely convinced, not as a matter of theory but as fact, that nothing but a proclamation of emancipation to every negro in the country will save us from war with England and France combined." \*

The first intimation Lincoln gave that he was seeing the light and was beginning to realize that the danger of European intervention was much more serious than the possible results of an emancipation policy in the Border States, was at the meeting of the Cabinet on July 22nd, when he read to the Cabinet a preliminary draft of a proposed proclamation. On September 13th, in answer to a deputation of ministers from Chicago who had waited upon him and urged him to issue at once a proclamation of emancipation, Lincoln said that he desired to know the will of God in the matter, and thought that if God revealed His will to others on the subject, He would surely do so to him. But since the days of miracles were past, he could hardly look for a direct revelation. Instead of that, he must study the situation as it existed. At present he could see no good in a proclamation of emancipation, for in territory not under control of the Federal armies it would be as inoperative as the Pope's bull against the comet. At that very time, Lincoln must have had the finished draft of the Proclamation in his desk. He was waiting patiently for something which could pass muster as a military victory and which would give force to the Proclamation.

When he learned that Lee's army had been driven back into Virginia, Lincoln summoned the Cabinet on September 22nd, and after some frivolous reading of passages from Artemus Ward's *High Handed Outrage at*

\* John L. Motley, *Correspondence*, II, 81. Edited by G. W. Curtis, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1889.

*Utica*, at which everybody laughed but Stanton, Lincoln, taking "a graver tone," reminded the Cabinet how at the July meeting he had decided not to issue the Proclamation then, but to wait for the propitious moment. The battle at Antietam had not been all that could have been desired; but the rebels had been driven out of Maryland, and Pennsylvania was no longer in danger of invasion. "When Lee's army was at Frederick, Maryland," said the President, "I determined as soon as it should be driven out of Maryland to issue a proclamation of emancipation. I said nothing to any one, but I made the promise to myself, and (hesitating a little) to my Maker. The rebel army is now driven out, and I am going to fulfill that promise."

When Lincoln kept the covenant he had made between himself and God and issued the Proclamation of Emancipation, the danger of European hostile intervention was over. Spurgeon, the popular London preacher, in his prayers in his tabernacle now asked the Lord to bless the *cause* of the North. Hitherto, the non-Conformist preachers had prayed for the freedom of the slave, but not for the Union. Cobden wrote to Sumner that the anti-slavery demonstrations which had followed the Proclamation of Emancipation had closed the mouths of those who had been advocating the cause of the South.

A soldier in the Confederate Army, the same who gained immortal fame the next summer at Gettysburg, George E. Pickett, quicker than most politicians and most military men, recognized the significance of the political act of Lincoln which followed Antietam. Writing from the Confederate headquarters, just two weeks after the battle, Pickett says: "The seventeenth following is recorded in letters of blood for both armies, and in its wake came Lincoln's great political victory, proving the might of the pen, in his Emancipation Proclamation—winning with it the greatest victory yet for the North. . . . It will be farewell to all foreign intervention unless Greek meets Greek and we fight fire with fire, and we, too, issue an Emancipation Proclamation."\*

The battle of Antietam, by the defeat of Lee and the frustration of his invasion, made possible at a critical

\* George E. Pickett, *The Heart of a Soldier*, 60. New York, Seth Moyle, 1913.

period in the history of the war the Proclamation of Emancipation, and this in turn, not only solidified the moral sentiment and purpose of the North, but just at a time when it seemed imminent, made forever impossible foreign intervention. This is why the battle of Antietam was the decisive battle of the Civil War. "At Sharpsburg," said Longstreet, "was sprung the keystone of the arch upon which the Confederate cause rested." †

The effect of the Proclamation of Emancipation upon the disposition of Napoleon III to intervene on the side of the Confederacy is confirmed by what he said to Catherine Murat of Florida, the wife of Achille Murat, son of the great marshal and Napoleon's sister, Caroline: "Cousin Kate, you had all my warmest sympathy and hopes for your success. But on account of slavery I did not dare to send an army to your assistance. Had I done so, I should have had a mob in Paris." ‡

The only one who seems to have been blind to the immense and far-reaching political significance of the military victory at Antietam was the chief agent of it, McClellan himself. He believed that his victory had saved the country, as Lincoln generously told him. But he was not farsighted enough to see the part that the Proclamation of Emancipation, made possible by the military victory, played in the salvation of the country.

Lincoln's policy in dealing with emancipation was admittedly that of an opportunist. There can be no question as to his enmity to slavery. Yet, only a month before he announced to the Cabinet his purpose to issue a Proclamation of Emancipation, he had written to Greeley that if he could save the Union without freeing any slave, he would do it. After Antietam Lincoln came to the tardy conclusion that to free the slaves would help to save the Union.

The Proclamation of Emancipation not only ended the threat of European intervention, but gratified thousands in the North who had hoped and prayed for such an issue. Even after he had issued the Proclamation, Lincoln was not sure as to its effect. "We are like whalers," he said, "who have been long on a chase; we have at last

† Johnson, *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, II, 674.

‡ Clarence E. Macartney and Gordon Dorrance, *The Bonapartes in America*, 145. Philadelphia, Dorrance and Company, 1939.

got the harpoon into the monster, but we must now look how we steer, or with one flop of his tail, he will send us all into eternity." But these fears were not justified. Emancipation strengthened and solidified Union sentiment in the North. The government, after all, depended for its life in the present death struggle upon patriots like the war governor of Massachusetts, John A. Andrew. When the Massachusetts soldiers were killed in Baltimore on their way to relieve Washington at the beginning of the war, Andrew telegraphed to the Mayor of Baltimore to have the bodies laid out, preserved in ice, and "tenderly sent forward by express to me." Over the bodies of these fallen Massachusetts soldiers Andrew made the prayer that he might live to see the end of the war, and that it should not end without freeing every slave in America. Speaking at a camp meeting at Martha's Vineyard not long before the battle of Antietam, the Governor said, "I have never believed it to be possible that this controversy should end and peace resume her sway until that dreadful iniquity (slavery) had been trodden beneath our feet. The conviction I have in my own mind that the appointed hour has nearly come makes me feel all the more confident in the certain and final triumph of our Union arms, because I do not believe that the great investment of Providence is to be wasted." Yes; the appointed hour had come.

After Antietam and its sequel, the Proclamation of Emancipation, the North knew that the great investment of blood and treasure which had been made to preserve the Union was not to be in vain.

## VIII

### LINCOLN VISITS McCLELLAN

On the 1st of October, McClellan received word, not by official communication, but from what he calls "a mysterious dispatch," that Lincoln was on his way to visit the army. He went at once to Harper's Ferry, where he found the President at Sumner's headquarters. He was accompanied "only by western people." Among these "western people" was General John A. McClernand. McClernand was then the most influential Democrat in Illinois, and when the war broke out, like Douglas, lost no time in letting his loyalty to the Union be known. Lincoln was ever ready to recognize and honor Democrats who showed their loyalty to the Union, and McClernand was rapidly advanced in rank until he was a major-general. He took an honorable part in the fighting at Donelson and Shiloh, but was without capacity as a commanding officer. It was probably during this visit to Washington that he secured permission from Lincoln to raise a corps of troops in the Middle West for the purpose of opening up the Mississippi, with the understanding that he was to have command of the expedition. This understanding caused Grant no little trouble, and Lincoln, who found it easier to make promises than to keep them, no little embarrassment.

After Sherman's failure against Vicksburg, in the assault at the bluffs of the Yazoo River, McClernand joined Sherman with his own corps and assumed command of the expedition. Neither Grant nor Sherman had any confidence in McClernand, and Grant solved the difficulty by going to the front himself and taking command of the army in the field. This was a mortal offense to McClernand, who felt that Grant was depriving him of the post that had been specially created for him by Lincoln. He was henceforth a thorn in the flesh to Grant during the Vicksburg campaign. Grant tolerated him until Sherman and McPherson protested against a con-

gratulatory address to the men of McClelland's corps which had appeared in the press, and which they thought reflected on the services of the other corps. This was too much for Grant, and he immediately relieved him. When General James H. Wilson read him Grant's order relieving him of command, McClelland looked up and exclaimed: "Well, sir, I am relieved." Then, after a pause, "By God, sir, we are both relieved!" What he probably meant was that Grant would have to go too. But if that was in his mind, he was unable to make good the threat. His influential friends, however, were soon at work pressing Lincoln to restore him to the command of his corps or give him an independent command. It was at this time that Lincoln wrote to McClelland, expressing his embarrassment and thanking him for the patriotic stand he had taken "in this life and death struggle of the nation." He explains to McClelland that to force him back upon Grant would be forcing Grant to resign. As for a new command, there was no force available. Then comes one of those gems of kindly philosophy which frequently adorn the pages of Lincoln's correspondence: "My belief is that the permanent estimate of what a General does in the field is fixed by the 'cloud of witnesses' who have been with him in the field; and that, relying on these, he who has the right needs not to fear."

It was during this visit of Lincoln to the army that there occurred an incident which was fanned by rumor and exaggeration into a revolting scandal. While riding one day in an ambulance with McClelland and other officers on his way from Burnside's corps to Porter's, Lincoln asked his bodyguard, Colonel Ward Lamon, to sing "a little sad song" of which he was very fond. It was known as "Twenty Years Ago," and was one of Lincoln's favorite ballads. Lamon says that often on the Illinois circuit, and at the White House, he had seen Lincoln in tears when he sang for him this simple song. The first two stanzas were as follows:

"I've wandered through the village, Tom,  
I've sat beneath the tree,  
Upon the schoolhouse playground  
That sheltered you and me.



But none were left to greet me, Tom,  
 And few were left to know  
 Who played with us upon the green,  
 Some twenty years ago."

Then Lamon roused Lincoln out of his melancholy by singing a comic song, "The Picayune Butler." The incident was soon exaggerated and distorted by the enemies of Lincoln. During the presidential campaign of 1864, the *New York World* published the following, under the title, "One of Mr. Lincoln's Jokes":

"The second verse of our campaign song published on this page was probably suggested by an incident which occurred on the battle field of Antietam a few days after the fight. While the President was driving over the field in an ambulance, accompanied by Marshal Lamon, General McClellan, and another officer, heavy details of men were engaged in the task of burying the dead. The ambulance had just reached the neighborhood of the old stone bridge where the dead were piled highest, when Mr. Lincoln, suddenly slapping Marshal Lamon on the knee, exclaimed, 'Come, Lamon, give us that song about the Picayune Butler. McClellan has never heard it.' 'Not now, if you please,' said General McClellan with a shudder, 'I would prefer to hear it some other place and time.'"

The campaign verse referred to was the following:

"Abe may crack his jolly jokes,  
 Over bloody fields of stricken battle.  
 While yet the ebbing life tide smokes,  
 From men that die like butchered cattle,  
 He, ere yet the guns grow cold,  
 To pimps and pets may crack his stories."

Lincoln was distressed by this canard, and Lamon wrote a spirited denial. But after reading his letter, Lincoln said, "No, Lamon, I would not publish this reply. It is too belligerent in tone for so grave a matter. There is



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

**McCLELLAN, LINCOLN, AND ARMY OFFICERS AT ANTIETAM**

Left to right, the fourth figure from the end is Major General George W. Morrell; the sixth, facing Mr. Lincoln, Major General George B. McClellan; the twelfth, Major General Fitz John Porter, and the fifteenth, Brigadier General Andrew A. Humphreys

a heap of cussedness mixed up with your usual amiability, and you are at times too fond of a fight. If I were you, I would simply state the facts as they were. I would give the statements as you have them here, without the pepper and salt. Let me try my hand at it." Lincoln then wrote out with his own hand a long account of the visit to Antietam and the incident of the song. This was to be Lamon's answer to a supposed inquiry of a friend. The pains Lincoln took show how disturbed he was by the slander. Upon second thought, however, he decided to withhold the letter and its explanation. In the letter he told how his visit to Antietam was ten days after the battle, and not the day after; that there were no dead to be seen, and not a grave that had not been rained on since it was dug.

Lincoln spent five days with McClellan, going over the battle fields at Antietam and South Mountain, and visiting the different corps of the army. McClellan, at the very first, was uneasy as to the purpose of Lincoln's visit. "His ostensible purpose," is to see the troops and the battlefield. I incline to think that the real purpose of his visit is to push me into a premature advance into Virginia. I may be mistaken, but think not." There was nothing, however, in Lincoln's attitude during this visit which was of a nature to make McClellan think that he was otherwise than pleased and satisfied with what had been accomplished. He confided to McClellan that formerly he had thought him too slow, but now he saw his mistake and was satisfied that he was the only general in the service who could handle a large army. The only fault he found with McClellan, he said, was that he was perhaps too prone to be sure that everything was ready before acting; but that his actions were all right when once he started. McClellan answered that he thought the experiments Lincoln had had with those who acted before they were ready would probably convince him that in the end he consumed less time than they did.

Early one morning during this visit, Lincoln walked with O. M. Hatch of Illinois to the top of a hill which commanded a view of McClellan's army. Beneath them lay the great host with their tents white in the morning sun. Lincoln gazed in silence for a little at the far flung army, and then said to Hatch, "Do you know what this is?" In astonishment, Hatch replied, "It is the Army

of the Potomac!" "So it is called"; said Lincoln, "but that is a mistake; it is only McClellan's bodyguard."\* But to McClellan himself, Lincoln spoke only words of praise and encouragement.

Sitting one day in the October sunlight on a hillside with McClellan, his long legs propped up and his knees under his chin, Lincoln said to McClellan, "General, you have saved the country. You must remain in command and carry us through to the end."† The two men parted for the last time on the battlefield of South Mountain, where Lincoln told McClellan that he would stand by him "against all comers," that he wished him to continue his careful preparations for a new campaign, and "not to stir an inch until fully ready." He would see to it that McClellan was let alone, and assured him that he would stand by him. This was on the 5th of October.

On the 6th of October, the day after McClellan parted with Lincoln on the battle field of South Mountain, he received from General Halleck, this order, "I am instructed to telegraph you as follows, 'The President directs that you cross the Potomac and give battle to the enemy or drive him South. Your army must move now while the road is good.'"

This telegram, authorized by Lincoln as soon as he reached Washington, and which must have amazed McClellan, after what Lincoln had told him at South Mountain the day before the telegram was sent, was the beginning of a campaign of urging, criticizing, fault-finding, and ridicule on the part of the government. Something must have happened after Lincoln got back to Washington.

McClellan's volunteer aide, Lieutenant James H. Wilson had returned to Washington for a few days after the Antietam campaign, and was there when General McClelland, who had visited the army with Lincoln, was in the city. McClelland explained his Vicksburg project to Wilson, and offered him a place on his staff. He also told him that Lincoln had made up his mind to relieve McClellan and was delaying only until he could select a successor.

\* Nicolay and Hay, *Lincoln*, VI, 175.

† Allen T. Rice, ed., *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time*, XXXIX. New York, North American Publishing Company, 1886.

McClelland charged Wilson to give McClellan this information, tell him of the Vicksburg project, and suggest that he seek the united command of the Mississippi Valley.

On October 16th Wilson returned to army headquarters near Antietam and gave this message to McClellan. At first McClellan seemed to take to the idea, but in a moment said, "They will never give me such a command . . . indeed, I doubt if I would accept any other. The Army of the Potomac is my army as much as any army ever belonged to the man that created it. We have grown together and fought together. We are wedded and should not be separated." To this the presumptuous young Lieutenant replied, reminding McClellan that he was "wedded" to a higher cause than any army. If the government did not offer McClellan an army, then he ought to take an army corps or a division. If they would not give him a division, then he should ask for a brigade. If that were denied him, he should resign, go back to his state and raise a regiment. If he failed to get a colonelcy, or any other commission, "I should take my musket and go out as a private soldier. If you act on that principle, you will not only succeed, but you will be the next President of the United States!" McClellan took no offense at this extraordinary speech, and when they parted he told Wilson that if he ever took another command, he wanted him on his staff.

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\* James H. Wilson, *Under the Old Flag*, I, 124. New York, D. Appleton & Company, 1912.

## IX

### JEB STUART TAKES A RIDE

On a misty morning early in October, Lee's cavalry chief, Jeb Stuart, crossed the Potomac at McCoy's Ford, some distance north of Martinsburg, with 1,800 well-mounted troopers, and started on his spectacular raid into Pennsylvania. His orders were to go to Chambersburg, cut the railroad there, do what damage he could, and secure information as to the positions and numbers of the Federal troops. He was also authorized to bring in citizens of Pennsylvania as hostages, who might be exchanged for Virginians held in the North. At noon on the tenth of October, the inhabitants of sleepy little Mercersburg were astonished to hear the clatter of sabres and the jingle of bridles as the advance squadrons of Stuart rode into the town. From Mercersburg Stuart turned northeast and rode on to Chambersburg, entering the town that night about nine o'clock. The alarm was now out. Halleck had telegraphed McClellan at nine o'clock that evening, "A rebel raid has been made in Pennsylvania today and Chambersburg captured. Not a man should be permitted to return to Virginia. Use any troops in Maryland or Pennsylvania against them." An hour later, McClellan replied to Halleck, "Every disposition has been made to cut off the retreat of the enemy's cavalry that today made a raid into Pennsylvania."

At Chambersburg, Stuart's troopers behaved themselves in a pleasing manner, many of the officers drinking coffee with Colonel Alexander McClure in his mansion on the outskirts of the town, now one of the buildings of Wilson College. The people of the town had a chance to take a look at the famous cavalryman, with his immense sandy whiskers, red cape, and the feather in his hat. Stuart's raid was the first of a series of three visits paid the fine old Pennsylvania town by the Confederate Army. The second was in the last days of June, 1863, when Lee had his headquarters there just before the battle of Gettys-

burg; and the third, and the most disastrous, was in July, 1864, when McCausland occupied the town and levied a contribution of \$500,000 upon it. The money not being forthcoming at once, McCausland reduced the town to ashes. His conduct was in striking contrast with that of Stuart in 1862 and Lee in 1863.

From every direction now, Federal troopers were riding and the blue infantry were marching in the effort to smash Stuart before he could get back across the Potomac. Instead of retracing his steps, and going back at some point on the Potomac to the west of the Federal Army, as he had come, Stuart made the bold decision to continue east and south and slip around the Federal Army at some point on the river between it and Washington. His reason for doing this was that he thought the Federal officers would be looking for him to return by the upper Potomac, and that all the routes in that direction would be stopped. He thought he had a better chance of escape by crossing the Potomac further down. Early on the morning of October 11th, he rode out of Chambersburg, crossed the mountains in the direction of Gettysburg, and at Cash-town, eight miles west of Gettysburg, turned to the southeast and entered Maryland at Emmitsburg. Newspapers and captured couriers let him know that Pleasanton, the Federal cavalry Commander, was riding from the direction of Hagerstown towards Emmittsburg. After a brief rest in Emmittsburg, Stuart pressed on, riding all night to the south, passing Frederick, where there was a Union force some miles to the east, and at dawn was at Hyattstown, and by ten o'clock that morning, the 12th, was safe across the Potomac. Pleasanton and the Union cavalry had made a great ride, covering seventy-eight miles in twenty-four hours, and just missed Stuart as he got over the river. It was Stuart's second ride around the Army of the Potomac. In deciding to circle the Federal army, instead of going back from Chambersburg and crossing the river to the north, Stuart, although giving to his engineer officer sound military reasons for his movement, was undoubtedly actuated also by his spirit of showmanship and love of the spectacular. Beyond the destruction of a few thousand stands of arms at Chambersburg, and the driving in with his army of several hundred Pennsylvania farmers' horses, the raid accomplished nothing. It

was, however, humiliating to the North, and must have been an annoyance to McClellan. In a country where accurate information cannot be quickly secured, even when plenty of troops are available for the chase, it is next to impossible to capture a fast riding column of cavalry, the plan and direction of which only their commander knows. The Union cavalry wore itself out in a great effort to overtake Stuart, but had found his scent too late.

When McClellan, after this raid, asked Halleck for remounts for the cavalry, he received the following sarcastic telegram from Lincoln, "I have just received your dispatch about sore-tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?" McClellan sent a dignified and courteous, but firm, protest to Lincoln against this aspersion on the cavalry, telling how they had been picketing one hundred and fifty miles of river front since the battle of Antietam, and also making mention of Pleasanton's remarkable ride of seventy-eight miles in twenty-four hours. When his nerves were raw, Lincoln could sometimes inflict deep hurt; but in a better moment he was always ready to say a word of kindness, and if necessary, of regret and apology. In his message to McClellan of October 27th, he expresses regret if he has done McClellan and the cavalry of his army any injustice; but says that "to be told after more than five weeks' total inaction of the army, that the cavalry horses were too much fatigued to move, presents a very cheerless, almost hopeless prospect for the future, and it may have forced something of impatience in my dispatch. If not recruited and rested then, when could they ever be?"

Stuart's raid may have played some part in the removal of McClellan from command in November. This is hinted at in the account given by Colonel R. B. Irvin of a conversation some officers had with Lincoln on a ship on the Potomac after the raid. Lincoln was in unusually high spirits and talked freely. An officer suddenly asked him, "Mr. President, what about McClellan?" Without looking at his questioner, Lincoln solemnly drew a ring upon the deck with his umbrella, and said quietly, "When I was a boy, we used to play a game three times round



and out. Stuart has been around him twice; if he goes around him once more, gentlemen, McClellan will be out." In a few weeks, but before Stuart had a chance to go round him a third time, McClellan was "out."

The cavalry of the Army of the Potomac did not come to its power and glory until Hooker took command in February, 1863. He organized it as a separate unit, and from that time, the cavalry division steadily increased in spirit and fighting power. The saying, "Who ever saw a dead cavalryman?" was one of the many attributed to Hooker. He did not use this expression as a slight upon that branch of the service; but he did announce his intention to make greater use of the cavalry, saying to one of his officers that he had not seen many dead cavalymen lying about as yet, but that ere long there would be such a sight. In conversation with one of his cavalry brigadiers, Hooker spoke of the superiority of the Northern trooper over his Southern adversary in point of food, mount, and equipment, and then added, "Now, with such soldiers, and such a cause as we have behind them—the best cause since the world began—we ought to be invincible; and by G—d, sir, we shall be! You've got to stop these disgraceful cavalry 'surprises.' I'll have no more of them. I give you full power over your officers, to arrest, cashier, shoot—whatever you will—only you must stop these 'surprises.' And, by G—d, sir, if you don't do it, I give you a fair notice, I will relieve the whole of you, and take the command of the cavalry myself!"

## X

### “THROWN OVERBOARD AGAIN”

Napoleon, commenting once on army delays through the lack of supplies, said: “What creates great difficulty in the perfection of the land commander is the necessity of feeding so many men and animals. If he allows himself to be guided by the commissionaires, he will never stir, and all his expeditions will fail.”

Perhaps McClellan, after Antietam, was too much guided by his commissary department. If an army waits for everything before it moves, it will never move. In his communications to McClellan, Lincoln had given him the choice of two plans of campaign against Lee's army. One was to attack him where he lay, at Winchester in the Shenandoah Valley; the other was to move into Virginia at some point east of the mountains, between Lee and Washington. After the autumn rains had commenced, this latter plan was much to be preferred, because the swollen Potomac would keep the Confederates from raiding into Maryland and Pennsylvania at points west and north of Harper's Ferry, and the army, moving into Virginia east of the mountains, could cover Washington, and at the same time threaten both Richmond and Lee's army.

At length, after many delays, McClellan led his army across the Potomac and moved forward into Virginia. The prospects for the Union cause were never brighter. A great army, thoroughly organized and equipped, elated over its recent victory at Antietam, and with unbounded enthusiasm for its commander, was now in a favorable position to attack the enemy and win a great victory. It looked as if in a few days that would be the issue. But destiny ruled otherwise. On the night of November 7th, McClellan sat in his headquarters tent near Rectortown, writing to his wife and telling her of the movements of the army and the fine progress that was being made. Outside, a driving snow was beating against the tent. At 11:30 o'clock, General Buckingham, a special messenger

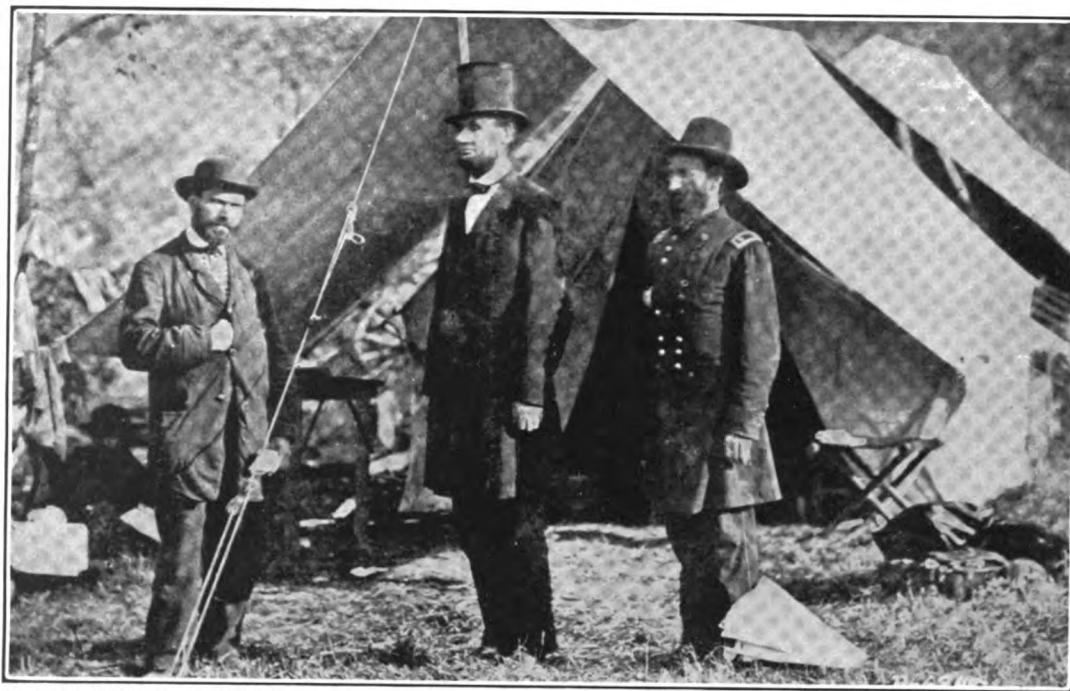
from the War Department, accompanied by General Burnside, "both looking very solemn," came into McClellan's tent, where they were greeted with McClellan's unflinching kindness and courtesy. After a few moments' general conversation, Buckingham said to Burnside, "Well, general, I think we had better tell General McClellan the object of our visit. He then handed McClellan two orders. The first, signed by Halleck, directed McClellan to turn over his command to Major-General Burnside "and repair to Trenton, New Jersey, reporting on your arrival at that place by telegraph for further orders." The second was from the War Department, through Stanton, and signed by Townsend, the Assistant Adjutant-General. This was an order relieving McClellan of command and ordering Burnside to take charge of the army. As McClellan read the two orders by the light of the candle, Buckingham and Burnside watched him intently. When he had taken in the contents of the order, McClellan, with his always winsome smile, turned to Burnside and said, "Well, Burnside, I turn the command over to you." Buckingham and Burnside then retired, leaving McClellan to his memories and his thoughts as he sat looking at the flickering candle on the table. After a moment, he took up his pen and wrote these words: "They have made a great mistake. Alas for my poor country! I know in my inmost heart she never had a truer servant. . . . I have done the best I could for my country. That I must have made many mistakes I cannot deny. I do not see any great blunders; but no one can judge of himself. Our consolation must be that we have tried to do what was right."

When the news spread through the army that their beloved general had been relieved, there was a storm of anger and protest. The government itself had been apprehensive as to the effect of such an order upon the army. Stanton sent an officer of high rank, Buckingham, to carry the instructions because he feared McClellan would not give up the command. Buckingham was instructed to see Burnside first and overcome his well-known objections to taking the post, by telling him that if he refused it, Hooker would be named in his place. The fears of Stanton as to the effect upon the army were not without ground. Hancock, when he heard the news,

said, "The army is not satisfied with the change, and considers the treatment of McClellan most ungracious and inopportune. Yet I do not sympathize in the movement going on to resist the order. It is useless. I tell the gentlemen round me they are serving no one man. We are serving our country." Gibbon, another fine officer of the army, said, "There is but one opinion upon this subject among the troops, and that is, the government has gone mad." Meade had the same opinion, and felt that it was all due to politics. At McClellan's headquarters, some of the officers, their disappointment and anger increased by whiskey, gathered about "Cinnamon" Custer, his face flushed and his golden locks shaking in the November wind, and indulged in wild talk, about "marching on Washington." In the midst of their intemperate tirades, McClellan stepped out of his tent and expostulated with them, expressing surprise at hearing such sentiments from the men with whom he had served in the Army of the Potomac; pointing out to them that it was their duty as soldiers to obey orders, and that the consequences would be terrible if they did not.

McClellan remained with the army for a few days, giving Burnside what information and suggestions he could. His departure on November 10th from the army which he had created and led in battle was one of the great scenes of the Civil War. Not only an impressive sight, said Gibbon, as McClellan rode through his camps for the last time, but "a painful, and in some respects, an alarming scene," for the troops were shouting, "Send him back! Send him back!" and one General cried out, "Lead us to Washington, General; we will follow you there!" Thus, with the hardened veterans of the Peninsula and Antietam crowding about to bid him farewell, some cheering and some weeping, McClellan boarded his train and started for Trenton, New Jersey, "to await further orders" which never came.

"Alas, my poor country!" said McClellan, as he sat in his tent that night after Burnside and Buckingham had left him. "They have made a great mistake." How terrible the mistake was, the country was not to know till that December day when the heights of Fredericksburg were crimson with the blood of Burnside's defeated army.



*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

LINCOLN, PINKERTON, AND GENERAL McCLELLAN

At his right, Allan Pinkerton, the famous detective and head of McClellan's Secret Service; at his left, General John A. McClernand, of the Western Army under Grant

## XI

### WHY McCLELLAN HAD TO GO

In many of Lincoln's actions there was an element of mystery. He never completely revealed himself or his motives. This was true in one of the most important acts of his administration, the removal of General McClellan from command of the Army of the Potomac. Montgomery Blair, McClellan's chief friend in the Cabinet, had gone to Lincoln the night before the order was sent for McClellan's dismissal, and urged the President not to relieve McClellan, saying he had heard rumors that such a step was being contemplated. When the interview was over, Blair left with the understanding that McClellan would not be relieved. The next morning he read the order in the papers, and when he met the President, Lincoln said to him, "Well, Mr. Blair, I was obliged to play shut pan with you last night."

What led the President to take such a step? Certainly it was not, as has often been alleged, the slow movements of McClellan after the battle of Antietam, for Lincoln, when he parted with McClellan on October 5th at South Mountain, had assured him that he would stand by him to the last, and that he was not to move an inch until he was ready. But he is hardly back in Washington before he sends an order, through Halleck, telling McClellan to march immediately across the Potomac and give battle to the enemy. It is clear that forces hostile to McClellan are operating on the President. Henceforth, his correspondence with McClellan shows irritation, impatience, and even ridicule, as instanced in his caustic telegram about what the cavalry had done since Antietam to cause them any fatigue. This impatience and hostility culminated in the order of November 7th, relieving McClellan of command. It was not impatience with McClellan's slowness of operations, for the army was in splendid shape, full of fight and enthusiasm, and was marching into Virginia east of the mountains and along the line

which Lincoln himself had advocated. A great battle with a great victory for the Union army seemed imminent. Then the blow fell.

What shall we say of personal jealousy and rivalry? Did this play any part in Lincoln's action? Although he is often referred to as the humblest of men, and, indeed, in many respects, was worthy of that description, Lincoln had a burning ambition for a renomination. Alexander K. McClure, who was close to him, says that this desire was "the thing ever uppermost in his mind during the third year of his administration, and like all men in the struggles of ambition, he believed his only motive in his desire for his own re-election was to save the country." \* Another victory, and McClellan would be a greater figure than the President. Remember Lincoln's comment on that October morning when he surveyed from a hilltop the encampment of the army and said to his friend Hatch, that it was called the Army of the Potomac, but in reality was "McClellan's bodyguard." Any man with such a host for a "bodyguard" was a dangerous rival. It would lift Lincoln out of the ranks of humanity to say that he was altogether destitute of any thought of McClellan as a rival personality. Human nature being what it is, that was only natural. Yet we cannot believe that for the sake of eliminating this rival personality from the field of military, and especially, political activity, Lincoln deliberately, and for that reason alone, removed McClellan from command, just when he seemed to be on the eve of a great victory.

Another factor which deserves some consideration in the effort to analyze Lincoln's motives in relieving McClellan of command, is the fact that there was an idea abroad that McClellan was in a conspiracy with others of like mind to conduct military affairs so that no immediate and crushing victory would be won, and that by some sort of compromise the Union would be saved and slavery with it. In his Harrison Landing letter of the July previous to the President, McClellan, in his emphasis upon how the war was to be conducted, undoubtedly gave the impression that he did not want to hurt the South. The ideas of McClellan and Lincoln on slavery were not so

\* Alexander K. McClure, *Abraham Lincoln and Men of War Times*, 123. Philadelphia, Times Publishing Company, 1892.

far apart, after all. Lincoln resorted to emancipation only under terrific pressure and as a last measure; and if McClellan was supposed to be of a party who would preserve the Union with slavery if necessary, that cannot have been so abhorrent to Lincoln, for in his letter to Horace Greeley on August 22, 1862, he had said: "If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery."

On the other point, a supposed desire on the part of McClellan to hold up military action, there were some incidents which might have created such a suspicion on the part of Lincoln. The Collector of the Port of New York, Barlow, related to the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, how when visiting McClellan at one of his grand reviews in the fall of 1861, McClellan told him that he preferred his place at the head of the army to the Presidency. He gave the impression that all with him was military; and he had no particular desire to close this war immediately, but would pursue a line of policy of his own, regardless of the Administration, its wishes and objects.\* In the Army of the Potomac there was a Major John J. Key, a brother to Colonel Thomas M. Key, of McClellan's staff. It was reported that when asked by another officer why the Confederate Army was not "bagged immediately after the battle near Sharpsburg," Key said, "That is not the game. The object is that neither army shall get much advantage of the other; that both shall be kept in the field till they are exhausted, when we will make a compromise and save slavery."

When Lincoln was told of this, he sent a message to Key asking him to disprove this alleged saying within twenty-four hours. Shortly afterwards, Major Key, and Major Levy C. Turner, to whom Key was reported to have made the remark, appeared at the White House. Turner testified that he had asked Key the question, and that his answer was that "that was not the game; that we should tire the rebels out and ourselves; that that was the only way the Union could be preserved; we come together fraternally and slavery be saved." Major Turner then went on to testify that he had never heard from Key any disloyal statement or any sentiment unfavorable to the

\* Welles, *Diary*, I, 116-17.



maintenance of the Union. In answer to this, the President said that if there was a game, even among Union men, to have the army not take any advantage of the enemy when it could, it was his object to break up that game. On the back of the record which he kept of this private court martial, Lincoln wrote:

In my view it is wholly inadmissible for any gentleman holding a military commission from the United States to utter such sentiments as Major Key is within proved to have done. Therefore, let Major John J. Key be forthwith dismissed from the military service of the United States.

Two months after his dismissal, Major Key, deeply grieved by the death of a son in the army, wrote to Lincoln asseverating his loyalty to the country, which he thought had been impugned by his dismissal. In his answer to this letter Lincoln, with characteristic tenderness of heart, sympathizes with Key in the death of his "brave and noble son," and tells him that in dismissing him from the army he did not charge him, or intend to charge him, with disloyalty, but had done it for the good of the service. "I had been brought to fear that there was a class of officers in the army, not very inconsiderable in numbers, who were playing a game to not beat the enemy when they could, on some peculiar notion as to the proper way of saving the Union; and when you were proved to me, in your own presence, to have avowed yourself in favor of that 'game,' and did not attempt to controvert the proof, I dismissed you as an example and warning to that supposed class. I bear you no ill will, and I regret that I could not have the example without wounding you personally." In a briefer and franker comment to his secretary, Lincoln said of the incident, "I dismissed Major Key because I thought his silly treasonable expressions were 'staff talk' and I wished to make an example." Incidents like this created the feeling in quarters hostile to McClellan that he was pursuing a policy of deliberate delay and temporizing, not trying to win a crushing victory, but holding back, until popular discouragement, financial troubles, and foreign complications would force the government to compromise.\*

\* *New York Tribune*, Dec. 20, 1864.

This gnawing suspicion that there were those in the chief army of the Republic who did not want to win a complete and crushing victory over the enemy troubled Lincoln as late as the battle of Gettysburg. He was terribly distressed when he got the news that Meade had permitted Lee to escape across the river into Virginia. After the adjournment of the Cabinet meeting on the day this news came, Lincoln overtook the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, on the lawn of the White House and walked with him towards the Army and Navy Building, telling him that what he had so much dreaded had come to pass, and that Lee had crossed the Potomac, and more, that there seemed to him a determination that "Lee, though we had him in our hands, should escape with his force and plunder. 'And that, my God, is the last of this Army of the Potomac. There is bad faith somewhere. Meade has been pressed and urged, but only one of his generals was for an immediate attack, was ready to pounce on Lee; the rest held back. What does it mean, Mr. Welles? Great God! what does it mean?'"†

A still stronger factor in the removal of McClellan, just when he seemed to be on the eve of a great victory, was the determined opposition of the Radical Republicans, such as Chase, Thaddeus Stevens, Ben Wade and others, to whom McClellan's views on slavery and the conduct of the war were extremely objectionable. McClellan as a dictator was a disturbing possibility, and with him, either in the White House, or controlling affairs as a military commander, these men felt, in all sincerity, that the policies which they had advocated would be in danger. Most of the Cabinet, too, were opposed to McClellan. After the second defeat at Bull Run, his enemies had to acquiesce in Lincoln's restoration of him to command; but their opposition, their dislike and their suspicion never subsided. As for presidential ambitions, McClellan distinctly disavowed any such thoughts or desires, and said that unwise friends had injured him in this respect. "My ambition was fully gratified by the possession of the command of the army, and, so long as I held that, nothing would have induced me to give it up for the Presidency. . . . The President and his advisers made a great mistake in supposing that I desired political ad-

† Welles, *Diary*, I, 370,

vancement. Many of the Democratic leaders did me great harm by using my name for party purposes without my knowledge or consent; and, without intending it, probably did more than my armed enemies in the way of ruining my military career by giving the administration some reason to suppose that in the event of military success I might prove a dangerous political rival."\* That McClellan was listening to the whispers of personal ambition was the firm opinion of many Republicans. So powerful a figure as the editor of the *Tribune*, Horace Greeley, said, "His timid and dawdling military policy are to be explained by sinister political influences and the whispered appeals and tempting suggestions of a selfish and sordid ambition. During that fall and winter [1861] his house was thronged with partisans of the extreme 'peace' wing of the Democratic party, who must have held out to him the golden lure of the Presidency as the reward of a forbearing, temporizing, procrastinating policy, which would exhaust the resources and chill the ardor of the north."†

There is no doubt that McClellan was often approached, in 1861, at least, on the subject of a dictatorship. Riding one day with some of his officers, he said, "I understand there is a good deal of talk of making a dictator." "Ah," replied one of the officers, "Mr. Lincoln, I suppose?" "Oh, no," answered McClellan, "it's me they're talking of."‡ During the Peninsula Campaign, McClellan was riding through the army with Colonel Thomas Key, a member of his staff. As usual, the soldiers cheered whenever McClellan appeared. "How those brave fellows love me," said McClellan, "and what a power that love places in my hands. What is there to prevent my taking the government in my own hands?" Startled at this, Key replied, "General, don't mistake those men. So long as you lead them against the enemy, they will adore you and die for you. But attempt to turn them against their government, you will be the first to suffer." Irritated at this, McClellan put spurs to his horse and galloped off.\*

\* *McClellan's Own Story*, 35.

† Horace Greeley, *The American Convict*, II, 247. Hartford, O. D. Case & Company, 1867.

‡ Cox, *Reminiscences of the War*.

\* Piatt, *Men Who Saved the Union*,

During the presidential campaign of 1864, Lincoln and his managers, for campaign purposes, tried to get hold of a letter which McClellan was said to have written to Democratic leaders after the battle of Antietam in answer to their proposal that he should stand for the presidency.\* According to the story, McClellan had read this letter to his intimate friend, General William F. (Baldy) Smith. McClellan and Smith had been friends in the Mexican War, and after. During the Peninsula Campaign it was the custom of McClellan to talk freely with Smith about his plans. But after a visit to headquarters by Fernando Wood, New York's Democratic Mayor, Smith observed that McClellan was treating him with unwonted coolness and reserve. When he mentioned this to McClellan, the latter told him that "he had something to show him." What he showed him was a letter in answer to overtures from Wood and other Democrats asking him to stand for the Presidency. In this letter of acceptance he gave his ideas as to conducting the war so as to conciliate and impress the people of the South with the idea that the Federal armies were intended merely to execute the laws and protect their property. The always blunt and outspoken Smith exclaimed, "General, do you not see, that looks like treason, and that it will ruin you and all of us." McClellan then tore up his letter and thanked Smith for the advice.

After Antietam, the same sinister Fernando Wood appeared at army headquarters, and again General Smith noted a coolness and reserve on the part of his friend and commander, McClellan, who seemed anxious to have his intimate friends out of the way and to avoid private conversation with them. Smith was kept away from headquarters on reconnaissance duty. But one night, returning to headquarters, and seeing lights in McClellan's tent, Smith went in to report. He was about to withdraw again, but McClellan asked him to remain, and when all the others had gone out, he told Smith that the proposal as to the Presidency had been renewed. This time, he said, he had agreed to their proposition, and had written them a letter acceding to their terms and pledging himself to carry out the war in the manner he had indicated in the

\* Benjamin F. Butler, *Butler's Book*, 716. Boston, A. M. Thayer & Company, 1892,

previous letter and which had been destroyed. The second letter was now read to Smith, who immediately afterwards applied for a transfer from McClellan's army. Lincoln had this information from Governor Smith of Vermont, who was a cousin of General Smith, and Thurlow Weed had gone to Vermont to interview Governor Smith, to see if there was any way of getting hold of McClellan's letter to Wood.

When Lincoln related this to his secretary, John Hay, the latter expressed amazement, saying he thought McClellan's trouble was constitutional weakness and timidity, but that he was not capable of "deep laid schemes of treachery and ambition." Lincoln then said that after McClellan's long delay to move into Virginia after the battle of Antietam, he "began to fear that he was playing false and that he did not want to hurt the enemy." \*

The officer who was responsible for this report about McClellan's agreement with Fernando Wood to become a candidate for the Presidency and conduct the war according to the desires of the Democratic politicians, General W. H. (Baldy) Smith, in the summer of 1864 commanded the 18th Army Corps, under General Benjamin Butler. Butler and Smith did not get along well, and on July 19th Smith was relieved of the command of the 18th corps. Soon after he was relieved Smith wrote a letter to his friend, Senator Solomon Foote, of Vermont, and in the letter made serious charges against General Grant and Butler.† He says that on the last day of June and the 1st of July, 1864, Grant and Butler came to his headquarters. Soon after their arrival, Grant turned to Butler and said, "That drink of whiskey I took has done me good"; and then asked Smith for a drink. Smith says he knew that Grant had recently pledged himself to total abstinence, but did not feel that he could decline the request in the presence of Butler, and had a servant produce a bottle. After the lapse of an hour, Grant asked for another drink, and soon his voice "showed plainly that the liquor had affected him." When Grant had departed, Smith said to one of his staff officers, "General Grant has gone away drunk; General Butler has seen it,

\* Thayer, *John Hay*, II, 132.

† Butler, *Butler's Book*, appendix 80.

and will never fail to use the weapon which has been put into his hands."

According to Smith, Grant had written a letter to the War Department, asking for the dismissal of General Butler, and that Smith succeed him in command. Later, Grant sent for Smith and told him that he could not relieve Butler, but that he, Smith, must be relieved because he had severely criticized General Meade's management of the Army of the Potomac in the bloody repulse at Cold Harbor, on the 3rd of June. Smith says that when he had talked in a confidential way with Grant about Cold Harbor and Meade, there was nothing whatever to indicate that Grant was displeased with what he had said about Meade. Smith insists that the reason the orders about General Butler and himself were changed, so that Smith was relieved and Butler retained in command, was that Butler went to Grant and threatened to expose his intoxication if the order were not revoked. Smith asserts also that Butler had threatened to make public something which would prevent Lincoln's re-election, and that he made a threat with reference to the Chicago Democratic Convention, which, he said, "he had in his breeches' pocket."

Of his supposed influence at the Democratic Convention, Butler says: "What could I do with the Chicago Convention, where the Southern majority of delegates and their copperhead allies hated me with more virulence and vigor than they did any other man in the United States, where I should have expected to be murdered had I appeared?" There was, indeed, little doubt as to the kind of reception Butler would have received had he appeared at the Chicago Convention, for, although as a delegate to the Democratic Convention at Charleston, South Carolina, in 1860, he had distinguished himself by voting for Jefferson Davis fifty-seven times, Butler, by his orders when in command at New Orleans, his attitude towards the Negro, and his policy of recrimination in connection with prisoners of war had won the hatred of Southern Democrats beyond that of any men in the North.

In a postscript to this letter to Senator Foote, Smith refers to the fact that Grant was in the habit of getting liquor in a surreptitious manner, and volunteers to tell

more about this if Senator Foote thinks that "at any time the matter may be of importance to the country."

Butler denies that the incident Smith relates about Grant, himself, and the whiskey ever took place, and says he never saw Grant take a glass of spiritous liquor in his life, although he had seen him drink wine at the dinner table. He indignantly repudiates the charge that, even had he seen Grant drunk, he could have used such a weapon against him, and quotes the postscript of Smith's letter to Foote to prove that Smith himself was willing to make use of such information in a base manner. The conviction, however, that Butler had some hold upon Grant long persisted. Senator George F. Hoar, in his bitter chapter on Butler, preserves this tradition. "I do not suppose," he says, "that the secret of the hold which General Butler had upon General Grant will ever be disclosed. Butler boasted in the lobby of the House of Representatives that Grant would not dare to refuse any request of his because he had in his possession affidavits by which he could prove that Grant had been drunk on seven different occasions."\* When this statement was repeated to Grant by a member of the House, Grant replied quietly, "I have refused his request several times." "In the case of almost any other person than President Grant," says Senator Hoar, "such an answer would have been a confession of the charge."

There is something about this history of Smith in his dealings with Grant and Butler which raises the question as to Smith's reliability when he comes to testify about his erstwhile friend and commander, McClellan. It is quite possible that a general who could write to a United States Senator, telling him that Grant got liquor "in a surreptitious manner," and that if the occasion arose he would be glad to say more about it, could be guilty also of villifying McClellan. Butler dismisses Smith with a paragraph that only Ben Butler could have written: "Does not Smith show himself to be, though of human form, only an animal of the lowest class, found nowhere but in America, the generic name of the whole species being 'MEPHITIS AMERICANA.' "†

\* George F. Hoar, *Autobiography of Seventy Years*, I, 362. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1903.

† Butler, *Butler's Book*, 716.

Shortly after McClellan's dismissal, Montgomery Blair, McClellan's chief advocate in the Cabinet, and General Wadsworth were talking with the President. Wadsworth was expressing opinions hostile to McClellan, when Blair broke in with the remark, "He would have been all right if he had stolen a couple of niggers." Lincoln joined heartily in the general laugh which followed this pungent comment by Blair.\* Blair's remark brings up the question as to what part McClellan's attitude towards emancipation played in his removal. The opposing political party was certain that it had played a chief part. The *New York Herald* greeted his dismissal with this comment. "It is sufficient that he has fallen the victim to the machinations of the radical abolition faction. . . . His unpardonable crime has been his persistent refusal to make the cause of the Union secondary to the cause of negro emancipation." † If McClellan had only "stolen a couple of niggers," and shown some zeal for the policy of emancipation, thought Blair, he would have been safe in his post as Commander of the army.

McClellan made no effort to disguise his hostility to the policy of emancipation. He had shown this on more than one occasion. The radicals and abolitionists had not forgotten his proclamations to the inhabitants of western Virginia, in which they thought he had gone out of the way to tell these western Virginians that their slaves would not be molested. When Buchanan was elected President in 1856, Marcy, afterwards McClellan's father-in-law and chief of staff, expressed himself as follows: "We have just received some of the election returns, and thus far Buck is ahead, which rejoices us all, and we hope he may triumph and defeat the miserable sect of Abolitionists, as they are most contemptible, and their success would be a most serious calamity to the country." ‡ There is no doubt that McClellan entertained opinions almost as unfavorable of the Abolitionists, and that he also regarded their possible success as a calamity to the country. He wrote to his wife from the Peninsula that he was being reminded of the "pleasant predicament in

\* H. G. Pearson, *James S. Wadsworth of Geneseo*, 148. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913.

† *New York Herald*, Nov. 10, 1862.

‡ Letter, Marcy to his daughter, Nov. 1856.



which I am—the rebels on one side, and the Abolitionists and other scoundrels on the other. I believe in my heart and conscience, however, that I am walking on the ridge between the two gulfs, and that all that I have to do is to try to keep the path of honor and truth, and that God will bring me safely through.” † Abolitionism to McClellan was evidently almost as deep and dismal a gulf as rebellion and secession. Gideon Welles is authority for the statement that McClellan had expressed the wish that at least two states of the Union should be made to suffer in the war, and the two he named were South Carolina and Massachusetts.

When McClellan heard of the issuance of the Proclamation of Emancipation, he made this comment in a letter to his wife: “The President’s late Proclamation, and the continuation of Stanton and Halleck in office, render it almost impossible for me to retain my commission and self-respect at the same time.” McClellan even went the length of considering open opposition to the Proclamation. General W. S. Smith says that he made this proposal to him and he dissuaded him against it. After Antietam, General Jacob Cox, who commanded the 9th corps under Burnside, went to McClellan’s headquarters on a Sunday morning to attend divine services. While he was waiting for the services to commence, a tall civilian came up to him and began to talk to him about how the politicians at Washington were trying to sacrifice McClellan. “But,” he added, “you military men have that matter in your own hands. You have but to tell the administration what they must do and they will not disregard it.” At this General Cox turned and said sharply, “What do you mean, sir?” The speaker, who, he afterwards learned, was John W. Garrett, the President of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, had mistaken Cox for another.

On the 24th of September, McClellan gave a dinner at his headquarters, and among the guests were Generals Cox, Burnside, and Cochrane, son-in-law of Gerrit Smith, the noted Abolitionist. McClellan told them that he had been urged by politicians and officers to oppose the Proclamation, and wanted their frank opinion, since they were friends of the administration. The war, he said, would end slavery; but he thought the Proclamation pre-

† *McClellan’s Own Story*, 316.

mature. All the officers present gave it as their opinion that for him to oppose the Proclamation would be a fatal error. McClellan then said that he felt so himself; but that the matter had been thrust upon him, and the army was so devoted that they would enforce any decision he would make as to any part of the war policy. General Cox then replied that those who had so advised him as to the willingness of the army to enforce any decision he should make, even one against the government, were his worst enemies. He, Cox, knew the soldiers well, and not a corporal's guard would stand by him in any slightest insubordination. Burnside and Cochrane affirmed the same. McClellan then asked them if it would be wise for him to say something to quiet the semi-revolutionary talk in the army. The opinion was that it would be well for him to address the army in general terms as to their duty, and advise the soldiers not to meddle with government affairs. McClellan took their advice, and after two weeks of meditation, called the attention of the army to the President's Proclamation, but with this significant comment, "The remedy for political errors, if any are committed, is to be found only in the action of the people at the polls." This amounted to telling the army that if they thought the Emancipation Proclamation was a political error, not to oppose it with military action, but fight it and repudiate it at the polls. General Cox, who was close to McClellan at this time, says he regarded his order to the army of October 7th, as an honest effort to break through the toils which intriguers had spread for him. That McClellan had a right to his opinions as to the wisdom and timeliness of the Proclamation, none will deny. But from the recital of General Cox, it is evident that McClellan at least entertained the idea of opposing with the power of his army the edict of the government. If Lincoln was apprised of this, it is not strange that he was dismissed. The strange thing would be that he retained him in command so long. As we shall see, Lincoln dispensed with the services of McClellan as soon as he felt himself able to do so.\*

\* A preposterous story was current after the war that after the Battle of Antietam McClellan wrote a letter to Lee, asking for a meeting, and suggesting that they unite their armies and march on Washington. W. S. Myers, *McClellan*, 375.

The October elections of 1862 in many places had gone against the Republican Party, and the smoke of the political battle had not cleared away, before Republican leaders, both the victorious and the vanquished, began to appear at the White House demanding the head of General McClellan, the vanquished, claiming that it was Lincoln's retention of him which had been responsible for their defeat. In the October elections William D. Kelley was returned to Congress from his Philadelphia district. The third day after the election, he went down to Washington and was warmly greeted by the President, who asked him to explain how it had come about that he, for whose election none seemed to hope, had been returned with a big majority, while so many others, whose election had been looked upon as certain, had been badly beaten. Kelley answered that his success in the election was due to his loyalty to the President, coupled with the fact of his well-known demand for the substitution of a fighting general for McClellan. It was to press for this removal that he had come to see the President.

In the midst of the interview, Edward McPherson made his appearance. He had just been defeated in the Gettysburg district. Lincoln greeted him, and expressing sympathy, asked "how he accounted for so unhappy and so unexpected a result in his district." In the generosity of his nature, McPherson was suggesting specious causes for his defeat, when Kelley interrupted him by saying, "Mr. President, my colleague is not treating you frankly. His friends hold you responsible for his defeat." The President then turned to McPherson, and asked him to tell him in all candor what had lost him his district. McPherson then replied that his friends attributed it to the tardiness in military movements, a result of McClellan's unfitness for command, together with Stuart's cavalry raid through the district on the Friday and Saturday before the election. Before the President could reply to this, there was another knock, and J. K. Moorhead of Pittsburgh entered the room. Lincoln extended his hand to Moorhead and said, "And what word do you bring, Moorhead? You, at any rate, were not defeated." "No," answered Moorhead, in a voice trembling with emotion, "No, Mr. President; but I am sorry to say it was not your fault that we were not all beaten; and, Mr. Presi-

dent, I came as far as Harrisburg yesterday, and passed the evening with a number of the best and most influential men of our state, including some of those who have been your most earnest supporters, and they charged me to tell you, that when one of them said 'he would be glad to hear some morning that you had been found hanging from the post of a lamp at the door of the White House,' others approved the expression." At this Lincoln, looking haggard and sad, said with dignity, "You need not be surprised to find that that suggestion has been executed any morning. The violent preliminaries to such an event would not surprise me." Kelley then sprang to his feet, and pacing violently up and down, begged the President to permit no other person to hear that he had ever entertained the thought of so fearful a possibility. The President, he said, lacked self-appreciation, and if he would only assert himself, in military matters, as he had in the other departments of the administration, he would command a following such as even Andrew Jackson never had. He declared that within twenty-four hours of the time it should become known that he had put a soldier in McClellan's place, he would find that he could command the moral, social, and financial resources of the country as no other President had done.

Unoffended by Kelley's outburst, Lincoln said to him, "Kelley, if it were your duty to select a successor to McClellan, whom would you name?" Evading a direct answer, Kelley advised the President to make up his mind to change the command of the army, and to let it be known that whenever a great battle was lost the general in command would lose his post, and to go on changing until he found the right man, "though he proved to be private with a marshal's baton in his knapsack." But Lincoln pressed him to suggest an immediate successor to McClellan. Kelley then named Hooker, whose sobriquet of "Fighting Joe" would give the country the idea that the change meant fight on the part of the army. "Would not Burnside do better?" asked Lincoln. When Kelley still advocated Hooker, Lincoln replied, "I think Burnside would be better, for he is the better housekeeper." With an oath, Kelley answered, "You are not in search of a housekeeper or a hospital steward, but of a soldier who will fight and fight to win." The interview was brought

to an end by the President's earnest, but cryptic, remark, "We shall see what we shall see."\*

Although he was the kindest and most considerate of men, when political exigency demanded it, Lincoln could act with the greatest decision, abruptness, and total disregard of personal ties or friendship. Perhaps the outstanding instance of this was his dismissal from his Cabinet of one who had been most loyal to him, and one of his wisest advisers, the Postmaster General, Montgomery Blair, when it became apparent to Lincoln that retaining Blair in the Cabinet would lose him thousands of votes in the election of 1864. When Lincoln's mind was made up that McClellan was a political handicap to him, McClellan's fate was sealed. The only question was as to how soon the blow would fall. Because of McClellan's unusual position with the army, his removal was a far more difficult and delicate matter than the removal of such generals as Rosecrans, Pope, Hooker, Buell, or Burnside. Lincoln had restored McClellan to the command of the army in the crisis after Second Bull Run because there was no one else in sight who could take hold of the army, save the Capital, and check the Confederate invasion. Yet, even when he did so, Lincoln hinted to the Cabinet, at the stormy session of September 2nd, that the restoration was only temporary. He afterwards confessed to William D. Kelley that his position at the time of McClellan's restoration to command was a striking illustration of the dangers to which Republican institutions are subjected by wars of such magnitude as to produce ambitious and rival commanders, "for the civil power of the government was then subordinated to the military; and although he had acted as Commander-in-Chief in putting McClellan again at the head of the army in that time of panic, demoralization, and insubordination, he was acting under military duress."

When the news of McClellan's removal spread through the army, General Meade made this comment. "Today the order has been received relieving McClellan from duty with this army, and placing Burnside in command. I must confess I was surprised at this, as I thought the storm had blown over. If he had been relieved imme-

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\* William D. Kelley, *Lincoln and Stanton*. New York and London, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1885.

diately after the battle of Antietam, or at any period before he moved, I could have seen some show of reason on *military* grounds. This removal now proves conclusively that the cause is political, and the date of the order, November 5th (the day after the New York election which the Democrats had won) confirms it." \*

After the battle of Antietam, McClellan had foreseen the possibility of being dismissed as soon as the menace of Lee's invasion was removed. Writing on September 22nd, he said, "It may be that now that the government is pretty well over their scare, they will begin with their persecutions and throw me overboard again." By November 7th, Lincoln felt strong enough to do without McClellan and face whatever storm his removal might occasion, and issued the order which put a stop to McClellan's military career. "I am stronger now with the Army of the Potomac than McClellan. The supremacy of the civil power has been restored, and the Executive is again master of the situation." † Hence, exit McClellan.

Another general with a Scotch name was ruined by the salutation of the witches, "Thou shalt be king hereafter." McClellan might have been President, had he responded to the overtures which were made to him by Lincoln in 1863. When he was in command of the army he was greatly handicapped by having his name associated with the Presidency. Lincoln turned to McClellan in his hour of need after the second battle of Bull Run. But when Lee was defeated at Antietam, Lincoln resolved to rid himself of the general to whom men had been saying for more than a year now, "Thou shalt be king hereafter."

\* Meade, *George Gordon Meade*, I, 325.

† Kelley, *Lincoln and Stanton*.

**Book Five**  
**WAITING FOR ORDERS**

## I

### WHILE OTHERS FOUGHT

At Trenton, New Jersey, whither he had been directed to proceed, McClellan waited for orders which never came. Without a word of recognition or thanks from the government, which now, save for his pay check, ignored his existence, McClellan watched and waited, while dark tragedy stalked the Army of the Potomac.

The first disaster was at Fredericksburg. The army was now under the command of McClellan's old friend, and early admirer, Ambrose E. Burnside. When Burnside was without a job and penniless, McClellan, then with the Illinois Central, secured him a position with the railroad and installed him and his wife in his house in Chicago. At South Mountain and Antietam Burnside had failed McClellan, and the friendship between them had cooled. Before he left the army in Virginia, McClellan did all he could to acquaint Burnside with the plan of campaign and the location of the different units. Twice before, Burnside had been offered the command of the army and had declined it. This time, in spite of his protest, it was forced upon him. Just what influenced Lincoln in giving Burnside the commander's baton has not been made clear, save that he was going to make sure that the new commander of the army was one about whom no political factions gathered and concerning whom there were no whispers of the Presidency or a dictatorship. So far as his military career was concerned, there was absolutely nothing in the record of Burnside which would have singled him out as the man to lead a great army.

Burnside knew that McClellan had been relieved, ostensibly, on the ground that he moved too slowly. He was expected to march against the enemy, and he did so at once, choosing for his plan of campaign to cross the Rappahannock River at Fredericksburg. From the very start everything went wrong. The pontoons were not up when expected, and by the time Burnside got ready to



cross the river, Lee's army was strongly entrenched in an impregnable position on the opposite heights. Burnside could have moved up or down the river; but instead of that he chose to cross at Fredericksburg, where Lee's army was waiting for him on Marye's Heights. At a council of war held at his headquarters on the evening of December 9, 1862, Burnside outlined his plan of attack. General French declared that the battle would be won in forty-eight hours, and called for three cheers for the commanding general. The cheers were given with a hearty will which shook the house. But as Burnside passed along the hall from the council chamber, he met Brigadier-General R. C. Hawkins, and said to him, "What do you think of it?" Hawkins answered, "If you make the attack as contemplated, it will be the greatest slaughter of the war, and there isn't infantry enough in our whole army to carry those heights if they are well defended." The brigadier was right; those who cheered were wrong.

On a hill back of Fredericksburg is a fine old white-pillared Virginia mansion. At the bottom of the hill, on the Fredericksburg side, there is a sunken road, flanked by a stone wall. On the top of the hill Lee had posted his artillery, and behind the stone wall at the bottom, protected by the wall and by the depression of the road, his infantry lay in three lines, one loading, one passing the guns, and one firing. It was against such a position that Burnside marched his men on the fatal 13th of December, 1862. One by one, his grand divisions, into which he had divided his army, flung themselves against the smoking hills, only to strew the ground with their dead and wounded. Standing in the cupola of the courthouse, and watching the blue lines wasting away before the stone wall, Couch exclaimed to Howard, "O great God, see how our poor fellows have fallen!" And the gray-bearded veteran, Sumner, restrained by Burnside from crossing the river to take his place at the head of his men, shed tears at the awful spectacle. The nation groaned, too, when it heard of the slaughter. Burnside, standing at his headquarters at Falmouth, and pointing to the thousands of dead and dying men lying on the field across the river, groaned aloud to General W. F. Smith, "O those men! O those men over there!" The nation echoed the groan.

There was just one redeeming feature, and that was the manly way in which Burnside assumed the entire responsibility for the disaster. Lincoln comforted him and his army and offered them the thanks of the nation. But for what?

The army was in a bad way. Desertions were rife; respect for authority was at a low ebb; thousands of men were absent on leave of one kind or another, and one of the best New England regiments openly hurraed for Jeff Davis when a Union officer of high rank rode by with his staff. Burnside had asked the dismissal of Stanton and Halleck, and finally issued an order dismissing General Hooker from the army, "as a man unfit to hold an important commission during a crisis like the present, when so much patience, charity, confidence, consideration and patriotism are due from every soldier in the field." This order was issued subject to the approval of the President. Instead of approving it, Lincoln on January 25, 1863, appointed to the command of the Army of the Potomac General Joseph Hooker, the very man whom Burnside had described as "unfit to hold an important commission during a crisis like the present." We have seen Hooker in action in the Peninsula and at Antietam, and his record is good. Lincoln heard that he had ambitions to be a military dictator, and when he gave him the command wrote a fatherly letter, in which he said: "I have heard in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course, it was not for this, but in spite of this, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up as dicators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship."

Hooker was soon to show that he was not cut out for a dictator. Yet, he did a splendid piece of reorganization. He put fight into the cavalry, stopped desertion by shooting deserters in the presence of the army, and restored to the army something of the spirit which it had possessed under McClellan. By the 1st of April, 1863, it was a well-drilled and thoroughly disciplined host, full of fight, and breaking into cheering whenever their handsome general rode his white horse down the lines.

The two armies still lay facing one another at Fredericksburg, with the Rappahannock River flowing between them. Hooker sent a cavalry division across the river west of the Confederate army, and as soon as that movement was under way, crossed the main army and got well into the rear of Lee without serious opposition. The soldiers were in fine spirits, and as they crossed the Rappahannock, they sang:

The Union boys are moving on the left and on the right,  
The bugle call is sounding, our shelters we must strike;  
Joe Hooker is our leader, he takes his whiskey strong,  
So our knapsacks we will sling, and go marching along.

Sedgwick's division still lay across the river from Fredericksburg, facing Lee, and ready to advance at a given signal from Hooker, who had moved his army to the vicinity of Chancellorsville. Everything looked favorable, and Hooker issued a proclamation to his army, saying, "It is with heartfelt satisfaction the Commanding General announces to the army that the operations of the last three days have determined that our enemy must either ingloriously fly, or come from behind its defenses and give us battle on our own ground, where certain destruction awaits them." It was also reported among the soldiers that Hooker said he had Lee in such a position that God Almighty could not prevent him from destroying the Confederate Army. "But let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off."

Dividing his army again, as at Second Bull Run, and taking a gambler's chance, Lee sent Jackson with a flanking column of almost 30,000 men clear around the right wing of Hooker's army. All day the Union soldiers saw the dust clouds raised by Jackson's column, but thought that Lee was retreating towards Richmond. But it was not a retreat. That night, May 2nd, the men of the 11th Corps, Howard's, eating their supper or loafing about their camp, were suddenly startled by deer and rabbits running through their camp. In a moment came the rebel yell, and Jackson's men were upon them. Regiment after regiment, brigade after brigade, was telescoped, and the whole corps routed.

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*Photo by U. S. Army Signal Corps*

**"FIGHTING JOE" HOOKER**

Down at the Chancellor House, Joe Hooker was sitting on the porch, enjoying the quiet spring evening, and chatting with his officers; when suddenly he and his staff saw a stream of mules, oxen, horses and soldiers pouring down the road, pursued by the eager Confederates. That night Stonewall Jackson, riding along his lines in the evening gloom, was fired upon, either by a North Carolina regiment or a Massachusetts regiment, and fell mortally wounded. His death made Chancellorsville a Pyrrhic victory for the South. The next day, Sunday, May 3rd, Jeb Stuart, now in command of Jackson's men, drove Hooker away from the Chancellor House and united his own lines with those of Lee, who then turned on Sedgwick, who had taken Marye's Heights, and drove him back over the river. During the fight Hooker was a strange mystery of inaction and torpidity. Some say that he was drunk; Carl Schurz, that not drunkenness, but unaccustomed abstinence accounted for his stupidity. What is certain is that as Hooker was standing on the veranda of the Chancellor House, a cannon ball struck the pillar against which he was leaning and he fell to the floor in a dazed condition. The next day the whole army recrossed the Rappahannock to its old position. Another grand failure. During the Gettysburg campaign, General Doubleday said to Hooker, "Hooker, what was the matter with you at Chancellorsville? Some say you were injured by a shell, and others that you were drunk. Now tell us, what was it?" To this Hooker replied: "Doubleday, I was not hurt by a shell, and I was not drunk. For once I lost confidence in Hooker, and that is all there is to it."

The darkest night of the war for Lincoln was that night when the tidings came of the defeat at Chancellorsville. Noah Brooks, an inmate of the White House at the time, thus describes Lincoln's anguish of mind: "I shall never forget that picture of despair. He held a telegram in his hand, and as he closed the door and came towards us, I mechanically noticed that his face, usually sallow, was ashen in hue. The paper on the wall behind him was of the tint known as French gray, and even in that moment of sorrow and dread expectation, I vaguely took in the thought that the complexion of the anguished President's visage was almost exactly like that on the wall. He gave me the telegram, and in a voice trembling

with emotion, said, 'Read it—news from the army.' The appearance of the President as I read aloud those fateful words was piteous. Never, as long as I knew him, did he seem so broken up, so dispirited, and so ghost-like. Claspings his hands behind his back, he walked up and down the room saying, 'My God! My God! What will the country say! What will the country say!'

Once again the hopes of the country and the administration had been blasted. The vast expenditure of gold and blood had come to naught. Measureless denunciation and urgent cries for peace poured in upon the President. That night after Chancellorsville, Lincoln kept his lonely vigil. His secretary, sitting in the room across the hall, heard through the hours of the night only the ticking of the clock and the tread of the President as he walked up and down in his chamber of anguish.

Far from the roar of the guns, what were the feelings of McClellan in his quiet New Jersey home, as the tidings came in of the ghastly tragedy of Fredericksburg and the gigantic fiasco in the tangled woods of Chancellorsville, where those fine troops that he had organized and led had been cut to pieces in senseless battles? McClellan loved his army as much as his army loved him, and it was with heartache and sorrow that he read of the disasters which had befallen it, and without any compensating injury to the enemy. In every battle he had fought with the Confederate army, McClellan had taken a heavy toll of the enemy, and the Confederate casualties, even at Antietam, where McClellan was on the offensive, were always heavier than the Union. But now it was just the reverse.

Hooker had lost confidence in himself at Chancellorsville; but Lincoln still held on to him, saying that he would not throw away a gun simply because it had missed fire once. But many of the officers of the army had lost confidence in their general. After Chancellorsville, Lee started on his second invasion of the North, the invasion which culminated in the battle of Gettysburg. Hooker's part in this campaign, up to the time of his removal, was commendable and skillful, and when Meade succeeded him in command, the army was in a splendid position, either to attack Lee's line of communication, or to confront him in battle. Harper's Ferry was again garrisoned by a Union force, and Hooker properly requested that this

garrison be attached to his army. Halleck refused the request, and Hooker, justly aggrieved, requested to be relieved. His request was granted, and General Meade was put in his place. Charles F. Benjamin, who occupied a confidential post at the War Department, says that after Chancellorsville, Lincoln, Stanton, and Halleck had determined that Hooker should not be entrusted with the leadership of the army in another battle, but that the order dismissing him was postponed until the last hour, so as not to arouse the hostility of the Chase faction in the Cabinet which supported Hooker.

As Lee's army crossed the Potomac and came marching up the white pikes of the Cumberland Valley towards Chambersburg and Carlisle, there was great apprehension in the North. Men began to think of McClellan. They had little confidence in Hooker's ability to defeat Lee, and doubted if any of the corps commanders under him could stop the Confederate invasion. Philadelphia was in alarm and began to dig trenches in her suburbs. At a mass meeting in Harrisburg, presided over by the former Secretary of War, Simon Cameron, a demand was made that Governor Curtin appoint either McClellan or Franklin, to command the Pennsylvania troops. Governor Parker of New Jersey telegraphed Lincoln that New Jersey was afraid her soil would be invaded, and wanted McClellan restored to the command of the Army of the Potomac. Only such a restoration would restore the spirit of the people. Governor Curtin sent Colonel Alexander McClure to Philadelphia to confer with the leading people there. After this conference, McClure sent a dispatch to Lincoln expressing the views of the Philadelphia leaders, and earnestly requesting that McClellan be placed in the command of the army. To put him in command again would restore confidence in the army and confidence among the people. Lincoln replied at once as follows:

A. K. McCLURE, Philadelphia:

Do we gain anything by opening one leak to stop another? Do we gain anything by quieting one clamor merely to open another and probably a larger one?

A. LINCOLN \*

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\* McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century*, 319.

Lincoln, no doubt, had his own anxieties and misgivings as to the outcome of the great battle which was pending; but he was determined not to break with the anti-McClellan men in his Cabinet and in Congress, and thus open anew the old controversy, the "clamor," which seemed inevitable with McClellan in command. What that conflict would have been is indicated by newspaper comments on the possible restoration of McClellan to the command of the army. The *New York Herald*, Democratic, said: "The popular heart beats high in General McClellan's favor, and the popular voice, which has already spoken for him all over the country, will give still louder utterances." On the other hand, the *New York Evening Post*, William Cullen Bryant's paper, declared that the "utter rout and annihilation of the army by the rebels in a pitched battle, would not be a harder blow to the friends of the Union than such an act of folly on the part of Lincoln." \*

Would the result have been different, or the Union victory more complete, had McClellan been in command at Gettysburg? The army undoubtedly would have marched and fought with greater enthusiasm, for Meade was not a man to touch the heartstrings of an army. Certain it is, too, that McClellan would never have permitted an advance detachment of his army to stumble into battle with the advance of Lee, under such disadvantageous circumstances as marked the first day's battle and the Union repulse at Gettysburg. He would have had his army well in hand and closely united, as he did in every battle which he fought. As for pursuing Lee and attacking him before he got over the river again at Williamsport, the hesitation and delay of McClellan under somewhat similar circumstances after the battle of Antietam leads one to think that he would have done much the same as Meade.

McClellan was not at Gettysburg, but his spirit was with the army. All through the hot and sultry first day of July, 1863, rumors and reports had been coming into the Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac at Taneytown, Maryland, that the advance of the army was fighting a battle with Lee near Gettysburg. Reynolds had been killed; Howard, who succeeded him in command, had been driven through Gettysburg with the loss of several

\* *New York Evening Post*, June 23, 1863.



thousand troops to the hills south of the town, and Hancock had come up to represent Meade, who had taken Hooker's place as Commander of the army.

At Headquarters, Taneytown, Md., on that first night of July, the scholarly, spectacled, severe, gray-bearded, and irascible Meade, sure now that Gettysburg was the place to fight the great battle, was sending out orders to the scattered corps of his army to march for Gettysburg. One of these orders went to John Sedgwick, commander of one of the best fighting corps of the army, the Sixth. This corps, the furthest away from the scene of action, was at Manchester, Maryland, thirty-five miles from Gettysburg. Meade wrote to Sedgwick the following order: "A general battle seems to be impending tomorrow at Gettysburg. It is of the utmost importance that your command should be up."

Late that Wednesday night, the Sixth Corps started on its famous march for Gettysburg. Officers rode along the columns, rousing the men to activity and perseverance, and telling them that the issue of the battle might depend upon their being up on time. Thick clouds of yellow dust, lifted by the feet of thousands of marching men, hung over the moving columns like a pall. The soldiers could scarcely breathe; sweat and blood ran down their chafed legs into their shoes and anointed their burning feet as they hurried northward. In the middle of the night one of the regiments was halted. An officer formed the men in a hollow square and read to them an order, purporting to be from Headquarters, to the effect that Major-General George B. McClellan was again in command of the Army of the Potomac. Instantly caps were thrown into the air, and a wave of cheering rolled down the ranks of the Sixth Corps. **McClellan! McClellan! McClellan!\***

Again that magic name. All through the sultry night, and on through the hot blistering July day, marched the Sixth Corps, marching now all the time to the deep thunder of the guns of the Second Day's Battle at Gettysburg. At 3.30 on the afternoon of the 2nd of July, the advance brigades of the Sixth Corps emerged from the clouds of dust and went into action on the left of the Union battle line, near Little Roundtop, and just in time to help stop and turn back the fierce charges of Longstreet's infantry.

\* Related to the author by a New Jersey Veteran.

They had marched to the music of McClellan's name.

When Grant was made commander-in-chief of the Federal armies, one of his first thoughts was to get back into active service able generals, such as McClellan, Buell, and others who were in retirement.

When I took command of the army, I had a dream that I tried to realize—to reunite and re-create the whole army. I talked it over with Sherman. Sherman and I knew so many fine, brave officers. We knew them in West Point and the army. We had the sympathy of former comradeship. Neither Sherman nor I had been in any way concerned in Eastern troubles, and we knew that there were no better soldiers in the army than some of those who were under a cloud with Mr. Stanton. Then I wanted to make the war as national as possible, to bring in all parties. I was anxious especially to conciliate and recognize the Democratic element. The country belonged as well to the Democrats as to us, and I did not believe in a Republican war. I felt that we needed every musket and every sword to put down the rebellion. So when I came East I came prepared and anxious to assign McClellan, Buell, and others to command. I had confidence in their ability and loyalty, confidence which, notwithstanding our differences in politics, has never faltered. But I was disappointed.\*

Sherman had the idea that it was the hostility of Stanton which prevented Grant from making use of the services of McClellan. But Grant, once asked if this was the reason, replied, "Not at all. The difficulties were not with the administration. The generals were not in a humor to be conciliated." But so far as we know, the only effort made to get McClellan back into active army service, after the Gettysburg campaign, was during the summer of 1864, when Blair, the Postmaster General, almost succeeded in having McClellan appointed to Halleck's post. McClellan and Grant—that would have been a great team.

\* Young, *Around the World With General Grant*, II, 445.

## II

### THE BATTLE AT THE POLLS

“He might have been President as well as not.”

So said that political seer, Thurlow Weed, one day in 1880, when a friend mentioned the name of McClellan. By way of explanation, Weed related how in December, 1862, in response to a telegram from Seward, he came to Washington and had an interview with Seward and Lincoln at the White House. Lincoln was greatly depressed. Everything, he said, goes wrong. “The Rebel armies hold their own. Grant is wandering around on the Mississippi; Burnside manages to keep ahead of Lee; Seymour has carried New York, and if his party carries and holds many of the Northern states, we shall have to give up the fight, for we can never conquer three-quarters of our countrymen scattered in front, flank, and rear. What shall we do?”

Weed suggested patience, and was confident that “the man capable of leading our splendid armies would come in time.” In this Seward concurred. But Lincoln, not noticing what Weed had said, began to talk about Governor Seymour of New York. “I have sent for you, Mr. Weed, to ask you to go to Governor Seymour and tell him what I say. Tell him now is his time. Tell him I do not wish to be President again, and that the leader of the other party, provided it is in favor of a vigorous war against the rebellion, should have my place. Entreat him to give the true ring to his annual message, and if he will, as he easily can, place himself at the head of a great Union party, I will gladly stand aside and help to put him in the executive chair. All we want is to have the rebellion put down.” This was only in keeping with what Lincoln had frequently expressed to his friends. “If there is a man who can push our armies forward one mile further or one hour faster than I can, he is the man who ought to be in my place.”

Thus commissioned by Lincoln, Weed proceeded to Albany, and had what seemed to be to him a favorable

interview with Governor Seymour. He left the Governor with the understanding that his message to the legislature in New York would omit the usual criticisms of the President, would breathe an earnest Union spirit, praising the soldiers and calling for more. But when Seymour's message was made public, instead of praising Lincoln and calling for soldiers, it denounced the administration, the arrest of Vallandigham, the Ohio "copperhead," and the enforcement of the draft.

Having failed in his negotiations with Seymour, Lincoln then turned to McClellan, still a Major-General in the army, but waiting for orders in New Jersey. "Tell the general," Lincoln said to Weed, "that we have no wish to injure or humiliate him; that we wish only for the success of our armies; that if he will come forward, and put himself at the head of a Union Democratic party, and through that means push forward the Union cause, I will gladly step aside and do all I can to secure his election in 1864. Through an intermediary, S. L. M. Barlow, Weed suggested to McClellan that he preside at a great Union-Democratic Mass Meeting to be held in Union Square on Monday, June the 16th. Everything looked favorable for the meeting; but on the very eve of the day set, Weed received a note from McClellan declining to preside over the meeting. In this letter McClellan said:

For what I cannot doubt that you would consider good reasons, I have determined to decline the compliment of presiding over the proposed meeting of Monday next. I fully concur with you in the conviction that an honorable peace is not now possible, and that the war must be prosecuted to save the Union and the government at whatever cost of time, treasure, and blood.

It was the wrong time for McClellan to refuse to preside at a war meeting, for on the very day he wrote his letter, Lee was on the march through Maryland into Pennsylvania. Weed was an astute politician, and there is no reason to doubt the correctness of his opinion when he says, "If he had presided at that war meeting, and had persistently followed it up, nothing but death could have

kept him from being elected President of the United States in 1864." \*

The name of McClellan, and that to his hurt, had been associated with the Presidency ever since he was made Commander of the Army of the Potomac. "During that fall and winter," says Horace Greeley, "his house was thronged with partisans of the extreme peace wing of the Democratic Party, who must have held out to him the golden lure of the Presidency as the reward of a forbearing, temporizing, procrastinating policy which would exhaust the resources and chill the ardor of the North." Undoubtedly the "golden lure" of the Presidency, and also of a dictatorship, was frequently held out to McClellan. But as commander of the army, he was careful not to commit himself to such schemes. Indeed, there was no reason why he should have done so. "My ambition," says McClellan, "was fully gratified by the possession of the command of the army, and so long as I held that, nothing would have induced me to give it up for the Presidency." As a successful commander of the Army of the Potomac, McClellan was a greater figure than the President.

But what of his ambitions, when he was no longer in command of the army? General W. F. Smith is authority for the statement that McClellan, after the battle of Antietam, in response to overtures from Democratic leaders in New York City, had committed himself as a candidate for the Presidency against Lincoln.† But a year passed before McClellan made any public utterance which could be construed as a political declaration. This was in connection with the campaign for the governorship of Pennsylvania in 1863. The Republican candidate was Governor Andrew G. Curtin, one of the noblest and most patriotic of the great war governors of the North. His opponent on the Democratic ticket was George W. Woodward, who, as a Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, had held that the draft was unconstitutional. Shortly before the October election, an article appeared in the *Philadelphia Press* asserting that McClellan had said that he was in favor of the election of Governor Curtin. When this was brought to his knowledge, McClellan wrote a letter,

\* Rice, ed., *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln*, xxxiii.

† Page 299.

which was made public, denying the correctness of the statement in the *Philadelphia Press* and advocating the election of Woodward, saying, "I regard his election as governor of Pennsylvania as called for by the interests of the nation."

The letter was unfortunate in a personal sense, as Curtin had been a friend of McClellan, having offered him the command of the Pennsylvania troops at the beginning of the war; and no man had done more for the Pennsylvania troops in the Army of the Potomac. It was unfortunate in a political sense, also, for McClellan was not satisfied merely to deny the statement that he was in favor of Curtin, but proceeded to give the reasons why he thought Woodward ought to be elected, saying in conclusion, "And, finally, I understand him to agree with me in the opinion that the sole great objects of this war are the restoration of the unity of the nation, the preservation of the Constitution, and the supremacy of the laws of the country." \* In the election which followed, Curtin was victorious, and the defeat of Woodward, whom he had thus publicly espoused, was, in a sense, a defeat for McClellan.

In the winter of 1863 and 1864, there was great dissatisfaction with President Lincoln, even in his own party. James A. Garfield, who had just entered Congress, wrote, "We hope we may not be compelled to push Lincoln for four years more"; and Whitelaw Reid, in the *Cincinnati Gazette*, described Lincoln as ready "to surrender the cause of human freedom to the masters of slave plantations." † Horace Greeley was not for Lincoln, and advocated Chase. "I wanted the war driven onward with vehemence, and this was not in his nature." Greeley feared that Lincoln's easy ways would allow the rebellion to obtain European recognition and achieve ultimate success. There were others, too, who could not understand "how a man who joked, told humorous stories, and read Artemus Ward, could be fit to be the Chief Executive of the country in this hour of trial." In December, 1863, James Gordon Bennett's *New York Herald* came out with an editorial headed, "Grant Is the People's Candidate."

\* Michie, *McClellan*, 446.

† Allan Nevins, *Fremont*, II, 651. New York and London, Harper and Brothers, 1928.

Another suggestion was Rosecrans, up to the time of his disaster at Chickamauga, one of the most successful and popular of Union generals. Horace Greeley, who with his lantern in his hand, was hunting for the right man, even went so far as to send James R. Gilmore to Rosecrans' headquarters to sound him out on the proposal. The first plan was to have Lincoln resign, put Hamlin in his place, and make Rosecrans the commander of all the armies. Gilmore found Rosecrans "sound on the goose," that is, his attitude towards emancipation, but altogether unsound as to a conspiracy to supplant Lincoln. The chief candidate in the field against Lincoln from his own party was the powerful and able Secretary of the Treasury, Salmon P. Chase. But Chase's boom came to a sudden ending in February, 1864, when the Union members of the Ohio Legislature, Chase's own state, held a caucus and nominated Lincoln for re-election, at the demand, they said, of the people and soldiers of Ohio.

The first step in organized opposition to the re-election of Lincoln was the meeting of the convention of the Radicals at Cleveland, May 31, 1864. The convention was attended by only a few hundred delegates, and was more of a farce than a serious political venture. Even the earnest advocacy of its platform by eloquent Wendell Phillips, and the eulogies pronounced on it by the Democratic press could not give it seriousness and dignity. The nominee was none other than the "Pathfinder," the picturesque John C. Fremont, whose failure as a military commander had been complete, but who had warmed the hearts of Abolitionists by issuing a Proclamation of Emancipation of his own when in command of the Department of Missouri in 1861, a proclamation which was promptly revoked by Lincoln. Fremont remained in the running until September 22nd, when he withdrew from the canvass. Lincoln's managers knew that there was no chance of Fremont's election, but were anxious as to the inroad he might make on the regular Republican vote. Zachariah Chandler, Senator from Michigan, after a conference with Ben Wade of Ohio, leader of the Republican Radicals, waited upon Fremont, asking him to withdraw from the contest, assuring him that if he did so, his chief political enemies, the Blairs, would be robbed of all power to do him injury. This meant, among other things, the

dismissal of Montgomery Blair from the Cabinet. Fremont declined the proposal on the grounds suggested, but said he would withdraw for "the welfare of the Republican Party." This he did, with a parting shot at Lincoln, in which he said that Lincoln's slavery attitude had built up for the South the strength to which it had attained, and had given them an advocate on the Chicago platform. The day after the announcement of Fremont's withdrawal, Lincoln, who in a political emergency could be ruthless in personal dealings, dismissed the faithful Montgomery Blair from his Cabinet. In the Cabinet, Blair had been the chief advocate of McClellan.

The regular Republican, or Union Convention, met on June 7th at Baltimore. The opposition to Lincoln within the Republican Party had by this time become less formidable, and nearly all the delegates came with instructions to renominate Lincoln. Answering a charge that it was time to get rid of a President who in four years had not been able to crush the rebellion, James M. Ashley, member of Congress from Ohio, said such a thing was unreasonable to expect, since in a much longer time the Lord had not crushed the devil. The temporary chairman of the convention was a Presbyterian minister and theologian, the Reverend Dr. Robert J. Breckenridge, of Kentucky. Breckenridge stirred the convention with sentences like the following: "Every blow you strike and every rebel you kill, dreadful as it is to do it, you are adding, it may be a year, it may be ten years, it may be a century, it may be ten centuries to the life of the government and the freedom of your children. . . . The only enduring, the only imperishable cement of all free institutions has been the blood of traitors." These battle sentences did not lose any in power because the speaker, the venerable theologian, was the cousin of John C. Breckenridge, Buchanan's Vice-President, and after he had been ousted from the Senate, a brigadier-general in the Confederate Army, and finally the Confederate Secretary of War. When the roll of the states was called, every state but Missouri, which cast its twenty-two votes for Grant, voted for Lincoln. Missouri then changed its vote, and the convention was unanimous for Lincoln.

As the summer wore on, the Republican leaders began to get anxious. Lee had stopped Grant in one of the



bloodiest repulses of the war at Second Cold Harbor, June 3rd, and Grant's determination to "fight it out along this line if it takes all summer," that is, "by the left flank," had to be abandoned. The people were weary of the slaughter; victory seemed far off. There was no manifest enthusiasm for Lincoln. This set that wise old politician, Francis P. Blair, Sr., to thinking. He was a man who had accomplished much by personal interviews. It was his earnest eloquence which, as much as anything else, persuaded Lincoln not to give up Sumter in the anxious first months of his administration. The old man had appointed himself an ambassador to talk with Robert E. Lee at the beginning of the war, with the hope of securing his services for the Union Army. In January, 1865, he went down to see Jefferson Davis at Richmond to propose to him that the North and South should forget their bitterness in a joint enterprise to throw Louis Napoleon and the French out of Mexico. Blair was a great man for interviews.

Without telling Lincoln or anyone else what he had in mind, old Blair packed his carpet bag, and one hot July day took the train for New York. His first call was on William Cullen Bryant, editor of the *Evening Post*. The author of *Thanatopsis*, although not greatly pleased with Lincoln's administration, assured the aged Blair that all things considered, he was the best candidate to support. From the office of the *Evening Post*, Blair went down to the editorial office of the *New York Herald*, and saw its editor, James Gordon Bennett. Bennett was willing to support Lincoln, but thought that the condition of a Republican victory was the restoration of McClellan to an active command. "As I left his office," wrote Blair, "he gave me in pretty emphatic raucle Scotch accent his last words for the President, 'Tell him to restore McClellan to the army and he will carry the election by default.'" From Bennett, Blair made his way to the *Tribune* and Horace Greeley. Greeley had been hunting about for almost a year for a candidate who would go stronger with the people than Lincoln, but no such person could be found, and Greeley was now willing to back the Republican ticket.

With this assurance from the chief editors and newspapers in New York, Blair carried his carpet bag down

to the Astor House. There McClellan came to call on him, and Blair submitted to him his plan. He told McClellan that he would be nominated by the Democrats at the Chicago Convention, and if he accepted the nomination and ran, he would be defeated. He reminded him of the fate of defeated candidates for the Presidency, mentioning among others Clay, Calhoun, and Webster. Never could a man thus defeated rise again to political importance, especially if in pronouncing the ban upon him, the voters felt that he had selfishly sought the post in the midst of a great crisis. At home and abroad, the old man told McClellan, the hopes of the enemies of the Union lay in a schism among its friends. His (McClellan's) was the only name about which any party of strength could rally in opposition to Lincoln and the Union party. Great, therefore, was the responsibility of McClellan, if he really loved the Union. This was what he ought to do: refuse to have his name presented at the Chicago Convention, and ask Lincoln for an army command. Should Lincoln refuse it, the responsibility would be upon him. If he assented, and appointed McClellan to a high military command again, and with the definite assurance on the part of McClellan that he had no presidential aspirations or plans, then the enemies of McClellan who had charged that the delays of the great army he had commanded without decisive results, "were the consequence of an ambition to clutch the Presidency by lingering out the war and his command to the end of the Presidential term, that he might make the prestige and hold the means to affect his purpose would be confounded." \*

McClellan disclaimed any presidential ambitions and promised to consider earnestly the proposition laid before him by Blair. The sickness of one of his children compelled him to leave the city and he did not again see Blair, nor did Blair hear from him further. When he returned to Washington, Blair went to the White House and told Lincoln what he had proposed to McClellan. Lincoln heard him through in silence, but gave no indication as to what he might have done had McClellan applied to him for service with the army.

The Democrats shrewdly postponed their convention till the end of the summer, hoping that some fortunate

\* Appleton's *American Annual Cyclopædia*, 1864, p. 790.

turn of events would put them in a position to speak and to nominate with greater power. At first, everything seemed to favor this political strategy. Lincoln had refused to sign a bill passed by Congress dealing with the question of Reconstruction, which would have prevented any movement towards Reconstruction from within the seceded states themselves, and would have regarded them merely as hostile and conquered territory. In answer to this, Henry Winter Davis, leader of the House, and Ben Wade, leader in the Senate, published a severe attack upon the President, in which they described his refusal to sign the bill as "a rash and fatal act—a blow at the friends of his administration, at the rights of humanity, and at the principles of Republican government." This did not sound well, coming from powerful Republicans just three months before the election. On the arena of the war, too, since Grant's victory at Missionary Ridge, there had been no notable Union success. Sherman had not yet taken Atlanta, and Grant, after the bloody repulse at Cold Harbor, June 3rd, having strewn the solitudes of the Wilderness with the corpses of his soldiers, gave up his plan, "by the left flank," and taking his army to the James River, commenced where McClellan had left off two years before. Had it been anybody but Grant, and had the nation not now been inured to disappointment and slaughter, his head would have come off, as in the case of those who had preceded him in command of the eastern army.

The Democratic Convention convened in the Wigwam at Chicago on August 29th. Four years had passed since the May day in 1860, when the booming of the cannon on the top of the Wigwam announced to the nation that the "railsplitter" from Illinois had overthrown Seward in the Republican Convention and was the nominee of the party for the Presidency. The sound of that cannon was the real beginning of civil war in the country. It had proved to be a war such as even the most thoughtful and anxious had not foreseen. Now, with the land furrowed with graves and drenched with blood, the representatives of the Democratic Party meet to select a candidate who can defeat Lincoln and "save the country."

The Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, August Belmont, a New York banker, called the Convention to order. In his brief speech he said, "In your hands

rests, under the ruling of an all wise Providence, the future of this Republic. . . . Four years of misrule by a sectional, fanatical, and corrupt party have brought our country on the very verge of ruin. . . . We are not here as War Democrats, nor as Peace Democrats, but as citizens of the great Republic.”

The permanent Chairman was Horatio Seymour, Governor of New York. Seymour’s speech as a “key-noter” was full of power and fire.

“Four years ago,” he said, “a convention met in this city when our country was peaceful, prosperous, and united. The delegates did not mean to destroy our government, to overwhelm us with debt, or to drench our land with blood; but they were animated by intolerance and fanaticism, and blinded by an ignorance of the spirit of our institutions.

“They (the Republicans) will not have the Union restored except on conditions unknown to the Constitution. . . . They will not let the shedding of blood cease even for a little time, to see if Christian charity or the wisdom of statesmanship may not work out a method to serve our country.”

Anxious not to offend the soldiers and their friends, Seymour, while denouncing the statesmen, eulogized the soldiers.

The world will know that they have done all that arms can do; and had wise statesmanship secured the fruits of their victories, today there would have been peace in our land. . . . Let not the ruin of our country be charged to our soldiers. . . . It was a soldier upon whom our Saviour bestowed His only commendation when He hung upon the Cross.\* It was a soldier alone who discerned His divinity when he heard Him pour forth His prayer for mercy and forgiveness for the authors of His suffering.

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\* The Governor adds to the text of the Gospels. Perhaps he had in mind Christ’s commendation of the centurion, whose servant He healed. (Matthew 8.)

This administration cannot save the Union We can. Mr. Lincoln views many things above the Union. We put the Union first of all. He thinks proclamations worth more than peace. We think the blood of our people more precious than the edicts of the President.

We are resolved that the party which has made the history of our country, since its advent to power, seem like some unnatural and terrible dream, shall be overthrown. Four years ago it had its birth upon this spot. Let us see that by our action it shall die where it was born.

When the convention reconvened on the 30th, James K. Guthrie, of Kentucky, was elected chairman of the Resolutions Committee. Guthrie had been one of the men considered by Lincoln for a post in his Cabinet. The most influential member of the Resolutions Committee, however, was none other than Clement L. Vallandigham. The son of a Presbyterian minister at Lisbon, Ohio, and expelled as a student from Jefferson College, Vallandigham was as eloquent and brilliant as he was bitter, vindictive and erratic. He was a member of Congress from Ohio, and in a speech attacking the government, in January, 1863, he said:

I did not support the war, and today I bless God that not the smell of so much as one drop of its blood is upon my garments. Our Southern brethren were to be whipped back into love and fellowship at the point of the bayonet. O monstrous delusion! Sir, history will record that after nearly 600 years of folly and wickedness in every form of government, theocratic, democratic, monarchic, oligarchic, despotic, and mixed, it was reserved to American statesmanship in the nineteenth century of the Christian era to try the grand experiment on a scale the most costly and gigantic in its proportions, of creating love by force, and developing fraternal affections by war, and history will record, too, on the same page the utter, disastrous, and most bloody failure of the experiment.

At a mass meeting at Mt. Vernon, Ohio, Vallandigham had denounced the government and said that Burnside's Order No. 38, he despised, spat upon, and trampled under his feet. This Order No. 38 had been issued in March, 1863, by Burnside as commander of the Department of the Ohio. The order read that "all persons found within our lines who commit acts for the benefit of the enemies of our country will be tried as spies or traitors, and, if convicted, will suffer death. . . . It must be distinctly understood that treason, expressed or implied, will not be tolerated in this department." When he heard of Vallandigham's speech, Burnside arrested him. He was tried by a military commission, found guilty of violating General Order No. 38, by declaring disloyal sentiments and opinions, with the purpose of weakening the powers of the government, and sentenced to close confinement at Fort Warren, Boston.

The arrest of Vallandigham caused a tremendous stir, and the enemies of the administration were furious. On May 16, 1863, a meeting of protest was held at Albany, New York. To this meeting Governor Seymour wrote, "It is an act which has brought dishonor upon our country. If it is upheld, our liberties are overthrown. The action of the administration will determine in the minds of more than one-half of the people of the loyal states, whether this war is waged to put down rebellion in the south or to destroy free institutions at home."

In answer to the resolutions adopted at the Albany meeting, Lincoln wrote one of his most famous and most carefully considered papers. It was in this paper that Lincoln said: "Long experience has shown that armies cannot be maintained unless desertion will be punished by the severe penalty of death. Must I shoot a simple-minded soldier boy who deserts, while I must not touch a hair of a wily agitator who induces him to desert? I think that in such a case to silence the agitator, and save the boy, is not only constitutional, but withal a great mercy."

Nevertheless, Lincoln was disturbed and embarrassed by what Burnside had done. He could not do other than stand by that patriotic general; but he relieved the tension somewhat, and injected an element of humor into the whole matter, by taking advantage of one of the clauses

of Burnside's Order, in which he had said that those found guilty of expressing sympathy for the enemy would be "sent beyond our lines into the lines of their friends." Vallandigham was therefore unceremoniously dumped between the lines of the armies of Rosecrans and Bragg, then confronting one another in Tennessee. After a brief stay in the South, he ran the blockade and made his way to Bermuda, and thence to Canada. The Democrats of Ohio had nominated him for Governor, and from Canada Vallandigham sent to Ohio an address in which he said: "Arrested and confined for three weeks in the United States, a prisoner of state, banished thence to the Confederate states, I found myself first a freeman when on British soil, and today, under the protection of the British flag, I am here to enjoy, and in part, to exercise the privileges and rights which usurpers insolently deny me at home." He was overwhelmingly defeated in the Ohio elections; but defying the order of expulsion, returned to the United States in June, 1864, and delivered speeches more violent and bitter than those for which he had been deported.\* Schuyler Colfax, in a speech in Indiana, declared that the reason Lincoln did not rearrest Vallandigham when he returned to the United States, was that he did not wish to "give any pretext for disloyal organizations to light the torch of Civil War all over the Northwest."

Such was the bitter opponent of Lincoln and the war, who, in spite of such a record, was able to dominate the Democratic Convention at Chicago and write its platform. The fatal plank in that platform was the following:

Resolved that this convention does explicitly declare as the sense of the American people, that after four years of failure to restore the Union by the experiment of war, during which, under the pretense of a military necessity, or war power higher than the Constitution, the Constitution itself has been disregarded in every part, and public liberty and private right alike trodden down, and

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\* Vallandigham's dramatic career came to a tragic conclusion at Lebanon, Ohio, in 1871, when he accidentally shot himself with a pistol, when trying to demonstrate to his associate counsel in a murder trial, that the accused could not have fired the fatal shot. Clarence E. Macartney, *Not Far from Pittsburgh*, 82. Pittsburgh, Gibson Press, 1936.

the material prosperity of the country essentially impaired—justice, humanity, liberty, and the public welfare demand that immediate efforts be made for a cessation of hostilities, with a view to an ultimate convention of the States, or other peaceable means, to the end that, at the earliest practicable moment, peace may be restored on the basis of the federal Union of the States.

The nominations were next in order. John P. Stockton, of New Jersey, nominated McClellan. Stuart, of Ohio, nominated Thomas H. Seymour of Connecticut. Charles A. Wickliffe nominated former President Franklin Pierce. One of the chief grievances of the Democrats had been the government's system of espionage and arbitrary arrests. A bar room loafer in a Michigan village, as a hoax, and to get revenge on Republicans who had been denouncing Democrats as traitors, wrote a letter filled with strange signs and vague references to plots against the government. It commenced by saying, "President P—— has drawn many brave and influential men to the league." The United States marshal into whose hand the letter fell thought it had to do with the notorious Knights of the Golden Circle, and sent it on to Seward, the Secretary of State. Seward sent the letter to Franklin Pierce with this note: "It would appear that you are a member of the secret league, the object of which is to overthrow the government." This, of course, was absurd, and Seward afterwards sent Pierce his apology. The Knights of the Golden Circle were much in evidence at the Chicago Convention.

Willard Salisbury, of Delaware, nominated L. W. Powell, of Kentucky. Powell withdrew his name on the ground that the candidate must not come from a slave state. The name of Pierce was also withdrawn. A wild scene followed when Harris, of Maryland, who rose to second the nomination of Thomas H. Seymour, said, "One man nominated here today is a tyrant." When order had been restored, Harris read General McClellan's order for the arrest of members of the Maryland legislature in October, 1861. In ordering these arrests, and in suspending the habeas corpus act, General McClellan had only followed the orders transmitted to him through the Secre-



tary of State, Seward. All charges, Harris declared, of usurpation that could be brought against Lincoln or Butler, he could make and substantiate against McClellan. This was followed by hisses, cheers, and shouts of "Vote for Jeff Davis!" Not to be silenced, Harris declared that McClellan was "the assassin of state rights, the usurper of liberties," and that if nominated, he would not ask his friends in Maryland to vote for him. As Harris made his way to his seat with the Maryland delegation, a man said to him as he was passing, "You ought to be turned out of the Convention, you damned traitor!" Whereupon, Harris turned and knocked the man off his chair.

Long, of Ohio, supporting the charges against McClellan said that he had gone further than Lincoln in tyranny and usurpation, had suspended the writ of habeas corpus, and had helped to enforce the odious Emancipation Proclamation. In defense of McClellan, Carrigan, of Pennsylvania, quoted the general's letters to Burnside, Halleck, and Buell, in which he declared the preservation of the Union to be the only object of war and that all civil rights were to be sacredly observed. The opponents of McClellan were trying to postpone his nomination by a motion to adjourn. The friends of McClellan were in a large majority, but darkness was coming down over the excited, angry and perspiring delegates, and as gas had not yet been introduced into the Wigwam, adjournment was necessary. The friends of McClellan were sure that no harm had been done their candidate by the bitter attacks made on him.

When the convention met on the 31st, it passed a resolution of eulogy concerning the fallen Democratic leader, Stephen A. Douglas. The resolution declared that had Douglas been spared, power would have been restored to the Federal compacts, and the terrible loss of life avoided. The final vote for candidates was, McClellan 202½; T. H. Seymour 23½; New York cast all of her 33 votes for McClellan, and Pennsylvania, once the great Democratic stronghold, her 26 votes. When the result was announced, a banner with McClellan's portrait was displayed across the platform, amid wild cheering. Underneath the portrait were written these words. "If I cannot have command of my own troops, let me share their fate on the field of battle." This was what McClel-

lan had written to Halleck, when, kept inactive at Alexandria, he listened to the thunder of the guns where his soldiers were fighting at the second battle of Bull Run.

When, upon the motion of Vallandigham, the nomination of McClellan was made unanimous, a wounded soldier on crutches bound his handkerchief to the end of one of his crutches, and, with tears streaming down his face, waved his crutch aloft.

George H. Pendleton, of Ohio, was named as McClellan's running mate, and after passing a resolution to the effect "that Kentucky expects the first act of McClellan, when elected, to be to open Lincoln's prison doors and set the captives free," the convention adjourned.

The reaction in the country, which, at first, did not grasp the significance of the plank in the platform about the failure of the war, seemed to be very favorable. Guns were fired and enthusiastic ratification mass meetings were held in the great cities. A. Oakley Hall, speaking at the mass meeting before the City Hall in New York, said that "the hope of the country is in beating Lincoln. If we do not, and he comes into power for another four years, there will be realized the new nursery rhyme for abolition infants:

Jeff Davis' cat could eat no fat,  
Abe's dog could eat no lean;  
And so, between them both,  
They licked the Union clean.

The *New York Herald*, dissatisfied with both Lincoln and McClellan, warned the Democratic supporters that those who thought McClellan had nothing to do but "walk over the course" would find themselves disappointed. Patronage and "the cohesive power of public plunder" was on the side of Lincoln. Many Republicans might be sulking in their tents, but when the time came they would vote for Lincoln. The *Herald* discounted the alleged unpopularity of Lincoln. On September 4th, in an editorial the *Herald* said, "If McClellan will set aside the Chicago platform, and stand boldly upon his own record, he will crush an embryo Northern revolution, annihilate the Copperheads, dispirit the Rebellion, save the country, and be triumphantly elected President of the United

States." But as the news of the military victories began to come in, the *Herald* advocated the withdrawal of McClellan and the nomination of Grant and Sherman. It lamented that "one of these manifest failures," Lincoln and McClellan, will be the next President of the United States; and on October 31, just a few days before the election, advised the Electoral College to repudiate both "failures," and disregarding the result of the election, choose a President who shall save the country.

McClellan and his advisers quickly discerned the danger of the party plank about the failure of the war. Letters of appeal and protest began to pour in on him from old friends and comrades, urging him to repudiate and denounce the platform which had declared the war to be a failure. Some advised him to run on an independent ticket, and others to wait until Lincoln had finished his second term. A New England man wrote him, "Throw those infernal politicians overboard and come out distinctly and unqualifiedly on the war platform, ignoring totally and forever the seeming truckling of the Chicago people to the Southern influence." \* Another, who signed himself "Union," appealed to McClellan shortly before the election in this fervent language:

O McClellan, repudiate that infernal, unsavory, contemptible platform and nomination! . . . You cannot stride the peace-war platform any more than it is possible to serve God and Mammon, at one and the same time. . . . If you would only come out and declare to us that after reconsidering your duty to your God, your country, the people and yourself, you feel obliged to decline this nomination; or secondly, that you cannot accept the nomination except upon the plain, simple, war-platform; or, lastly, snap your fingers at the whole vile brood of real disunionists and decline the nomination outright, and apply at once (and have published through the press) to the President for orders to the field—and George B. McClellan, if you're not the next President, after old Abe has gotten through his term and fully finished the re-

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\* McClellan Papers.

bellion—why I should be very much mistaken, that's all.\*

In his letter of acceptance, which was in reality a repudiation of the Chicago platform, McClellan said, "The Union is the one condition of peace. The Union must be preserved at all hazards. I could not look into the face of my gallant comrades of the army and navy, who have survived so many bloody battles, and tell them that their labors, and the sacrifice of so many of our slain and wounded brethren, had been in vain; that we had abandoned that Union for which we have so often periled our lives."

The words of McClellan had the true ring to them; but the platform to which he was tied was a 'body of death.' No candidate could have overcome such a handicap. The Republicans were not slow to take advantage of the mistake the Democrats had made in adopting Valandigham's fatal plank. The *Tribune* on September 2nd said, "The rioters who held our city in siege during three days of July, 1863, who burned the colored orphan asylum, turning two or three hundred helpless and inoffensive children into the street, who in gangs of one to three hundred hunted simple Negro boys and women through the streets, maiming, robbing, and killing as many of them as they could, are all hot for McClellan." The record and character of some of the people who were "hot for McClellan" was one of the strongest campaign arguments for the Republicans.

The old specter about McClellan's disloyalty again walked the land, and, no doubt, was taken seriously by hundreds of thousands of voters. The *Tribune* published an excerpt from the *Richmond Dispatch*, of June, 1862, to the effect that at the beginning of the war McClellan wrote to a high Confederate officer expressing a desire to serve in the Confederate Army. The *Tribune* also published an excerpt from the *Richmond Whig*, saying that after the battle of Rich Mountain, in western Virginia, July, 1861, McClellan and his next in command, Rosecrans, in conversation with captured Confederate officers, declared that they would rather be leading an army against Massachusetts than against Virginia. It is quite

\* McClellan Papers.

possible that McClellan may have said something like that. It was a sentiment sometimes heard in the Union Army.

The Republicans made every effort to cast discredit upon McClellan's record as commander of the Army of the Potomac. Much was made of the fact that in the battles in which he commanded McClellan was rarely seen at the front. Vituperative Ben Wade, speaking at Cincinnati, declared that the only time McClellan found himself at the head of his army was when it was retreating across the Peninsula during the Seven Days' Battle. The Abolitionists took Lincoln as the lesser of the two evils. One of the most powerful of them, Gerrit Smith, speaking at Cooper Institute, November 4th, just a few days before the election, said, "I do not call McClellan a coward. His courage has never been tried; he has never been under fire."

But the most effective speeches were being made by the cannon of Grant and Sheridan and Sherman. The *Tribune* reported how shortly after the fall of Atlanta, two McClellan men crossing to New York on the ferry boat were overheard discussing the recent victory. One of them said to the other, "Well, we'll elect 'Little Mac' in spite of all the victories." "What a confession!" adds the *Tribune*.

"In spite of all the victories!" That was the chief handicap for the Democrats. The guns of the Union armies spoke louder and more eloquently than McClellan's campaign orators.

Almost down to a month before the election, the greatest gloom prevailed in the camp of Lincoln and the Union party. At the end of August, Thurlow Weed, veteran politician, could find nobody in New York or in other states "who authorized the slightest hope of success." On August 9th, Horace Greeley wrote Lincoln that nine-tenths of the whole American people were "anxious for peace—peace on almost any terms—and utterly sick of human slaughter and devastation." If the election were to take place the next day, the Democratic majority in New York and in Pennsylvania would amount to 100,000. The thing to do was to hold a national convention, consent to an armistice for one year, and the war once stopped, the contending sections would never fight again. The

chairman of the Republican National Executive Committee, Henry J. Raymond, Editor of the *New York Times*, wrote to Lincoln, "I hear but one report, the tide is setting strongly against us." Leonard Swett said that when he arrived in New York he found the most alarming depression possessing the minds of Republican leaders and spokesmen, such as Greeley, Beecher, Raymond, and Weed, and that "all the small politicians without exception, utterly gave up in despair." There was talk of persuading Lincoln to withdraw; and if he would not, then to call a convention and supplant him with another candidate.

It was not strange, therefore, that Lincoln himself was enveloped in the gloom which had settled down upon his associates. In this mood, when the Cabinet met on the 23rd of August, probably the very day on which he received a discouraging report from the chairman of the Republican Committee, Lincoln submitted to the members of his Cabinet a folded paper, and asked them to write their names across the back of it, giving no intimation of what he had asked them to endorse. A few days after the election in November, when the Cabinet convened, Lincoln took a paper from his desk, reminding them that at the meeting in August he had asked them to sign their names across the back of a paper. His secretary then cut the paper open. This was what Lincoln had written:

This morning, as for some days past, it seems exceedingly probable that this administration will not be re-elected. Then it will be my duty to so cooperate with the President-elect as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration, as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot possibly save it afterwards.

In explanation of this curious pledge with himself and his Cabinet, Lincoln said: "I resolved in the case of the election of General McClellan, being certain that he would be the candidate, that I would see him and talk matters over with him. I would say, General, the election has demonstrated that you are stronger, have more influence with the American people than I. Now let us together, you with your influence, and I with all the executive power

of the government, try to save the country. You raise as many troops as you possibly can for this final trial, and I will devote all my energies to assist and finish the war."

When Lincoln made this explanation Seward commented, "And the general would answer you, 'Yes, yes'; and the next day when you saw him again and pressed those views upon him, he would say, 'Yes, yes,' and so on forever, and would have done nothing at all." To this Lincoln rejoined, "At least I should have done my duty, and have stood clear before my own conscience."

But while the political major generals were bemoaning the state of affairs, and despairing of victory, Lincoln's military generals and admirals were making effective campaign speeches. These speeches were the thunder of Sherman's guns at Atlanta, the guns of Farragut at Mobile Bay, and of Sheridan at Winchester and Cedar Creek in the Shenandoah Valley. These resounding victories knocked the planks one by one out of the Democratic platform and made possible the election of Lincoln. "Sherman and Farragut," said Seward, in a speech at Washington, "have knocked the bottom out of the Chicago nominations."

One of the most effective campaign speeches was that made by a young officer of a Michigan Regiment. Speaking at a meeting in Michigan, Julius C. Burrows said, "Every shell from Sheridan's guns knocks a plank from the Chicago platform. Go to gallant Farragut, who, lashed to the mast amid a storm of lead and hail, went on to victory, and ask him if the war is a failure. Go to Sherman, who steadily advanced the old flag until he planted it on the principal stronghold in Georgia, and ask him if the war is a failure. Go to Grant, who is cutting every artery of the Rebellion, and ask if the war is a failure. Go to the gallant Sheridan, whose gleaming bayonets sent the rebel hordes like a whirlwind up the valley, and ask him if the war is a failure. Go ask your 'deluded brother,' Early, whose army was driven in squads to the mountains, if the war is a failure."\*

No; the war could hardly be called a failure. The stars in their courses were fighting against the Democrats. When the smoke of the battle lifted after the election on

\* W. D. Orcutt, *Burrows of Michigan and the Republican Party*, I, 119. New York, Longmans, Green & Company, 1917.

November 8th, McClellan had carried just three states—New Jersey, Delaware, and Kentucky. Of the 233 electoral votes, Lincoln had 212, McClellan 21. The total vote was Lincoln, 2,330,552; McClellan, 1,835,985. The soldiers cheered for McClellan, but most of them voted for Lincoln. A shift of 250,000 votes would have given McClellan the popular majority. A change of 60,000 votes in some of the doubtful states would have meant the election of McClellan. Thousands of illegal votes were undoubtedly cast for the Republican ticket by foreigners who had not resided in the country for the required length of time.\*

Lincoln's home county in Illinois, Sangamon, gave McClellan a majority of 376. In New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, the three states with the largest electoral votes, all of which Lincoln got, McClellan's popular vote was only 86,407 less than that of Lincoln.

The "bayonet vote" for Lincoln was 116,887, and for McClellan 33,748. This was probably not a true index of the army feeling towards McClellan, and had the soldiers who wished to vote the Democratic ticket been afforded the same encouragement and facilities as their comrades of Republican persuasion, the vote for McClellan would have been much larger.

A sample of the pressure put on military men by the Republican leaders was the case of E. W. Andrews, adjutant general to the commander of the defenses at Baltimore. Although a Democrat, and a McClellan man, Andrews was a strong Union man. For a time he had been pastor of the famous Broadway Tabernacle Congregational Church, New York. He had gone with a friend to a Democratic rally in September, where, unexpectedly, he was called upon to make a speech. In his brief remarks he expressed his high regard for McClellan as a soldier and said that he intended to vote for him in the coming election. The next day the Secretary of War, Stanton, issued an order, afterwards rescinded by Lincoln, that Andrews be mustered out of the service.

There was some anxiety as to how Pennsylvania would go in the Presidential election, as the October elections had gone against the Republican Party in that state. Mc-

\* William S. Myers, *The Republican Party, a History*, 151. New York and London, Century Company, 1928.



Clellan was a native of Pennsylvania and his managers were conducting a vigorous campaign in the state. Colonel Alexander McClure went down to Washington and had a midnight conference with Lincoln. McClure told Lincoln that Pennsylvania could not be carried by the home vote alone. "Well, what is to be done?" asked the President. McClure replied that the solution was a very simple and easy one. Grant's army was idle in front of Petersburg, and Sheridan would win no more victories in the Shenandoah Valley. Send 5,000 Pennsylvania soldiers home on furlough from each army, and the ticket would be victorious in Pennsylvania. Lincoln's face brightened at the suggestion, and McClure added, "Of course you can trust Grant, to make the suggestion to him to furlough 5,000 Pennsylvania troops for two weeks?" To McClure's surprise Lincoln made no answer, and a shadow fell across his face. Amazed at this, McClure said earnestly, "Surely, Mr. President, you can trust Grant with a confidential suggestion to furlough Pennsylvania troops?" Still Lincoln was silent. Whereupon, McClure added, "It can't be possible that Grant is not your friend; he can't be such an ingrate?" After some hesitation, Lincoln replied, "Well, McClure, I have no reason to believe that Grant prefers my election to that of McClellan." When he had recovered from his anger and astonishment, McClure, denouncing Grant for what seemed base ingratitude, said to Lincoln, "General Meade is a soldier and a gentleman. He is the commander of the Army of the Potomac. Send an order to him from yourself to furlough 5,000 Pennsylvania soldiers home for two weeks, and send that order with some trusted friend from the War Department with the suggestion to Meade that your agent be permitted to bring the order back with him." After some reflection, Lincoln answered, "I reckon that can be done."

"And what about Sheridan," asked McClure. Lincoln's sad face brightened at once, as he exclaimed, "Oh, Phil Sheridan; he's all right." The order was sent to Meade; but an intimation to Sheridan was sufficient. Ten thousand Pennsylvania troops came home and helped to swell the majority for Lincoln. McClure's cautious suggestion to Lincoln that he get back from Meade the order to furlough the Pennsylvania troops, was to protect Lin-

coln and his administration, in case the Democrats should claim that undue influence had been exerted upon the soldiers to vote for Lincoln.

This is a curious bit of military and political history. It reveals that Lincoln was willing to go over the heads of Grant and Meade to get several thousand men sent home from the army, then before Petersburg. It also reveals that Lincoln at that time felt doubtful as to Grant's earnest and loyal support. Long after this, when Grant was about to retire from the Presidency, McClure met him at Drexel's bank in Philadelphia. Anxious to learn what Grant's real feelings were towards Lincoln in the Presidential election of 1864, McClure reminded Grant of the silence he had maintained during the campaign, and that some of Lincoln's friends were not sure as to his preference in the contest. Grant at once replied that he desired the re-election of Lincoln, but studiously avoided giving any expression, public or private, to his preference, for, he said, "it would have been obviously unbecoming on my part to have given a public expression against a general whom I had succeeded as Commander-in-Chief of the army." \*

However reticent and neutral he may have been in the army as to the campaign for the Presidency, Grant furnished a powerful Republican campaign document in a letter written on August 16th to his chief backer in Congress, E. B. Washburne, of Illinois. This letter was published in the *New York Times* on September 19th. It was Grant's famous "cradle and grave" letter. "The rebels," he wrote, "have now in their ranks their last man. . . . A man lost by them cannot be replaced. They have robbed the cradle and the grave equally to get their present force. Besides what they lose in frequent skirmishes and battles, they are now losing from desertions and other causes at least one regiment per day. With this drain upon them the end is not far distant, if we will only be true to ourselves. Their only hope now is in a divided North. . . . They hope for a counter revolution; they hope the election of the peace candidate. In fact, like 'Micawber,' they hope for something to 'turn up.'" † This letter was written before the nomination of McClel-

\* McClure, *Lincoln and Men of War Times*, 205.

† Appleton's *American Annual Cyclopædia*, 1864, p. 134.

lan; but it is not likely that Grant had in any degree abated in his advocacy of the Union ticket.

But for the fatal blunder of the Chicago Convention in declaring the war a failure, the Democrats would probably have won the election. How was it that astute politicians in the ranks of the Democratic Party committed such a blunder? The answer is that they had been made over confident by the disputes and wrangling in the Union Party, and by the popular lethargy which seemed to be upon the North at that time as to Lincoln and the prosecution of the war. Thus they overshot the mark.

The campaign was one of great bitterness and personal denunciation. The Lincoln Catechism, on the Democratic side, asked, "Have the loyal leagues a prayer?" Then followed the prayer, which was a parody of the Lord's Prayer: "Father Abraham, who art in Washington, thy kingdom come, and overthrow the Republic; thy will be done, and the laws perish." The Republican Party answered with the Copperhead Catechism. One of its questions was: "What are the articles of thy belief?" and the answer, couched in the phraseology of the Apostles' Creed, was as follows: "I believe in one country, one constitution, one destiny, and in George B. McClellan, who was born of respectable parents, suffered under Edward M. Stanton; was refused reinforcements and descended into the swamps of the Chickahominy. He was driven therefrom by fire and by sword, and upon the seventh day of battle ascended Malvern Hill, from whence he withdrew to Harrison's Landing, where he rested many days. He returned to the Potomac, fought the battle of Antietam, and was then removed from his high command, and entered into oblivion; from this he shall one day arise and be elevated to the presidential chair, there to dispense his favors unto all who follow him."

The same Copperhead Catechism contained the following parody on Christ's Summary of the Ten Commandments. "Have any precepts been laid down for thy guidance?" "Yes, two." "What are they?" "Thou shalt hate the nigger with all thy heart, and with thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: thou shalt hate an abolitionist like the Devil." \*

\* Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, the War Years*, III, 269. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1939.

These two catechisms, the Democratic and the Republican, are interesting, not only as reflecting the opinions and passions of the day, but also as illustrating that singular combination of reverence and irreverence, of familiarity with things religious and what borders on the sacrilegious, which have been characteristic of the American mind.

In the campaign both McClellan and Lincoln were furiously assailed. The old libel that Lincoln, when driving over the battle field of Antietam where the dead were yet unburied, had asked Ward Lamon to sing an indecent song, was revived and circulated by Democratic newspapers. Commenting on the rancor of the campaign, Lincoln sorrowfully said, "It is singular that I, who am not a vindictive man, should always, except once, be before the people in election for canvasses marked for their bitterness."

This political battle in which McClellan measured himself against Lincoln is the one chapter in his career which is to be regretted. The student of his life will wish that McClellan had promptly declined the nomination of a party which had declared the war in which he himself had played so conspicuous a part a failure. Why did he not do this? A man without guile, he had ventured into a field full of dangers and pitfalls. He had been ungratefully dealt with by the administration and government. But personal humiliation and resentment probably played little part in McClellan's permitting himself to stand against Lincoln. The years which have passed since the Civil War, and the lasting results which were achieved, have almost totally eclipsed the principles of protest which actuated sincere patriots like McClellan and others of his school, who felt that constitutional principles were at stake, and that therefore the party in power must be defeated. McClellan was sincere in this attitude; and no doubt, with the call coming to him from all parts of the North, felt that he had an opportunity to do his country a signal service. He had been the idol of his army, and perhaps mistakenly fancied that he was as popular with the people as he had been with the soldiers of the Army of the Potomac. There was the memory, too, of other soldiers who had been elevated to the Presidency—Washington after the Revolutionary War; Taylor and Pierce after the Mexican War. And what shall we say of the

urge of a great ambition? Had McClellan been elected President of the United States in 1864 instead of Lincoln, he would have been in a position of power such as no President of the United States ever occupied; for, with his military record, he would have been at one and the same time a military dictator and a political dictator. McClellan sincerely believed, and so said, that as a military commander he had twice saved the country, in organizing the army after Bull Run, and again in the Antietam Campaign. Perhaps he thought that now he was destined to save the country a third time in the capacity of a military dictator and President. But fate ruled otherwise.

The day before the election in November, McClellan wrote out his resignation as a Major-General in the United States Army, and General Sheridan was promptly promoted to the vacancy. It was just twenty-two years since McClellan, a boy of fifteen, had appeared at the gates of the Academy at West Point. Not a long service; and yet they were years full of action, emotion, disappointment, and achievement.

During the campaign William H. Osborn, chairman of the board of directors of the Illinois Central Railroad, of which McClellan had once been the chief engineer and vice-president, told Abram S. Hewitt and a son of Peter Cooper, founder of Cooper Institute, that they were mistaken in their thought that McClellan would win in the coming election. He said that Lincoln would beat him because he had the courage and the energy to get things done, whereas McClellan, "while able and great in preparation," lacked the self-confidence necessary for victory. In this connection Osborn made a profound observation on the character of McClellan, when he said that even if he should be elected, he would not have the energy and decision to make a strong president. "When he was with the Illinois Railway," Osborn said, "he built the strongest bridges on the road, and yet 'hesitated' to give the order to send over the first train."\* Here Osborn seemed to come near to that mysterious something in McClellan's intellectual makeup which was the cause of his stopping short of the greatest achievements and failing to reap the harvest which he had sown and to make use of the victory he had won.

\* Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, the War Years*, III, 284. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1939.

### III

#### AFTERNOON AND EVENING

With his defeat for the Presidency, McClellan's association with great events came to an end. He was only thirty-eight years of age, and was to live until he was fifty-eight, but after the mighty stir of the Civil War and the part he took in it, all that followed was quiet and commonplace. For him now it was "Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars, the spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife," but not "Farewell the tranquil mind," and not "Farewell content." In January, following his defeat at the polls, McClellan sailed for Europe, and from his retreats in Germany, Italy, and Switzerland, watched the sunset of the rebellion and stormy sequel of Reconstruction. He returned to the United States in September, 1868. In 1877 he was elected governor of New Jersey.

The remaining years were spent in the quiet and happiness of his home on Orange Mountain in New Jersey. McClellan had purchased this home, adjoining that of his father-in-law, General R. B. Marcy, in the summer of 1863. He named it "Maywood," in honor of his daughter May. His winter home was in New York, where he and his family were prominent figures in the social life of the city. At his spacious Jersey home McClellan kept in touch with the affairs of the world and with his friends. He pursued the military studies in which he had always taken delight, studies illuminated now by the lamp of his own experience, and worked on his military memoirs, published after his death under the title, *McClellan's Own Story*. He was a connoisseur of ceramics, and had gathered trophies of art and literature about him from all parts of the world. Occasionally his neighbors saw him riding over the hills on his companion of the Civil War, "Daniel Wester." This faithful horse which had carried him safely through all his campaigns is buried under the trees of the estate.

On rare occasions McClellan walked in on a gathering of the survivors of the Army of the Potomac. When he

did so, men leaped to their feet, and the cheers which had once resounded through the gloomy defiles of the Peninsula and over the meadows of Antietam were heard again. His last public address was made on the battle field where he attained his highest fame, Antietam. The speech was delivered on Memorial Day, 1885, when he made his first visit to Antietam since the war. In this speech McClellan again gave expression to a favorite idea of his that the war was "brought about, and even made necessary by the extremists of the two sides. If the moderate men, North and South, could have controlled events, the dread arbitrament of arms might have been avoided." He warned the nation that the way to avoid such a conflict in the future was to keep within the bounds set by the Constitution and scrupulously observe the rights of the states. At the same time, he stated in noble terms, as he always had done, the significance of the preservation of the Union, and declared that he and his fellow Democrats of the North had fought for the Union because "we believed that it contained within itself the power of securing all possible good things to the people, and chiefly because we believed that we could see the hand of God guiding our fathers in the creation of a nation destined to become the greatest of which history bears record."

In this address McClellan paid a graceful tribute to General Grant, then dying of cancer at Mt. McGregor: "Thanks to the magnanimity of the great soldier who led the Union Army—now, alas, a prey to disease—there was nothing said or done to create personal hate, or to cause the blush of shame." Referring to the Army of the Potomac and the Army of Northern Virginia, McClellan said that he was glad that he had been permitted to live "until the fame and exploits of those magnanimous rivals, until the ability and virtue of Robert E. Lee, and the achievements of the Army of Virginia, as well as the heroism and renown of the Grand Army of the Potomac, have already become part of a common heritage of glory of all our people. Would I could meet here today the living presence of that splendid man and soldier, Robert E. Lee, in this very field, where in all honor and earnestness we strove as enemies, and even take him by the hand, as in the long past days when we served together in the land of the Montezumas." \*

\* *Baltimore Sun*, June 1, 1885.

When he was Governor of New Jersey, McClellan's old friend, S. L. M. Barlow, wrote him saying he had seen a magnificent new yacht called the *General McClellan*. "I am sure you are tired of being Governor, or anything else, for no matter what the title be, the result is always the same—work, work, unceasing. Now suppose we gather our household goods and sail away in this good ship, until we come to 'the land where it is always afternoon.'" But McClellan answered, "I fancy, Sam, that we will never reach that land where it is always afternoon in any ship built by mortal hands. Our fate is to work, and still to work, as long as there is any work left in us. . . . And I do not doubt that is best, for I can't help thinking that when we reach that other and far better land, we shall still have work to do throughout the long ages."

The "land where it is always afternoon" was nearer than he thought. At the end of a golden October day at his beautiful home on the Orange Mountain in 1885, McClellan conducted family prayers, as he was wont to do, for he was not less devout than his great antagonist, Lee, and retired to his room to write. These last written words were a tribute to the Army of the Potomac. He spoke of its Peninsula Campaign as "one of those magnificent episodes which dignify a nation's history, and are fit subject for the grandest efforts of the poet and the painter." Upon his heart was written the Army of the Potomac. His last thoughts were of that host.

Having written his tribute to the Army he had created and led in battles, McClellan went to bed, taking with him a book to read. Soon his family heard him groaning in pain. He was lifted out of bed and put in a chair and the doctor summoned. At three o'clock in the morning, October 29, 1885, McClellan, looking towards his wife, whispered to his physician, "Tell her I am better now." In another moment he was gone.

The funeral was held at the Madison Square Presbyterian Church, New York. Dr. Charles H. Parkhurst, in another decade famous as the battler against political corruption in New York, read the service. In deference to the wishes of Mrs. McClellan, and the frequently expressed desire of the general himself, the funeral, in contrast with that of General Grant in the previous July,



was without military pomp or circumstance. But among the pall bearers were General W. B. Franklin, who had commanded a corps on the Peninsula and at Antietam; General Winfield Scott Hancock, Hancock "the superb," who had won that sobriquet under McClellan on the Peninsula; and his own best-loved and ill-starred Fitz-John Porter. But there was another also who helped to carry the body down the steps of the church, one who had worn, not the Blue, but the Gray; General Joseph E. Johnston, McClellan's first antagonist on the Peninsula.

The body was laid to rest at Riverview Cemetery, Trenton, on a hill overlooking the Delaware River. On a November day, in 1862, McClellan had gone to Trenton in obedience to the order of the President, which directed him to turn over his command to Burnside "and repair to Trenton, New Jersey, reporting on your arrival at that place, by telegraph, for further orders." Now McClellan came again to Trenton; this time, to wait, not "for further orders," but for the Resurrection.

It was only twenty years after the war when McClellan died. But already most of the great figures of the war, political or military, had passed from the stage. Lincoln, who always had kind thoughts of McClellan, had fallen by Booth's pistol just when it was certain that the Union was saved. Stanton, McClellan's powerful and bitter foe, died as a Justice of the United States Supreme Court in 1869, a post to which he had been appointed by Grant just three days before his death. Meade, the victor of Gettysburg, broken-hearted because in 1869 Grant passed him by and made Sheridan the Lieutenant-General of the Army, slept with his fathers in Philadelphia in 1872. Thomas, the "Rock of Chickamauga," also nursing an incurable wound because Grant had made Sheridan Lieutenant-General of the Army, fell asleep at San Francisco in 1870. David Farragut, conqueror at Mobile Bay, died in 1870. Burnside, once McClellan's chief friend, died in 1881. Handsome Joe Hooker closed his eyes on the world in 1879. George Pickett, McClellan's classmate, and one who loved him to the end, the hero of the charge on the third day of Gettysburg, died at Norfolk in 1875. George Custer, McClellan's favorite aide with the golden curls, went out beneath a thunder of hoofs and a chorus

of Indian yells in the battle on the Big Horn in 1876. Lee, murmuring the name of one of his captains, had fallen asleep at his home on the shaded campus of Washington College in 1870; and just three months before McClellan received the Last Order, Grant, fighting a grim battle with cancer, finished the course at Mount McGregor.

With all of them, it was "better now."

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