

Eggleston George Cary

**The History of the Confederate
War, Its Causes and Its
Conduct. Volume 2 of 2**



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George Cary Eggleston

The History of the Confederate War, Its Causes and Its Conduct, Volume II (of 2) A Narrative and Critical History

CHAPTER XXXI

The Struggle for Emancipation

In the meantime great events were occurring which were in some respects more important in their bearing on the war than battles would have been. In these events the war recognized itself and adapted itself to its conditions.

From the beginning the abolitionists had clamorously and ceaselessly demanded of Mr. Lincoln that he should recognize the actual cause of the war by proclaiming freedom for the slaves at the South. There was no doubt in anybody's mind that the war was simply the culmination of that "irrepressible conflict" between the systems and sentiments of free and slave labor which had constituted the burden of the country's history for nearly half a century. If there had been no slavery there would have been no war.

It is true that a very large proportion of the Southern people regretted slavery, deprecated its existence, and earnestly desired to be rid of it. It is also true that the great mass of the Southerners were non-slaveholders, and that their fighting was done not for the perpetuation of that institution, in which they had no interest, but in assertion of those reserved rights of the individual states upon the maintenance of which they sincerely believed that the liberty of the people depended. These people desired to take their states out of the Union, not for the sake of slavery, but for the sake of that right of local self-government which they regarded as the fundamental condition of liberty among men.

On the other hand a large proportion of the Northern people cared little or nothing about slavery – many of them even approving the institution as the only practicable arrangement under which blacks and whites could live peaceably together, and as a condition eminently proper for the incapable black man. But these believed in the maintenance of the Union as a condition of liberty and progress, and were ready to sacrifice their lives and their possessions in behalf of that end.

Nevertheless it was clear from the beginning that in the last analysis, the war involved as its issue the maintenance of slavery, or the destruction of that system root and branch.

Personally Mr. Lincoln hated slavery and very earnestly desired its extermination. But, as he reminded those who beset him with unsolicited advice, he was restrained by his oath of office while they were free to advocate any principle or policy that might seem good in their eyes.

Moreover, he had upon him the tremendous task of preserving the Union and in aid of that supreme purpose he was ready to sacrifice all other considerations of what kind soever. In answer to an impassioned appeal from Horace Greeley in August, 1862, Mr. Lincoln set forth his attitude in these words:

"My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it. If I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it. And if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

At the beginning Mr. Lincoln had clearly seen the necessity of winning all the support he could to his war measures. He had seen that while practically the whole population of the North would stand by him in a war for the preservation of the Union, there must be a very great and

dangerous defection, should he make the war one for the extirpation of slavery in those states in which the institution existed under protection of the Federal Constitution. By thus resolutely refusing to make the war a crusade against slavery, and declaring – as he did in his official utterances – that it was no part of his purpose to interfere with the domestic institutions of any state, Mr. Lincoln had drawn to his support a vast body of influential citizens who would otherwise have opposed, and whose influence was great enough perhaps, if it had been offended, to have robbed him of the means of restoring the disrupted Union. Had he adopted the policy of the extremists at the North, had he begun by declaring war upon slavery rather than upon disunion, there is little doubt that Maryland, Kentucky and the whole strength of Missouri would have been thrown into the Confederate side of the scale with disastrous effect. Even New York, the financially and otherwise dominant Northern state, would have given him at best only a divided and ineffective allegiance, while in all the other states of the North, heavy minorities, and in some cases perhaps commanding majorities, would have opposed his measures and deprived him of that support in Congress and the country upon which depended his success in his effort to restore and perpetuate the Union.

By his policy of waging war at the outset only for the salvation of the nation's integrity he won to his measures the support of hundreds of thousands whose antagonism, or whose dissatisfied inactivity, would have threatened the National arms with defeat and disaster. So far-reaching indeed was the effect of his wiser policy that it gave to the country in its hour of sorest need the services of the great War Minister, Edwin M. Stanton, with all that his inclusion in the cabinet implied.

Mr. Stanton and Mr. Lincoln were not friends. They were very nearly enemies. Stanton was a Democrat of very pronounced views; Mr. Lincoln represented a party which Stanton had strongly and even bitterly assailed, holding it to be sectional in origin, impulse and purpose, and therefore scarcely less than a treasonable conspiracy against the Nation. But when Mr. Lincoln resolutely formulated his policy, as one that had for its sole object the restoration of the American Union of States and the preservation of the Nation from disruption, Mr. Stanton gladly consented to bear his share in the conduct of affairs with that end in view.

It was a daring thing for Mr. Lincoln to do, thus to place at the head of the War Department when actual war was on, a Democrat whose Democracy was everywhere known to be pronounced and aggressive. Mr. Lincoln foresaw that such an appointment would inevitably invite hostile criticism and probably active opposition. But Mr. Lincoln was a man of exalted moral courage. He needed the peculiar abilities of Edwin M. Stanton at the head of the War Department at a time when the war seemed almost everywhere to be going against the Union cause, and he needed Stanton's influence in the country. He therefore risked criticism and made the appointment as one that would tend better than any other to marshal the Federal strength into an effective force and perhaps extort victory at the last from a situation which had thus far brought mainly disappointment.

Perhaps the sagacity of the President had still another object in view in the appointment of Stanton. Mr. Lincoln was a shrewd and far-seeing politician. By appointing Stanton, his personal enemy and a distinguished Democrat, to the second most important place among his Constitutional advisers, he did more than in any other way he could have done, to reconcile Northern Democrats to his administration and to make of them earnest supporters instead of active antagonists of his measures for the preservation of the Union.

Mr. Lincoln had several opportunities to emphasize his attitude and purpose. The best of these was furnished by Horace Greeley's article, in reply to which he wrote the passages already quoted in this chapter.

But the matter was made more emphatic in other ways. When McClellan, early in the war, advanced into Western Virginia, that general issued a proclamation to all slaveholders there assuring them that it was no part of the Government's purpose or policy to interfere with the institution of slavery; that on the contrary the Federal forces would promptly restore to their masters any fugitive slaves who might escape to the Union lines, and that the Federal armies would

themselves suppress every attempt at slave insurrection which might be made in the interest of the Union cause. "Notwithstanding all that has been said by the traitors," he wrote, "to induce you to believe our advent among you will be signalized by an interference with your slaves, understand one thing clearly; 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."

There is not the smallest doubt that McClellan issued this proclamation with Mr. Lincoln's full approval and even probably by his direction. In any case it reflected the President's attitude and purpose at that time.

At an earlier date, in May, 1861, General B. F. Butler, then commanding at Fortress Monroe, was appealed to for the return of three fugitive slaves who had escaped into his lines. He refused upon a law point of great subtlety. He contended that as negro slaves – chattels of their owners – were capable of being made useful to the Confederates, not only as producers of food for the support of the Southern armies, but also as laborers upon the fortifications and the like, they were properly "contraband of war" precisely as arms and ammunition and foodstuffs are. From that time forward an escaping slave was called a "contraband," and in view of the astonishing lies told by such "contrabands," and the errors of judgment into which those imaginary bits of information often led the Northern press and people, there was at last a general ridiculing of all statements based upon the testimony of "intelligent contrabands."

Mr. Lincoln did not interfere with General Butler's policy of holding escaped slaves as merchandise "contraband of war." But in other cases he did interfere with the strong hand. In August, 1861, General Fremont, commanding in Missouri, issued a proclamation declaring free the slaves of every Confederate engaged in war against the Union. Mr. Lincoln repudiated the proclamation and himself abrogated its terms.

Seven months later, in March, 1862, Mr. Lincoln gravely asked Congress to adopt a policy of compensated emancipation. The war had already cost about a billion dollars, and it threatened to cost twice or thrice that sum in addition, with an uncertain result as the outcome.

Accordingly, Mr. Lincoln planned to end the struggle by a business-like negotiation. He asked Congress (March 6, 1862), to authorize the Government to lend pecuniary aid to every state which should adopt measures looking to the gradual abolition of slavery. He saw and felt that it would be cheaper for the Government to buy every slave in the land at twice his market value, than to prosecute the war upon the enormously costly scale which it had assumed. Incidentally, also, the making of such an arrangement, if it had been possible to make it, would have saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of men – the flower of the country's youth on both sides of the line.

It was a business-like and humane thought, and Congress assented to it. But it was based upon the mistaken notion that the Confederates were fighting primarily for their property rights in slaves. It ignored the supremely important fact that the war was costing the Southern people incalculably more than double the value of all the slaves owned in those states. It failed to recognize the equally important fact that, rightly or wrongly, the Southern people sincerely believed themselves to be contending for liberty, for the constitutional rights of the states, for the principle of local self-government; that they were contending against that basilar principle of imperialistic oppression – the government of communities by a power outside of themselves. To Mr. Lincoln's own dictum that "no man is good enough to govern any other man without that other man's consent" they had added the corollary that no community and no nation is good enough to govern any other community without that other's consent. They were fighting, as they confidently believed, for the fundamental principle of self-government among men, and to that cause they were ready to make sacrifice of slavery as cheerfully and as heroically as they were already making sacrifice of all else that they held dear.

Mr. Lincoln misunderstood them and misinterpreted their attitude and their condition of mind. If they had been offered ten thousand dollars apiece for all their slaves – worth on the average

only a few hundreds at most – they would have rejected the offer angrily as a tendered bribe to induce them to give up and betray that cause of human liberty, states' rights, and the right of local self-government, in behalf of which they had taken up arms.

To such men, inspired by such beliefs and engaged in such a cause, no price could offer the smallest temptation. Mr. Lincoln had misunderstood the Southern people, as they had misunderstood him. Their warfare had no element of commercialism or of greed in it, precisely as his was directed not, as they supposed, to the destruction of State autonomy, but to the sole object of restoring and perpetuating the American Union. As fanaticism in antagonism to slavery could not swerve him, so considerations of merely pecuniary advantage did not and could not influence them. His proposal, which was in effect, to buy all the negroes in the South, made no more impression upon the Southern mind than would a proposal to purchase their wives and children, or their right to sign their own names.

It was under this misapprehension of Southern sentiment that Mr. Lincoln for a space rejected every suggestion of negro emancipation and sought to hold his generals in the field to a policy of complete non-interference with slavery in the Southern States.

We have seen in what fashion he dealt with General Fremont's proclamation of emancipation in Missouri. On the twelfth of April, 1862, General David Hunter, in command of the forces on the South Carolina coast, issued a general order to the effect that all slaves within his immediate jurisdiction should be confiscated as contraband of war, and instantly set free. On the ninth of May he issued another general order in which he declared all negroes resident in South Carolina, Georgia and Florida to be free men.

Ten days later Mr. Lincoln annulled these orders absolutely by executive command, declaring that the question of the emancipation of slaves was one which he reserved to himself, and forbidding all generals in the field to deal with it in any way, direct or indirect.

Congress had legislated on the subject in a very cautious and hesitating fashion. In August, 1861, it had passed an act authorizing military commanders to seize and hold all negro slaves found actually employed in the military service of the Confederacy with the knowledge and consent of their owners. But the act stipulated that slaves so confiscated, should not be set free but should be held subject to the future disposal of the Federal courts.

The proceedings of military officers in the field with respect to this matter varied according to the views and temper of each. Mr. Lincoln's revocation of Fremont's orders led to that General's resignation. General Hunter's act in enlisting a regiment of fugitive slaves who had fled into his lines, gave great alarm in Congress and in the country, lest the war should be diverted from its Union-saving purpose and converted into a crusade for the forcible abolition of slavery, involving all the horrors of a servile insurrection on the part of slaves who, in many parts of the South, were scarcely better than half savages.

General Williams, commanding the Department of the Gulf, sought to solve the difficulty by the simple process of turning all fugitive slaves out of his camps, thus avoiding the necessity of deciding whether or not he would permit masters to come within his lines for the purpose of recapturing their slaves. Two colonels refused to obey this order, and were promptly removed from their commands in consequence.

Thus the "irrepressible conflict" of sentiment on the subject of property in slaves divided the Federal army and sorely vexed the country as it had done for nearly half a century before.

To Mr. Lincoln it brought perplexities of the gravest sort. It embarrassed him very greatly in his effort to hold the war steadily to the purpose he had marked out for it. It defeated all his hopes of persuading the South to believe that the Government was trying to save or restore the Union, and that the administration was sincere in its declaration of a fixed purpose not to interfere with the institution of slavery in states where it constitutionally existed or to impair in any way

the autonomy of those states. Such pledges could make no appeal to the minds of Southern men in face of the actual interferences attempted, often successfully, by commanders in the field.

Worse still, this irreconcilable division of opinion and diversity of action, threatened to deprive the administration of that strong support at the North which Mr. Lincoln deemed necessary to a successful prosecution of the war. It threatened to alienate that great body of men at the North who were implacably opposed to abolitionism and who held firmly to the belief that the autonomy of the States was necessary to the maintenance of liberty, but who were ready enough to make sacrifice of blood and treasure in aid of a war waged solely for the preservation of the Union.

In this embarrassing situation Mr. Lincoln made a second attempt to cripple Southern resistance by securing emancipation by purchase in the border states, thus cutting off all hope on the part of the South that those states would ever secede, and at the same time in some degree satisfying the clamor of the abolitionists. He called the border-state Congressmen about him and earnestly, even passionately urged them to vote in Congress for an act pledging the Government to pay to every state that should decree emancipation the full value of all the slaves held in such state at the time the census of 1860 was taken. He especially besought these representatives of border slave states to persuade their constituents to a willing acceptance of these terms.

Nothing of any practical value came of this effort. It resulted only in stimulating on the part of the Abolitionists that aggressive insistence upon universal emancipation by military force which was so sorely embarrassing to the President.

It was soon afterwards (August 19, 1862), that Horace Greeley published his open letter entitled "The Prayer of Twenty Millions" to which Mr. Lincoln replied, setting forth his policy and purpose, in words already quoted in this chapter: "My paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it. If I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it. And if I could do it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that."

But all this while Mr. Lincoln contemplated the emancipation of the slaves by executive proclamation as a war measure to be resorted to whenever it should seem to him likely to be effective. In the preceding month of July he had drawn up a proclamation of emancipation, and had read it to his cabinet. But he had laid it aside, believing that the time was not yet ripe. The Confederates seemed at that time at high tide of military success. Their armies, victorious and aggressive, were overthrowing one Federal force after another, and putting Washington itself upon an uncertain defense. It was the conviction both of Mr. Lincoln and of Mr. Seward, that to issue an emancipation proclamation under such circumstances would not only seem ridiculous in the eyes of the world but would be everywhere interpreted as a despairing manifestation of conscious weakness, the futile outcry of failure. He must wait for victories before taking this step.

But when after Antietam, Lee withdrew from Maryland and abandoned his campaign against the national capital, Mr. Lincoln decided to assume the rôle of a victor, dictating terms which he held himself strong enough to enforce.

Accordingly on September 22, 1862, he issued a proclamation declaring that on the first of January, 1863, all slaves held in those states or parts of states which should at that time be still in rebellion should be then and forever afterwards free.

This was at once a threat and a promise.

It is a matter of curious speculation to consider what would have been the situation if the Southern States had submitted themselves before the beginning of 1863. In that event the proclamation of freedom to slaves within their borders would have been of no effect, inasmuch as it applied only to states remaining at war. A second executive proclamation of emancipation would have had no war necessity to justify or even to excuse it. For the Constitution conferred upon the President no power to emancipate slaves. It was only on the plea of war necessity that this power

could be remotely and speculatively inferred, and that war necessity would have passed completely away had the war itself come to an end before the date set for the enforcement of the threat.

Perhaps it was in view of this very remote contingency that Mr. Lincoln at that time urged upon Congress the adoption of a constitutional amendment forbidding slavery anywhere within the borders of the Union.

Congress did not act upon the recommendation at that time, and on the first of January, 1863, Mr. Lincoln issued his final proclamation of emancipation, naming the states and parts of states in which rebellion was held then to exist, and declaring free all the slaves within those states and parts of states. It did not apply to those slave states which had not joined the Confederacy, and, except that Maryland voluntarily freed her slaves near the end of the war, the institution remained lawful in such states as had not seceded, and actually continued to exist there until December 18, 1865, when the ratification of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution was officially proclaimed by Mr. Lincoln's successor.

So far as securing actual liberty to slaves within the Confederate lines was concerned, the emancipation proclamations had no effect whatever. They were probably not expected to have any. But they had an important bearing upon the conduct of the war and the state of the public mind. They made an end of all doubt about what Federal commanders in the field should do with slaves escaping to their lines. They satisfied the strong and growing abolitionist sentiment at the North, and they had some effect in alienating war Democrats and a considerable number of Republicans from the Federal cause, thus checking enlistments in some quarters, and impairing the administration's support.

This effect was far less marked than it would have been had Mr. Lincoln issued an emancipation proclamation earlier in the war when he was first urged to do so. Nevertheless the political effect was notable.

In the autumn elections there was a heavy falling off in Republican majorities, while in some important states Democrats relentlessly opposed to the administration and all its policies were elected to replace Republicans in office. This was notably the case in New York, where Horatio Seymour succeeded the Republican governor, E. D. Morgan, and a sentiment in hostility to the administration and to the war itself grew up, which was afterwards reflected in bloody riots when the time came for a draft of men for the army.

In Europe and particularly in England, the emancipation proclamation went far to change a former friendship for the Confederacy, which had at times threatened danger, into a strong moral support for the Federal cause.

But whatever moral and political results, for or against the Lincoln administration, this act may have produced, it had no perceptible effect upon the actual conduct of the war. That was still to be fought out at the cost of millions of treasure and multitudes of lives. Many of its greatest battles were still to come and its most important campaigns were yet to be fought out.

CHAPTER XXXII

Burnside's Fredericksburg Campaign

It has already been related that at the end of the battle of Sharpsburg, or Antietam, neither army cared to renew the contest. The two confronted each other within deadly firing distance for the space of twenty-four hours, doing nothing whatever. Apparently each had so far had enough of such fighting that neither cared to take the initiative for its renewal, yet each was ready enough to meet the other should that other care to assail it.

At the end of this waiting time Lee slowly retired towards the Potomac, McClellan not caring to pursue, and finally crossing the river the Confederates went into camp near Winchester.

So far from planning either to press Lee or to move by some other route upon Richmond, McClellan seems to have thought that he had done quite all that could be expected of him, in turning back the Confederate invasion of the region north of the Potomac. It appears from his dispatches to Mr. Lincoln that he purposed with his enormously superior army to take the defensive, post himself on the Potomac and stand ready to meet any second attempt that Lee might make to invade the North or to strike at Washington. Even for such a service he did not deem his army large enough, though it greatly outnumbered Lee's, or sufficiently well equipped, though its equipment was notably superior to any that its adversary ever had, either before or after that time.

Instead of planning a campaign McClellan devoted himself to the making of multitudinous requisitions and ceaseless complaints.

Precious weeks of perfect campaigning weather were thus wasted, McClellan lying idly upon the north bank of the Potomac while Lee rested and reinforced his army near Winchester.

But if McClellan did nothing Lee was not so supine. He did not indeed begin a new campaign or bring on a battle, but he again awakened apprehension of invasion at the North by sending Stuart – the same cavalier who had ridden around McClellan's army near Richmond – to make a raid into Maryland and Pennsylvania which seemed for the time at least to be the precursor of a new movement of invasion by the Confederates.

On the tenth of October, with 1,800 picked cavalry men and some light field-pieces, Stuart crossed the river at Williamsport, above McClellan's position, made a rapid march to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, and thence swept eastward and southward, riding unmolested entirely around McClellan and returning to Virginia on the thirteenth by passing the river again below Harper's Ferry.

He brought off a rich store of ammunition, supplies and many valuable horses, but the capture of these was neither the primary object nor the chief result of the daring raid. It was intended for moral effect, and it wrought such effect in a marked degree. It awakened apprehension at the North, and it showed Lee to be still capable of an aggressiveness of which McClellan was obviously very greatly in fear. At the North as well as at the South it gave to the situation, after the late campaign, the appearance of one in which the Confederates seemed in better condition for further operations than their adversaries were.

Mr. Lincoln renewed his urgency for McClellan's advance, and finally succeeded in inducing him to cross the river and to seem at least to take the offensive. But after crossing into Virginia, McClellan did nothing effective. The history of Mr. Lincoln's effort to set the splendid Army of the Potomac in motion again, and the correspondence incident to that effort, are interesting, but they do not come within the purview of this present work.

Wearying at last of the inactivity Lincoln ordered General Burnside to take command of the Army of the Potomac, as McClellan's successor, and the new commander decided to move down the left bank of the Rappahannock and attempt a march upon Richmond by a short route.

Establishing his base of supplies at Aquia creek on the Potomac, only a few miles from Fredericksburg, with a railroad connection between, Burnside sat down on the north side of the Rappahannock, opposite Fredericksburg, the last of his columns reaching that point on the twentieth of November. Lee, moving upon a parallel line, reached Fredericksburg about the same time, and formed his lines to resist his enemy's contemplated advance.

Lee's army at that time numbered about 68,000 men, but before the battle it was swelled by reinforcements to nearly 80,000, and again reduced by detachments, to 68,000 or less. Burnside's force numbered about 120,000, with 147 guns, about twice Lee's strength in artillery.

Fredericksburg lies upon fairly level ground, immediately upon the southern bank of the Rappahannock, which at that point is not fordable at any season. In rear of the town and within cannon range, there is a line of bold hills beginning upon the river above the city and stretching in a curve around the town to the eastward where they gradually diminish in height and finally disappear.

Lee seized upon these hills and hurriedly fortified them, placing his artillery in effective positions and shielding his men with strong earthworks. Here he concentrated the greater part of his army under Longstreet on the left or west, and Jackson on the right or east, while D. H. Hill, with the remainder of the Confederate army was posted at Port Royal, twenty miles further down the river, eastward, to meet and repel any attempt that might be made to cross there and turn the flank of Lee's position.

This detachment of Hill with a strong force to a point so far away as to forbid his direct coöperation with the rest of the army during the battle, seriously diminished Lee's effective strength, but the advantage of position which he possessed and the advantage of fighting behind breastworks which his enemy must assail from the open, compensated him somewhat.

Burnside's first difficult task was to get his army across the river. This he could do only by the use of frail pontoon bridges of which he purposed to lay five – three in front of the city and two below. The pontoon trains were slow in arriving, and when they came it was for a time impossible to put the pontoons into position, owing to the destructive fire of the sleepless sharpshooters Lee had posted along the banks to interfere with the work. In consequence of this and other difficulties it was not until the tenth of December that a crossing was made which Burnside had confidently expected to make more than a fortnight earlier.

In the meanwhile Lee had busied himself night and day in strengthening his position in every possible way, and he was soon fully prepared for the contest.

Burnside's first assault was made about ten o'clock on the morning of December 13. It was made in two columns, striking simultaneously, the one against Lee's right and the other against his left. The assault upon his right was at first attended with a partial success, but Jackson hurried troops to the breach and quickly hurled the assailants back in confusion, pursuing them nearly to the river's bank where a heavy artillery fire checked his progress. The Federal assault on that part of the Confederate line was not renewed during the day.

From official reports and otherwise, it appears that Burnside at first intended to direct his main attack upon this right wing of Lee's army. The hills there were lower and far less defensible than were those on the Confederate left, and offered, certainly, a much more tempting opportunity to the Federal commander. It was without doubt the weakest point in Lee's line – the point which the Federals might have assailed with greatest hope of success or at least of inflicting the heaviest loss upon their foes. But, for some reason which has never been clearly explained, Burnside changed his plan of battle almost at the last moment, and directed his heaviest columns against Marye's Heights, the well-nigh impregnable stronghold of Lee's left wing. Here Lee had his batteries and a host of infantry strongly posted in formidable earthworks on top of the hills, in a position of great advantage.

For a body of troops to charge up Marye's Heights, bristling as they did with hostile and well served cannon, and defended by tens of thousands of veteran riflemen, was a task that might well have appalled even such sturdy fighters as composed the Army of the Potomac. But the matter was made more difficult by another peculiarity of the ground. Looked at from below, the hill seemed to present a smooth surface, ascending gently toward the works that defended it. But this appearance was deceptive. On the side of the hill well in advance of Lee's main line, and running athwart the Federal line of advance, there was a sunken road, faced with a stone wall, which formed as perfect a breastwork as any that an engineer could have constructed there. Into this sunken road Lee threw about two thousand riflemen, who lay there perfectly concealed from view and as well protected against adverse fire as men using rifles can be. Their orders were to withhold their fire until the enemy charging up the slope under a destructive cannonade from above, and thinking of the works at the top as the first obstacle to be encountered, should reach a point a score or so of yards in front of the sunken road, whence they could be swept away like dust before a housemaid's broom. It was as deadly a trap as could be imagined, and its concealment was perfect. Yet when the Federal general decided to make his main attack upon Lee's left, there was no course open to him but to take this doubly defended hill by assault or suffer fearful disaster, as he did, in a futile attempt to do so. For the nature of the ground on Lee's farther left rendered it impossible to turn his flank or try conclusions with him otherwise than by a direct charge upon Marye's Heights.

The first attack was made by French's division. It was already suffering terribly under the fire from the hilltop, when it came upon the sunken road and was instantly swept away by a hailstorm of bullets. Retiring, French left about one half of his men on the field, dead or wounded.

Hancock charged next with five thousand men and was driven back with a loss of two thousand or more.

The exact nature of the case was not even yet understood. The position in the sunken road was still masked to the Federal commanders. But French's and Hancock's attempts had conclusively shown that no courage, no determination, no heroism however high, could enable mortal men to carry that hill by assault. Nevertheless Burnside persisted where a wiser leader would either have withdrawn or have changed his plan of battle. He sent another, and another, and still another division into that fire of hell, only to see them instantly hurled back, shattered fragments of most gallant commands, beaten, broken and well-nigh destroyed by reason of a blundering obstinacy on the part of their commanding general.

Finally Hooker was ordered to make another attempt – the sixth of those futile and bloody charges. He pointed out to Burnside the uselessness of the effort and begged him to abandon without further needless sacrifice of gallant men's lives, an operation which had already been proved to be hopeless.

In a blind rage Burnside seemed unable to comprehend what his subordinates saw clearly enough. He insisted upon sending Hooker's command also into that slaughter pen. They rushed forward, – four thousand as brave fellows as ever fought in battle – and a few minutes later seventeen hundred of them lay stretched upon the field, their bodies riddled with Confederate bullets, while their comrades, unable to achieve the impossible, fell back as the remnants of the other divisions had done before.

The Confederate war furnished two conspicuous manifestations of supreme heroism on the part of large bodies of men – one upon one side, the other upon the other. Pickett's charge at Gettysburg was one of these. This series of six charges up Marye's Heights was the other.

When the sixth assault ended as its predecessors had done, the time had manifestly come to end the battle. A wiser commander would have ended it much earlier, indeed. Having lost 12,353 men in an ill-directed contest Burnside withdrew to the river bank, baffled and beaten beyond recovery.

The Army of the Potomac had won all the glory for itself that heroic conduct can give in the absence of victory, but it had need now of rest, recruitment and a new commander.

Burnside was clearly not equal to the task of commanding such an army in a contest with such an adversary as Robert E. Lee. He had himself passed precisely that judgment upon his own capacities when on three former occasions the command of the Army of the Potomac was offered to him. But now that he had accepted that command and had led to disastrous defeat what somebody at the time characterized as "the finest army on the planet," disappointment and chagrin seem for the moment to have unseated his reason. He refused to recognize the extent of the disaster he had suffered or the conspicuousness and completeness of his defeat. His army was torn and broken as no other great army on either side had been before. It was weary with futile battling, discouraged by a failure that had involved terrible losses, and the fact that it was not demoralized was due only to the splendid courage and devotion of the soldiers themselves. Worse than all it had lost confidence in the capacity of its leader.

Nevertheless Burnside, reckless of any consequences that might follow, was determined that night to renew the battle on the following morning, himself leading his own former corps, the Ninth, in still another desperate attempt to carry Marye's Heights. Earnest protests and persuasions succeeded at last in inducing him to abandon this purpose, and after remaining inactive for a day on the bank of the river, he withdrew his army, under cover of night, to the other side of the river and the fearfully disastrous Fredericksburg campaign was at an end.

Military critics have wondered much that Lee, whose loss in the battle had been only 5,309 men, and whose troops were almost wild with the enthusiasm of victory, permitted his badly beaten adversary to remain unmolested on the southern bank of the stream for twenty-four hours and then quietly to retire. Burnside's position and the condition of his army strongly invited attack. He had a wide and deep river behind him, with only a frail pontoon bridge spanning it. Had he been defeated there by assault on the part of the victors there would have been no way of escape open to him. Destruction or surrender must have followed.

On the other hand, his force still heavily outnumbered Lee's and it was in no way demoralized. Defeated and discouraged as it was its spirit was unbroken, and had Lee left his works and assailed it in the open, the issue of the conflict might have been very uncertain. It is alleged that Lee's lieutenants urged a tempestuous assault, and that Lee's chief reason for rejecting the advice was born of his hope that Burnside would himself on the next day renew the attempt to dislodge the Confederates from their well-nigh impregnable position.

However that may be, Lee did not in fact assume the offensive; Burnside retired during darkness to the farther side of the river and the two armies settled themselves in winter quarters, Lee presently sending large bodies of men to the southwest to reinforce the armies there, where active warfare was in progress, and still more active warfare threatened.

The military operations of the season that thus closed had been in every way remarkable. Four distinct campaigns had been fought, all of them severe, and all marked by brilliant strategy and heroic conduct on the part of the troops on either side. McClellan's siege of Richmond, which had filled the South with gloomy apprehension, had been broken in a series of bloody and impressive battles, and the Army of the Potomac had been forced to withdraw for the defense of Washington.

Pope's campaign with his Army of Virginia had been conspicuously brought to naught by brilliant strategy and desperate fighting.

Lee's invasion of Maryland had for a time reversed the former order of things, putting the Federals on the defensive. It had ended at last in a battle so indecisive that both sides claimed it as a victory. Finally Burnside's well planned but badly executed Fredericksburg campaign had resulted in very conspicuous defeat and failure after one of the bloodiest battles of the war.

The net result of the four campaigns was one of very great advantage to the Confederates. The gloomy apprehension with which they had looked forward to that summer's military operations

was changed to exultant joy and confidence as they contemplated the situation when the work of the year was over. They had discovered a commander for whom their adversary had as yet found no match in his mastery of the art of war. They were reinspired by the results achieved and were full of confidence for the future.

On the other side, the North rejoiced in the splendid fighting quality of the Army of the Potomac, as demonstrated in the Seven Days' battles, at Manassas, at Antietam, and most of all, at Fredericksburg. The danger which at one time seemed so imminently to threaten their capital and the cities farther north, had been averted, and they had confidence that the coming spring would bring results in Virginia as pleasing to them as those that had been achieved by Grant in the west during the year that was coming to an end.

The struggle of the giants had but just begun.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Halleck's Treatment of Grant

When Halleck assumed command at Pittsburg Landing after the battle of Shiloh he seemed intent, not only upon depriving Grant of the privilege of vigorously following up the victory he had won but also upon "snubbing," ignoring and humiliating that successful general in every way possible. If Grant's tremendous and at last successful struggle to force Beauregard back to his defenses at Corinth had been a crime instead of a heroic achievement, his commanding general could scarcely have punished it in more annoying and humiliating ways than he did.

It was a sore affliction to Grant to have command taken from him at the moment when he saw before him a perfect opportunity to pluck the ripe fruits of his obstinate fighting by pressing forward in overwhelming force for the completion of the conquest for which that fighting had provided an easy and certain way. It was still more severely painful to him to sit still and see all the easy possibilities of the situation he had created, deliberately thrown away by martinet incapacity.

To a man like General Grant, simple minded and sincere, a man whose sole ambition was to force the war to a successful conclusion within the briefest possible time, and whose vigor in action seemed to make that result certain with the masterful means now in hand at Pittsburg Landing, this foolish frittering away of the opportunity he had created by his splendid fighting, must have been the most painful of all the punishments which Halleck at that time inflicted upon him for his impertinence in wresting a great victory from a calamitous defeat, before his superior officer could reach the field and reap the credit for himself.

But Halleck had other humiliations in store for his impertinently successful lieutenant the late Galena clerk, and the now admired and applauded officer of volunteers. Grant even yet had no rank in the regular army, and he had ventured to advise the temporary dissolution of the regular army in order that the skill and training of its officers might be utilized – with capacity alone as the test – in making the volunteers, who after all constituted the country's chief reliance for its salvation, as effective in the field as if they had been regulars.

We have seen how, after Grant's conquest of Forts Henry and Donelson, and the complete rupture of the first Confederate line of defense, Halleck forbade him to gather the fruits of his victory, suspended him from command and seemingly threatened him with arrest. After Shiloh it would not have been prudent for Halleck again to suggest the arrest of a general whose name was on every lip as that of the one Federal commander who was capable of winning victories while all others were meeting conspicuous defeats. But Halleck had other arrows in his quiver. He left Grant as nominally his second in command, and, in form at least, assigned him specifically to the command of the right wing of the army. But he proceeded from the beginning to ignore his second in command. He summoned him to none of those councils and consultations to which he invited Grant's own subordinates. Even in the matter of orders to that wing of the army which he had technically placed in Grant's charge, he ignored all the courtesies and flagrantly violated all the usages of war, by sending his commands directly to division generals, instead of sending them through General Grant's headquarters – thus rivaling the discourtesy of Judah P. Benjamin in his dealings with Stonewall Jackson. This left Grant in humiliating ignorance even of the orders issued to divisions which were supposed to be under his command, and for whose movements and conduct he was held responsible. His situation was unendurable, even to a man of his robust habits of mind, and by way of relief he finally asked permission to establish his headquarters as District Commander, at Memphis, a city which had by that time come into Federal control.

These details are recited here, not by way of apology or defense of General Grant. His fame needs no defense, and very certainly his conduct in war needs no apology. Moreover all these

circumstances, and others that reflect still more unfavorably upon Halleck's extraordinary treatment of the only Federal general who at that period of the war seemed able to achieve victories, are calmly and fully set forth in General Grant's own memoirs. But such details are necessary here, in explanation of that fair and full, and impartial history of the Confederate war, which is intended in these volumes.

There were repeated occasions in the course of the struggle when vigor of generalship on the one side or upon the other, would very certainly have brought the war to an early conclusion, sparing both sides the tremendous sacrifices which a lack of capable generalship in the end entailed upon both.

This post-Shiloh imbecility was one of those conspicuous, and conspicuously neglected occasions. There is not room for doubt that if Halleck had remained in his St. Louis headquarters, and had permitted Grant with the now combined armies of himself, Buell and Pope, to prosecute an instant and vigorous campaign, the whole Mississippi Valley would have been speedily brought under Federal control, with all the consequences that such a conquest must have involved.

After the battle of Shiloh Grant had by his own estimate 120,000 men at and near Pittsburg Landing, or within easy call. For in addition to Buell's army Pope had reinforced him with 30,000 men. Beauregard had about 30,000 effectives at Corinth – or after Van Dorn reinforced him, perhaps 47,000. Grant's own expert opinion expressed in print, is that within two days he could and would – if let alone – have captured Corinth, driving the Confederate forces there into disorderly retreat if not compelling their surrender, and capturing all their stores. He would then have been in position to move in overwhelming force upon Vicksburg and Port Hudson, points not yet strongly fortified or heavily garrisoned. Capturing them, as he easily could have done, he would have made the Federals masters of the Mississippi above Baton Rouge, while Farragut was making himself master of all the lower reaches of the river. In the meanwhile Grant would have prevented that concentration and recruitment of Beauregard's army for which Halleck gave generous leisure to his enemy by delaying his own advance from Pittsburg Landing for three weeks of preparation and then consuming an entire month in pushing a force of three men to his adversary's one over an unobstructed and undefended space of less than twenty miles only to find when he got to his destination that his enemy, greatly strengthened, had in leisurely fashion retired to another position, taking with him every pound of provisions and every round of ammunition he possessed.

Here were seven of the most precious weeks of the war lost, and the loss is very inadequately measured by that statement. It is not too much to say that Halleck's extraordinary deliberation and delay alone made possible and certain all the terrible fighting and all the losses of human life incident to the Vicksburg campaign, just as the paralyzing incapacity of his orders after the capture of Fort Donelson, made needlessly possible and destructively certain the tremendous battling of the Confederates at a later period at Nashville, Chattanooga, Franklin, Lookout Mountain, Chickamauga and in the Atlanta campaign.

If military etiquette upon either of these occasions had permitted General Grant, with the support his words would undoubtedly have had from Sherman, Buell and Thomas, to set forth clearly the conditions, needs, and opportunities in the Western Department, the authorities at Washington would pretty certainly have set Halleck's embarrassing authority aside, thus giving demonstrated capacity the license it desired to achieve results of incalculable benefit to the National arms. But Halleck alone of all the generals in that quarter enjoyed the privilege of direct communication with the War Department, and Halleck so adroitly represented – perhaps he did not consciously or intentionally misrepresent – the facts of the situation, that presently, on the eleventh of July, he was appointed to succeed McClellan as Commander in Chief of all the Union armies.

This was perhaps the most astonishing, not to say the most unwise, appointment made on either side during the entire course of the war, unless we except Mr. Jefferson Davis's appointment

of Pemberton after he had lost Vicksburg, to the position of military adviser of himself, with apparent authority to control and command even Robert E. Lee.

In the meanwhile Halleck had done all that was possible to him to humiliate General Grant and to deny him everything in the shape of opportunity. General Grant, in his "Memoirs," (page 219), pathetically says:

Although next to him [Halleck] in rank, and nominally in command of my old district and army, I was ignored as much as if I had been at the most distant point of territory within my jurisdiction; and although I was in command of all the troops engaged at Shiloh, I was not permitted to see one of the reports of General Buell or his subordinates in that battle until they were published by the War Department long after the event.

Again on page 225, General Grant tells of an occasion when he suggested a military movement to General Halleck – a thing that the second in command might very well have been expected to do. After explaining to his readers what his suggestion was, General Grant adds: "I was silenced so quickly that I felt that possibly I had suggested an unmilitary movement."

Yet when Halleck was ordered to Washington to assume chief command he saw clearly that it would not be prudent in the existing state of the public mind to make any other than Grant the commander at Corinth. He therefore sent word to Grant in Memphis to report at Corinth. But he said nothing whatever to him about his own appointment to the command of all the armies, or about his intended departure for Washington, or even about his intention that Grant should assume command at Corinth. He merely directed him to report there, leaving it entirely to uninformed conjecture whether he was merely to report in person for some instruction or was to remove his headquarters from Memphis to that point. In this uncertainty Grant telegraphed asking whether or not he was to take his staff with him. To this Halleck curtly and discourteously replied: "This place will be your headquarters. You can judge for yourself."

CHAPTER XXXIV

Grant at Corinth

When Grant took command at Corinth he found matters in an exceedingly confused and embarrassing condition. In the first place his authority was so ill defined that he could do nothing of importance without risk of subjecting himself to censure and perhaps even to a trial by court martial for having exceeded his authority, while if he left anything undone by reason of his uncertainty as to the scope of his command, he must do so at equal risk of censure or court martial for neglect.

Halleck had been in command of the entire department and of all the forces within its borders. In leaving General Grant as his successor he did not invest him with a similarly comprehensive authority. Neither did he make it clear that such authority was denied to him. So far as his orders indicated Grant was still only a district commander, having authority only over troops within the district of West Tennessee, whose eastern boundary was the Cumberland river, beyond which Halleck had sent a large part of the forces that had been under his command at Corinth. And yet Grant was practically a department commander. His own exposition of the situation is so clear, succinct and complete, that no paraphrase can better it or equal it. On page 233 *et seq.* of his "Memoirs," General Grant wrote:

I left Memphis for my new field without delay and reached Corinth on the fifteenth of the month. General Halleck remained until the seventeenth of July; but he was very uncommunicative, and gave me no information as to what I had been called to Corinth for. When General Halleck left to assume the duties of general-in-chief I remained in command of the District of West Tennessee. Practically I became a department commander because no one was assigned to that position over me, and I made my reports direct to the General-in-chief; but I was not assigned to the position of department commander until the twenty-fifth of October. General Halleck, while commanding the Department of the Mississippi, had had control as far east as a line drawn from Chattanooga north. My district only embraced West Tennessee and Kentucky west of the Cumberland river. Buell, with the Army of the Ohio, had as previously stated, been ordered east towards Chattanooga, with instructions to repair the Memphis and Charleston railroad as he advanced. Troops had been sent North by Halleck along the line of the Mobile and Ohio railroad to put it in repair as far as Columbus. Other troops were stationed on the [Mississippi Central] railroad from Jackson, Tennessee, to Grand Junction, and still others on the road west to Memphis. The remainder of the magnificent army of 120,000 men which entered Corinth on the thirtieth of May, had now become so scattered that I was put entirely on the defensive in a territory whose population was hostile to the Union.

One of the first things I had to do was to construct fortifications at Corinth better suited to the garrison that could be spared to man them. The structures that had been built during the months of May and June were left as monuments to the skill of the engineer, and others were constructed in a few days, plainer in design, but suited to the command available to defend them.

In brief Halleck had completely thrown away one of the most brilliant opportunities of the war. He had found an army of 120,000 men, flushed with victory and full of spirit, concentrated at a point in the center of the Confederacy, from which it was not only possible but easy to advance in overwhelming force in any direction, while the inflow of recruits at that time was great enough to make good and even to double the losses that battle might involve. On the other hand

the Confederates had lost so heavily at Shiloh that they did not venture to make a stand in their intrenchments at Corinth, even though Halleck's extraordinary dilatoriness gave them seven weeks of precious time in which to recruit their army, strengthen their defenses and receive reinforcements of 17,000 seasoned and veteran troops that were presently sent to them.

General Grant has pronounced the positive and unhesitating opinion that an energetic advance immediately after the Shiloh battle, with the enormously superior forces then concentrated at that point would have resulted beyond a peradventure in the conquest of Corinth within two days, with the capture of all the stores and ammunition there as a necessary incident and the capture of Beauregard's army as at least a promising possibility. By consuming three weeks in preparation for an advance which ought to have been made at once and by wasting a whole month more in an advance by parallels, where an advance at the quickstep with fixed bayonets, was all that was needed, Halleck had completely thrown away this opportunity.

But even then, even after wasting seven weeks in reaching Corinth, it was not too late to achieve results of the most momentous consequence. On page 227 of his "Memoirs," General Grant gives this expert opinion of the situation and the opportunity:

The Confederates were now driven out of West Tennessee, and on the sixth of June, after a well contested naval battle, the National forces took possession of Memphis, and held the Mississippi river from its source to that point. The railroad from Columbus to Corinth was at once put in good condition and held by us. We had garrisons at Donelson, Clarksville and Nashville on the Cumberland river, and held the Tennessee river from its mouth to Eastport. New Orleans and Baton Rouge had fallen into the possession of the National forces, so that now the Confederates at the West were narrowed down for all communication with Richmond to the single line of road running east from Vicksburg. To dispossess them of this, therefore, became a matter of the first importance. The possession of the Mississippi by us, from Memphis to Baton Rouge, was also a most important object. It would be equal to the amputation of a limb in its weakening effect upon the enemy. After the capture of Corinth a movable force of 80,000 men, besides enough to hold all the territory acquired, *could have been set in motion for the accomplishment of any great campaign for the suppression of the rebellion.*¹ In addition to this, fresh troops were being raised to swell the effective force.

But the work of depletion commenced. Buell, with the Army of the Ohio, was sent east, following the line of the Memphis and Charleston railroad. This he was ordered to repair as he advanced – only to have it destroyed by small guerilla bands or other troops as soon as he was out of the way. If he had been sent directly to Chattanooga, as rapidly as he could march, sending two or three divisions along the line of the railroad from Nashville forward, he could have arrived with but little fighting, and would have saved much of the loss of life which was afterwards incurred in gaining Chattanooga. Bragg would then not have had time to raise an army to contest the possession of Middle and East Tennessee and Kentucky; the battles of Stone river and Chickamauga would not necessarily have been fought; Burnside would not have been besieged in Knoxville without the power of helping himself or escaping; the battle of Chattanooga would not have been fought. These are the negative advantages, if the term negative is applicable, which would probably have resulted from prompt movements after Corinth fell into the possession of the National forces. The positive results might have been,

¹ The italics are not General Grant's, but are placed by the author of the present work, upon words that seem to him to be pregnant of criticism and explanation.

a bloodless advance to Atlanta, to Vicksburg, or to any other desired point south of Corinth in the interior of Mississippi.

Will the reader bear in mind, that these military criticisms are not made by the author of the present work, although they fully commend themselves to his judgment, but are the calm and deliberate utterances of Ulysses S. Grant, by all consent the ablest general that ever commanded a Federal army, and a general minutely familiar with every detail of the situation which presented itself after Shiloh? They bear the authority both of intimate knowledge and of demonstrated military skill. Reduced to their lowest terms they amount to this: If Halleck had been an officer fit to command an army, he would have rushed upon Corinth with his three to one force on the very day on which he assumed command. The result could not have been in the least degree doubtful. But even after he had wasted seven precious weeks – three of them in preparation for an advance for which he was already fully prepared, and four more in an advance over a wholly undefended space of nineteen miles which he ought to have covered in one day or a day and a half at most, – there was still open to a capable general an opportunity which Halleck utterly failed to see or to seize. He had under his command 120,000 veteran troops, of the very best fighting quality and subordinately commanded by such masters of the military art as Grant, Sherman, Thomas, Buell, Lew Wallace, Nelson, Prentiss and their fit fellows. Making the most liberal allowance for detachments to guard railroads and to hold every acre of country conquered, General Grant says he could have mustered an effective army of 80,000 men or more for aggressive operations in any direction that might have seemed best to him, against which the Confederates could not have opposed more than 30,000 or 40,000 at the utmost. The whole central South lay before him where to choose. His opportunity was one the like of which came to no other commander North or South, during the whole course of the war. He threw it utterly away. He scattered his superbly overwhelming army to the four winds, under orders that rendered their courage and their enterprise futile, and left Grant in a hopelessly defensive position, with no army capable of any measure of aggression, and with an authority so ill defined that he could not order a concentration even in the smallest way.

And yet, this man, Halleck, who had never fought a battle in his life, and who had never commanded an army except to scatter and waste it, was chosen to command all the armies of the United States.

Surely the country could not have been worse served if the administration had been intent upon losing the war instead of carrying it to success. And very certainly the long domination of this peculiarly incapable man served to embarrass "enterprises of great pith and moment," and to prolong the destructive, fratricidal struggle for long after the time during which, under wiser counsels, it would have endured.

Curiously enough no explanation of this costly blunder has ever been suggested. We know of course that Halleck's first appointment to command in the West was made upon General Scott's recommendation, at a period of the war when nobody knew or could know what officers of the old army were capable of achieving results and what ones were unfit for command. General Scott's mistake in selecting Halleck for a highly responsible command was pardonable under the circumstances. But after his extraordinary dealings with the victories at Fort Henry and Fort Donelson, and still more conspicuously after his phenomenal failure to seize upon the opportunity that came to him ready made by the results achieved at Shiloh, it is absolutely impossible for the most imaginative critic to conceive of a reason which might have justified the administration at Washington in selecting this man with his doubly demonstrated incapacity to direct all the armies of the Union in their operations.

Not only was Grant left upon the defensive with a force too small to permit aggression of any kind on his part, but even this scant force was rapidly and very dangerously depleted by orders from Halleck's Washington headquarters. The Confederates and guerrillas were daily threatening his communications and frequently attacking his defensive detachments in force. He was confronted

on the south by an effective force of 35,000 men under Van Dorn and Price, threatening Memphis, Corinth, Bolivar and other points. Grant's concern for the safety of Memphis, isolated as that post was by the Confederate occupation of Grand Junction – between Memphis and Corinth – was lightened only by the fact, as he himself suggestively put the matter, that "it was in Sherman's hands."

Under this stress of circumstances, and with extraordinary disregard of what disastrous consequences there might be involved, Halleck on the fourteenth of August ordered Grant still further to weaken himself by sending two more divisions to Buell on his tedious march eastward. Again on the second of September, Grant received orders to send still further reinforcements to Buell, and two days later Gordon Granger's division was detached and sent, by orders from Washington, to Louisville. On the twenty-second Colonel Rodney Mason, whom Grant had forgiven for arrant cowardice at Shiloh, made a dastardly surrender of Clarksville with half a regiment or more.

Thus the one commander who had thus far shown himself capable of conceiving campaigns and conducting them to success, was left with a totally inadequate and constantly diminishing force, to waste his time in guarding a vast territory while Bragg was marching from Rome, Georgia, with a strong Confederate army toward Chattanooga, meaning to seize that position before Buell could get there. In his "Memoirs" General Grant gives expression to his regret that he was not permitted to move, instead of sitting still, at a time when even with the depleted force under his command, he still felt confident of his ability to crush and destroy Bragg's force, thus forestalling and rendering unnecessary the very severe and bloody campaigns which were destined to follow for lack of such a timely blow.

The Confederates, early in the spring, had enacted and enforced a conscription law which had resulted in putting every man in the South capable of bearing arms, into the army. At the North – largely because of the defeat of McClellan and Pope in Virginia, and of Halleck's astonishing failure to follow up the Shiloh campaign with aggressive operations – the volunteering had so far ceased that Mr. Lincoln's call for an additional 300,000 men met with a meager and unsatisfactory response. In several states – New York among them – the quotas were not furnished by volunteering and it was necessary to order a draft to fill up the ranks depleted by battle and disease. The North at this time had more than twice as many men in the field as the South could muster. But with every southward advance of Federal armies more and more men must be withdrawn from the active work of aggression and set to guard places captured, to maintain lines of communication and to hold regions that had been overrun. Moreover the Southerners were mainly fighting on the defensive, which in some degree compensated for their lack of equal numbers. Still again the enlistment of every man at the South was to endure to the end of the war, while very large numbers of men at the North were enlisted for shorter terms, some of them for only three months or a hundred days, scarcely time enough in which to discipline and train them into effectiveness.

Without offense, also, – and certainly no offense is intended – it is fair to say that the volunteers and conscripts who at this period of the war came into the Confederate service, were in many cases morally superior to the men brought by draft processes into the armies of the Union. They were all Americans for one thing, while great multitudes of those enlisted or drafted into the service at the North were recent immigrants from Europe who neither knew nor cared for the issues involved in the contest but who entered the service as they might have accepted any other employment, for the sake of the money returns promised. These money returns included, besides pay, rations and a clothing allowance, a bounty of extraordinary liberality, amounting in many cases to a larger sum of money than its recipients had ever dreamed of owning, as the price of substitution. For while at the South every man included within the terms of the conscription law must shoulder his musket and go to the front, whatever his wealth or social position might be, the case was very different at the North. There men who had the means of buying a substitute very

often did so. Many who lacked the means or were unwilling to pay the high price exacted by those who stood ready to sell themselves as substitutes, emigrated to Canada or went to Europe to escape the military service.

These facts undoubtedly created a disparity between the two contending armies, which had not existed during the earlier part of the war. The immigrants and the purchased substitutes who joined the Federal armies after the campaigns of 1862 were over, were not morally the equals of the native or long naturalized Americans who had fought so heroically around Richmond, at the second battle of Manassas, at Sharpsburg, and at Shiloh. For this as well as for the other reasons indicated, the North had need of larger numbers than the South, in order to carry the war to success.

The Confederates now held a smaller section of the Mississippi than before, but they held that more strongly. A general of capacity, after Shiloh, might easily have wrested its possession from them, as General Grant has pointed out. Under a general incapacity, nothing was done to that end and the Confederates, thus favored by Federal neglect, had so far fortified their strongholds that the dislodgment which would have been easy in the spring could now be accomplished only by one of the severest, bloodiest and most perilous campaigns of the war. Thus all that had been gained above or below, towards the reconquest of the Mississippi, had gone for next to naught. For the possession of its mouth on the one hand, and the control of its upper reaches on the other, meant nothing so long as the Confederates held Vicksburg and Port Hudson, thus obstructing a river whose sole value was as a highway.

In Virginia the Southern arms had been successful in an extraordinary degree. McClellan's splendid army of 120,000 men had been broken and beaten back from the very gates of Richmond, and sent hurriedly northward to defend the National capital itself against threatened capture. Pope, at the head of an army quite equal to any that the Confederates could muster, had been outmaneuvered, outfought and overthrown at Manassas, and hurled back upon the defenses of Washington as a needed refuge. Lee had invaded Maryland, his cavalry amusing themselves by unopposed marches into Pennsylvania. Finally Burnside's attempt at Fredericksburg with an army overwhelming in its numbers, had resulted in fearfully bloody failure.

As the autumn drew on Grant was left at Corinth, by no fault of his own but because of Halleck's orders, with a force barely sufficient, if sufficient at all, to hold the railroads and outlying posts which he was set to guard. In his front there lay a threatening army stronger than any that he could hope to bring together at any one point. To the eastward Buell, under paralyzing orders, was slowly marching toward Chattanooga, while Bragg with a strong Confederate army was hastening northward to seize that commanding strategic position and to push thence northward with high hopes and fair prospects of making the Ohio river before the year was out, the dividing line between the Northern and Southern forces, replacing the line which by Grant's successes had been drawn the whole width of two states further south.

On these points the testimony of General Grant is too direct, too conclusive and too valuable to be omitted here, or to be given otherwise than in his own carefully chosen words. On page 237 *et seq.* of the "Memoirs" he writes:

General Buell had left Corinth about the tenth of June to march upon Chattanooga. Bragg, who had succeeded Beauregard in command, sent one division from Tupelo on the twenty-seventh of June for the same place. This gave Buell about seventeen days' start. If he had not been required to repair the railroad as he advanced, the march could have been made in eighteen days at the outside, and Chattanooga must have been reached by the national forces before the rebels could have possibly got there.

On page 240 we have this careful estimate of the situation at the beginning of September:

On the seventh of September I learned of the advance of Van Dorn and Price, apparently upon Corinth. One division was brought from Memphis to Bolivar to meet any emergency that might arise from this move of the enemy. I was much concerned because my first duty after holding the territory acquired within my command, was to prevent further reinforcing of Bragg in Middle Tennessee. Already the army of Northern Virginia had defeated the army under General Pope, and was invading Maryland. In the center General Buell was on his way to Louisville and Bragg marching parallel to him with a large Confederate force for the Ohio river. I had been constantly called upon to reinforce Buell until at this time my entire force numbered less than 50,000 men of all arms. This included everything from Cairo south within my jurisdiction. If I too should be driven back the Ohio river would become the line dividing the belligerents west of the Alleghanies while at the east the line was already farther north than when hostilities commenced at the opening of the war. It is true Nashville was never given up after its first capture, but it would have been isolated and the garrison there would have been obliged to beat a hasty retreat if the troops in West Tennessee had been compelled to fall back. To say, at the end of the second year of the war the line dividing the contestants at the east was pushed north of Maryland, a state that had not seceded, and at the west beyond Kentucky, and this State which had been always loyal, would have been discouraging indeed. As it was many loyal people despaired in the Fall of 1862 of ever saving the Union. The Administration at Washington was much concerned for the safety of the cause it held so dear.

This was a most trying time for a man of General Grant's overmastering instinct of activity. The task set him of guarding a vast territory and three railroad lines against a ceaselessly active and enterprising enemy, gave him occupation enough it is true. But the situation forbade him to concentrate anywhere, or to do anything indeed except repel assaults first upon one insignificant point and then upon another. A mere catalogue of the actions fought at this time in that quarter would occupy pages of print. Only one of them had enough significance to require mention in this history. On the thirteenth of September the Confederate general, Sterling Price, with a considerable force occupied Iuka, a town on the Memphis and Charleston railroad, about twenty miles east of Corinth. The fact was a significant commentary upon the unwisdom of the orders which delayed Buell's march on Chattanooga, in the end defeating its purpose, in order to repair a railroad, any point upon which the Confederates could seize at will in spite of Grant's utmost diligence in an impracticable and indeed impossible defense.

Grant feared that the object of Price's movement might be something of vastly more importance than the destruction of a railroad station, as indeed it was. Price's purpose in seizing Iuka was to get control of the railroad east of that point long enough to enable him to send heavy reinforcements to Bragg, who was at that time pushing Buell back upon Louisville, with the prospect, if reinforced in timely fashion, of capturing that city, compelling Grant's retirement to Cairo, and establishing the Ohio river as the northern boundary and the military line of the Confederacy. Accordingly Grant dangerously weakened several exposed points in order to concentrate under Rosecrans a sufficient force to drive Price out of Iuka before the main body of the Confederate army south of Corinth could join him there.

The operation resulted in some strenuous fighting. Price was driven back and his scheme was defeated. The details of the battle need not be recounted here. They belong to the domain of minute history, covering special campaigns. For the purposes of a general history of the war, it is sufficient to point out the only strategic purpose involved in the movement, and its defeat by a timely and judicious activity.

CHAPTER XXXV

Bragg's Campaign Against Louisville

Strategically considered there was no point in the middle South so important to either side at that time as Chattanooga. Either side having possession of that place could hold it against a force outnumbering its garrison many times. More important still, its possession by the Confederates opened to them three or four different routes of advance into Kentucky, which no enemy with anything like an equal force could effectually guard or defend. To hold one of these routes was to open another. Confederate possession of Chattanooga at that period of the war meant therefore the possible and even probable conquest of all eastern Kentucky, the isolation and fall of Nashville, the reconquest of the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, and the enforced retirement of Grant's advanced army to the line of the Ohio river.

All these consequences, as General Grant has said, were the probable results of a Confederate occupation of Chattanooga in force, and had Bragg succeeded in the campaign he directed from that point all these consequences would have been morally certain to befall the Union arms, as General Grant saw at the time and afterwards set forth in his "Memoirs."

On the other hand the seizure of Chattanooga by a Federal force of consequence, would have closed and barred the gate to all further advances of the Confederates into Tennessee and Kentucky. It would have made the southern boundary of Tennessee permanently the most northerly military line of division between North and South, making of Kentucky a state completely saved to the Union and of Tennessee a state completely recovered to it.

General Halleck had sagacity enough to see, at least in some degree, the strategic necessity of seizing upon Chattanooga. Accordingly he ordered Buell to march upon and occupy that place. But he seems to have forgotten that there were energetic men in command of Southern armies, men quite as capable as he was of recognizing an opportunity. Instead of sending Buell post haste to occupy the place, as General Grant has pointed out that he should have done, leaving the repair of the Memphis and Charleston railroad to details of troops to be made after the main point was gained, he threw away the advantage of a seventeen days' start and a shorter line than that of his enemy, and kept Buell for many weary weeks repairing bridges and culverts while Bragg was hurrying with all possible speed to throw a commanding force into Chattanooga.

The result was that Bragg captured the commanding strategic position and Buell was left "in the air," as military men say, not knowing where to concentrate or in what direction his enemy was to be expected. The story of his haltings, his hesitations, his confusion of mind, his orders and counter orders, as given in General Van Horne's "History of the Army of the Cumberland," and in the accompanying documents, is pitiful in its revelation of the perplexities of an earnest, sincere and very capable officer who had been made the victim of "orders" from an incapable but relentlessly exacting "superior."

It would be an idle and wearisome waste of space to recount here all of Buell's marchings and counter-marchings, all the orders given and countermanded, and given again only to be again rescinded, which marked the progress of that campaign. For the purposes of history it is enough to say that Bragg, with his Confederates, in the end succeeded in maneuvering Buell out of Tennessee and across Kentucky to the neighborhood of Louisville, while sending a dangerously strong detachment into eastern Kentucky to threaten Covington and Cincinnati. The purpose of this detachment was to compel Buell to divide his force and send a part of it up the river to defend Cincinnati, thus weakening the defense of Louisville, which city Bragg intended to assail and confidently hoped to capture.

That purpose failed. The moment that Cincinnati was threatened, men in multitudes, who had not before thought of enlisting, swarmed to the point of danger and freely offered themselves for its defense. It was not necessary for Buell to spare a single regiment for Cincinnati's protection, beyond those already holding eastern Kentucky, and even these, when Bragg's campaign developed its purpose against Louisville, were able to spare considerable detachments to aid Buell in Louisville's defense. But all this is an anticipation of events. Let us tell the story as it occurred.

During the spring and summer of 1862, and after Buell's main army had marched westward to reinforce Grant at Pittsburg Landing, there had been almost ceaseless campaigning and fighting along the upper Tennessee river, in Alabama, and around Cumberland Gap. Generals O. M. Mitchell, G. W. Morgan and Negley were the active agents in this campaigning on the Federal side; Kirby Smith was the Confederate chieftain with John Morgan and N. B. Forrest for his enterprising cavalry raiders. The fighting was often severe and the maneuvers brilliant on both sides, but in the absence of strong armies it was after all scarcely more than skirmishing, involving no battle of importance and no movement of strategic consequence enough to require mention in a general history of the war. The struggle was the outcome of a purpose on either side to maintain the strategic status quo, or if possible to improve it here and there where opportunity offered. Substantially the result was to leave matters about as they had been, except that the continual activity and the frequent encounters of arms served to discipline and steady the raw recruits who were coming in on both sides. The operations of that spring and summer served to make soldiers of the new men North and South.

It was not until after Halleck sent Buell to seize upon the strategic position at Chattanooga, and Bragg, seventeen days later, withdrew his main body from Grant's front and set out by the roundabout way of Mobile to anticipate Buell, that the war in that part of the country again assumed strategic and historical importance.

Buell's march eastward was necessarily very slow and halting, and during its continuance he was compelled to scatter his forces in a very dangerous fashion. There had been two blunders made at the outset – both of them made by General Halleck against General Buell's protest. One of them was in making Corinth the base of supplies for Buell's army and depending for communication upon a long east and west line of badly broken railroad which was exposed at almost every point to frequent and destructive incursions of the enemy. Buell had asked to make Nashville his base instead. That point was connected with Louisville by rail and still more securely by river, and the river route was at all points adequately guarded against interruption by an effective gunboat fleet. From Nashville south and east there were railroads which Buell could have guarded effectually with one fifth the force necessary to the very ineffectual protection of the east and west line of the Memphis and Charleston road.

But Halleck was imperative in his orders and Buell had to submit, with the ultimate result of having to scatter his forces widely in order to guard both lines and repair both, on pain of bringing actual starvation upon his army.

The second mistake was in ordering Buell to repair the very badly damaged Memphis and Charleston railroad as he advanced. This, as we have already seen, resulted in so delaying his advance that Bragg reached Chattanooga first and was from that hour master of the situation.

In the meanwhile Forrest and Morgan were ceaselessly active in Buell's rear – towards Louisville – harassing his detachments, threatening and at times destroying his communications, burning bridges, tearing up railroads, gathering recruits from the youth of Kentucky and Tennessee, throwing the people into panic and grave uncertainty of mind, and now and then defeating and capturing important forces. Thus at Tompkinsville, Kentucky, Morgan routed the Federal garrison under Major Jordan, and proceeding, destroyed the railroad at Lebanon Junction, and at Lebanon compelled the surrender of the force there with a large amount of supplies which Buell badly

needed. Thence he raided all over central Kentucky, destroying railroads of the utmost importance to Buell and finally escaping with rich booty into the Confederate lines again.

Forrest pushed out from Chattanooga and undertook even larger operations. He assailed Murfreesborough on the thirteenth of July, carried the place by storm, captured the whole garrison, including its commander, General Crittenden, and, turning about, overcame and captured Colonel Lester on the Stone river, with his entire force of nine full companies.

These actions were not battles of any special consequence, of course. They are mentioned here merely as illustrations of the perplexities that beset General Buell in his march upon Chattanooga, and ultimately made a complete failure of the attempt. Such actions as those described were of daily occurrence, and they compelled General Buell not only to weaken his column by detachments sent to strengthen exposed positions, but still further to cripple himself by sending columns of some importance to try conclusions with the very enterprising enemy.

Bragg, at the head of a strong Confederate army, established himself in Chattanooga on the twenty-ninth of July, some weeks before Buell could finish the reconstruction of the Memphis and Charleston railroad and advance to the point the occupation of which was the sole object of his campaign.

Bragg at once called to his aid all the troops that could be spared to him from points of less importance, and very soon he was at the head of a strong force which threatened a serious and dangerous invasion.

But while he was thus concentrating his forces for a vigorous aggressive movement, Bragg adroitly concealed his purposes. He so disposed his divisions as to leave Buell in utter uncertainty as to his intentions. It might be that he intended a reconquest of Nashville. It might be that his purpose was to march into eastern Kentucky. It might be that he intended to move northward, take Buell in flank and rear, destroy his communications, cut him off from assistance or retreat, and perhaps compel his surrender. His dispositions equally threatened each of these possible enterprises, without in the least degree impairing his ability instantly to concentrate his entire force for the execution of any one of them.

And what his force was Buell did not know and could not conjecture with any degree of confidence. East Tennessee was full of Union men eager to give helpful information to the Federal commander, but Bragg, with an adroitness that had not before been brought to bear upon campaigning in the west, managed to conceal the strength of his army even from the citizens of Chattanooga, at the same time moving troops about in such fashion as to suggest half a dozen different and irreconcilable purposes. It thus happened that the more and the more positive information Buell received with regard to his enemy's operations and intentions, the more hopelessly was he bewildered. He dared not concentrate upon any line, lest his adversary should move at once by some other and put him in peril. No one can read General Buell's orders and dispatches written at that time without being strongly impressed with the hopeless confusion and uncertainty of his mind due to a situation that was perplexing in the extreme.

It was obvious that he must draw his widely scattered forces together at some point; but where? He could not concentrate them at any point upon the line or in the region he was supposed to be occupying without weakening all other points at grave risk of having his enemy turn his position and bring him to destruction. There was only one course that he could pursue with even tolerable prudence. That was to abandon his aggressive campaign, fall back, concentrate for defense and give battle at some point of his own selection much farther north.

Bragg's army consisted of five divisions of infantry with artillery and cavalry. Buell had five divisions in front and three others within almost instant call, while he could depend upon being still further reinforced from Louisville, whither a still further part of Grant's army had been sent. But the nature of the country in which Bragg lay, and the uncertainty of his intentions forbade an attack upon him there.

Buell decided at last that his adversary's objective was Nashville, and on the thirtieth of August he gave orders for a retreat toward that place by way of Murfreesboro. At Murfreesboro he made no pause, as by that time Bragg's movement had developed his purpose to go into Kentucky and make a hurried advance upon Louisville, striking that city before Buell could come to its defense. Buell therefore abandoned his march towards Nashville and pushed his column northward by hurried marches, in the hope that he might beat Bragg in the race for the Ohio river, or failing in that, might be in time to fall upon his adversary's rear before he could establish himself in Louisville's defenses. He left a small garrison to hold Nashville but pushed forward in all haste with his main army, in retreat upon Louisville.

His retreat was embarrassed at every step. Bragg had forces ahead of him who destroyed bridges, tore up tracks, captured important supply depots, and in one case, at Mumfordsville, compelled the surrender – September 17 – of a fortified town with its garrison, upon which Buell had somewhat depended for a reinforcement.

At first Buell had left Thomas at Nashville, to defend that city, but his own need of strength became so pressing that he called upon that able officer to join him with the greater part of the troops that had been left at Nashville.

What Bragg's campaign really meant, and what he hoped to accomplish by it may best be shown by his own orders and dispatches. On August eleventh, soon after he had established himself at Chattanooga, he sent instructions to General Van Dorn who was confronting Grant at Corinth in which he said: "It is very desirable to press the enemy closely in West Tennessee. We learn their forces there are being rapidly reduced, and when our movements become known, it is certain they must throw forces into middle Tennessee and Kentucky, or lose those regions. If you hold them in check, we are sure of success here; but should they reinforce here so as to defy us, then you may redeem west Tennessee and probably aid us by crushing the enemy's rear."

On August 27, just as his army was got into vigorous motion, General Bragg wrote to Van Dorn again as follows: "We move from here immediately – later by some days than expected; but in time, we hope, for a successful campaign. Buell has certainly fallen back from the Memphis and Charleston railroad, and will probably not make a stand this side of Nashville, if there. He is now fortifying that place. General E. K. Smith, reinforced by two brigades from this army, has turned Cumberland Gap and is now marching on Lexington, Kentucky. General Morgan (Yankee) is thus cut off from all supplies. General Humphrey Marshall is to enter eastern Kentucky from western Virginia. We shall thus have Buell pretty well disposed of. Sherman and Rosecrans, we leave to you and Price, satisfied you can dispose of them, and we confidently hope to meet you upon the Ohio."

Two days later, on August 29, Bragg telegraphed Price, saying: "Buell's force is in full retreat upon Nashville, destroying their stores. Watch Rosecrans and prevent a junction. Or, if he escapes, you follow him closely."

It will be seen from these dispatches that Bragg had no real thought of advancing upon Nashville, as Buell at first believed that he intended to do. His campaign was boldly planned for a larger conquest farther north, which, if he had been successful, would have left Nashville an easy prey to a strong detachment, if indeed it had failed to succumb to isolation and fall by its own weight.

In these brief communications we have a complete revelation of Bragg's plans and purposes – a complete setting forth of his hopes. Stripped of military technicalities his purpose was to push his army towards Louisville in advance of Buell's retreat; to strike and destroy the Federal general's line of railroad communication between Nashville and Louisville, at points north of Buell's march, thus impeding and delaying the Federal retreat and in Forrest's phrase "getting there first with the most men" —*there* meaning Louisville on the Ohio river.

In aid of this plan he had cut off the Federal general, Morgan, at Cumberland Gap, rendering his force useless for any aggressive purpose and incapable of joining Buell anywhere. He had

ordered strong forces into eastern Kentucky, to hold there all the Federals in that quarter, to threaten Cincinnati and perhaps to compel the detachment of a considerable force from the garrison at Louisville for the defense of the Ohio city. He depended upon Price and Van Dorn so to occupy Grant's badly depleted army in western Tennessee and northern Mississippi as to prevent it from moving to Buell's assistance, or should it so move, he expected his very energetic lieutenants to cripple it by a prompt pursuit and by vigorous blows struck upon its rear, in the meanwhile overrunning and reconquering the region lost in western Tennessee and Kentucky.

This was without doubt one of the most brilliantly planned operations of the entire war on either side. It looked to no less an achievement than the undoing of all that had been done by Grant and Buell and Thomas, the reconquest of all the region lost and the establishment of the Confederate lines upon the Ohio river for both offensive and defensive operations during the next year and the years to follow.

The one defect of the plan was that the Confederates had not force enough to carry it to success, except by some happy accident, and happy accidents were far less likely to happen in the autumn of 1862 than they had been a year earlier when troops were raw, generals totally inexperienced and the problems of war wholly unsolved even in their primary processes.

Bragg's force was considerably less than that which Buell had under his immediate command. Lee was at that time carrying on his tremendous campaigns in Virginia and Maryland so that no troops could be spared from that quarter to reinforce Bragg's undertaking. Price and Van Dorn had quite all they could do to hold their own against Grant at Corinth and Sherman at Memphis. It is true that Grant had been "stripped to the skin," as he expressed it, by calls upon him to reinforce Buell and to spare division after division for the army that was contending against Lee and doubtfully defending the Federal capital. But on the other hand Price and Van Dorn had been stripped equally bare to furnish Bragg with the troops with whom he was invading Kentucky.

And while Bragg was thus marching into his enemy's country with a force only about three fifths as numerous as that of his adversary and with no prospect of important reinforcement from any quarter, Buell was retreating upon a city strongly held, whose garrison would furnish an instant and a very strong reinforcement, while the mere threat of Bragg's advance was inducing the hurrying of multitudes of fresh troops from all the northwestern states, to the menaced cities of Cincinnati and Louisville. For it was clearly seen in Ohio, Indiana and Illinois, and even in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, that should Bragg succeed in establishing himself on the Ohio river the states north of that stream must become the ravaged and trampled theater of the next year's campaign, with a Confederate invading force swelled by enlistments from Kentucky and Tennessee to enormous proportions and reinforced by the fifty or sixty thousand Southern veterans whom the conquest of the Ohio by Bragg would instantly release from defensive work farther south. In brief, if Bragg could have captured and held Louisville by defeating Buell, it was morally certain that the Confederates would have been able, during the following spring, to invade the Northwest with an effective force of tremendous proportions. For Kentucky and Tennessee would in that case have become wholly Confederate, and the whole South would have joined in an effort to make decisive use of such an opportunity to end the war in triumph. Tens of thousands of seasoned troops employed during the summer of 1862 in garrisoning towns and protecting railroad lines would in that case have been set free to aid in an aggressive movement north of the Ohio. With the Confederates established at Louisville and holding the Ohio river as their line, there would have been no choice but for Grant to withdraw from Mississippi, West Tennessee and Kentucky, thus setting free not only the 30,000 or 50,000 men confronting his present position, but also the garrisons and armies about Vicksburg and along the several railroads in Mississippi and in northern Georgia and Alabama. It is certainly not an exaggeration to estimate that had Bragg succeeded, as he hoped, in seizing Louisville and meeting Van Dorn and Price "on the Ohio" as he said, the Confederates could and would have mustered at least 150,000 men for the invasion of the

Northwest at the opening of the spring of 1863 – an army greater than the South ever put into the field at any point during the entire continuance of the war.

And all this was a not impossible – indeed a not improbable – contingency. It is true that Bragg's force was in numbers inferior to Buell's in about the proportion of three to five. But it was massed at the outset and remained completely coöperating from beginning to end of the campaign. It had besides, the advantage of knowing what it intended and whither it was going, while Buell must vaguely guess its intentions and hold himself ready during a retreat, to meet his enemy wherever that enemy might see fit to strike.

In war these things offset superiority of numbers in a degree which it is difficult for the civilian reader to understand. He who can give battle or refuse it where he pleases, has a very great advantage over his adversary who must accept whatever is offered or else retreat at disadvantage.

Moreover Bragg had managed to get the start of Buell in their race for Louisville, and this advantage had been greatly increased by his success in breaking Buell's lines of march by burning bridges, tearing up railroads and capturing supply depots. For a time it seemed more than probable that Bragg would reach Louisville and occupy it before Buell could by any possibility get there. In that event Buell would have been cut off from all supplies, and only ordinary vigilance on the part of the Confederates would have been necessary to starve him into surrender – for if thus cut off, his stores could not have supported his army for more than three or four days at the utmost.

Still again, Bragg had another ground of hope. It often happens in war, that a smaller force, skilfully handled, masters a larger force. To go no further back than the Seven Days' battles around Richmond, and the campaign following, Lee had succeeded by the skilful handling of a comparatively small force in overcoming one army which greatly outnumbered his own, while paralyzing the purpose of other forces as great as his own, that had been sent to reinforce his enemy. With this and many other familiar illustrations of the possibility of achieving conspicuous military success against superior numbers present to his mind, it was not vainglorious on the part of Bragg, who believed in his own skill, to hope that if he could reach Louisville in advance of Buell, his army, inspirited by repeated successes on the march, and holding the vantage ground of possession, might successfully meet and defeat Buell's way-weary force, cut off, as in that case it would have been, from its objective, from all hope of assistance and even from very badly needed supplies.

Indeed, had Bragg achieved his purpose of pushing his columns into Louisville in advance of Buell's coming, it would have been almost a miracle for him to have failed in his resistance to the outmarched Federal commander's attempts to recapture the lost stronghold.

It was one of those fearful crises of the war, – like Sharpsburg and Gettysburg – in which the whole outcome of the struggle hung trembling in the balance, and the future alike of the Union and of the Confederacy was risked, as it were, upon the hazard of a die.

For while Bragg was thus dragging Buell back from northern Alabama and Georgia to the Ohio river and more than seriously threatening to make of that river the fortified frontier of the Confederacy, Lee was in Maryland, after having overthrown McClellan before Richmond and Pope at Manassas, and the National capital itself seemed in sore danger of capture. The year which had opened with the Union victories at Forts Henry and Donelson, presently followed by Grant's success at Shiloh, while McClellan's overwhelming divisions were near enough to Richmond to see the spires of that city's churches, seemed about to draw to a close so disastrous to the Federal cause as to leave it in worse case than at the beginning of the war or indeed at any time since the first defeat at Bull Run.

The National credit was impaired as it never had been before. The Confederates were moved to make of the eighteenth of September a day of Thanksgiving for a deliverance which they regarded as in effect accomplished.

Enlistments at the North had so far fallen off that drafts must be made in order to maintain that great superiority of numbers without which the North, fighting aggressively, could not hope

to make head against Southern defense, as all the operations of the war up to that time had shown, and as the later course of the contest additionally proved at every point.

But Bragg's effort to seize Louisville before Buell could throw himself into that city's defenses, failed of its purpose. By virtue of a wonderful march Buell reached the city first, near the end of September, the last of his forces arriving there on the twenty-ninth. Bragg was at Bardstown, not far away and in a very threatening position. In the meanwhile Grant held his own at Corinth in spite of the dangerous depletion of his forces, and the whole of West Tennessee remained in possession of the Federals.

Buell found heavy reinforcements awaiting him at Louisville, while Bragg at Bardstown had not yet been joined, as he had expected to be, by Kirby Smith's force from eastern Kentucky.

The conditions of the campaign were thus reversed. Buell, who had been on the defensive and in enforced retreat, was able now to take the offensive, while Bragg, who had been advancing with high hopes was now in a position from which he must retreat promptly on pain of having his army overwhelmed and destroyed.

Buell quickly reorganized his army into corps, welding the raw troops into the seasoned force, and within a day or two he was ready to assail the enemy who had driven him across two states.

Bragg retired to Perryville with a total force of about 35,000 men, and Buell with 58,000 advanced upon him. On the eighth of October a severe battle occurred which lasted from noonday to night and seemed undecided when night fell. But when morning came Bragg had retired and was in slow and orderly retreat southward. The Federal loss in the battle of Perryville was reported at 4,348, including two brigadier generals killed. The Confederate loss is unknown, but as Bragg began the battle with only three divisions assailing eight, and as the fighting at times was muzzle to muzzle, the slaughter among such troops as were actually engaged on his side, must have been terrible.

Learning that Kirby Smith's command had on that evening joined Bragg, General Buell did not press his enemy, but disposed his forces for a defensive battle. It was not until the thirteenth that he discovered that Bragg was indeed retreating and ordered a pursuit. This was pressed, with some fighting now and then, as far as Crab Orchard, where the Federals halted, leaving Bragg free to make his leisurely way to East Tennessee with an enormous wagon train loaded with a rich booty of supplies which he had gathered in Kentucky.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Fall and Winter Campaigns at the West and South

The climatic conditions of the disputed country south and west were excellent for campaigning during the autumn, and tolerable during most of the winter. As neither side was satisfied with the results achieved in that quarter during the spring and summer of 1862, both were disposed to carry on the war with vigor during the autumn of that year and the winter following.

On the third of October, while Buell and Bragg were confronting each other near Louisville, Van Dorn, who had been heavily reinforced from Missouri, undertook to carry out Bragg's orders, for the capture of Corinth and the reconquest of western Tennessee and Kentucky. He advanced upon Corinth in force and assailed Rosecrans, who held the immediate command of that place, upon lines chosen by the Federal commander, three miles in front of the main defenses.

It was a rich prize that the Confederate commander battled for, and right manfully did he strive to gain it. Corinth at that time was a depot of supplies of unusual consequence, and besides that, its conquest would mean the complete breaking of Grant's long and difficult line of defense.

During the first day of terrific fighting, Van Dorn succeeded in driving Rosecrans back to the refuge of the town's fortifications. On the next morning he assailed the works with extraordinary vigor and determination. His men suffered terribly from the cannon and musketry fire of a protected enemy at short range, but they succeeded at last in breaking the defenses and forcing their way into the town where they fought inch by inch through the streets. For a time it seemed certain that they must succeed not only in carrying the town and capturing the stores that had been collected there, but also in compelling the surrender of the defending force, twenty thousand strong, with the multitude of large guns mounted upon the works. But reinforcements came to Rosecrans's aid at the critical moment and turned the tide of battle just in time to prevent a great disaster to the Federals. The Confederates were driven back and after a heavy loss, never accurately reported, they retreated from the place.

Grant had ordered Rosecrans, should this occur, to pursue with all his force and crush the Confederate column completely. Rosecrans delayed even the beginning of pursuit from noon, when the retreat began, until the morning of the next day and then, by a mistake in the road taken, lost even the little chance left to him of effective pursuit.

Grant was sorely displeased with this loss of an opportunity which had been purchased at cost of so severe a battle, and at his request Rosecrans was removed to another field. He was sent in fact, after a brief time, to succeed Buell, whose failure to do greater damage to Bragg met with condemnation at Washington.

The Confederate authorities were equally displeased with their general, Van Dorn, and soon afterwards he was superseded in command by General John C. Pemberton.

Pemberton was a Pennsylvanian by birth, who had married at the South. He was a special, personal favorite of President Davis. He had never commanded an army or conducted a battle in his life, yet Mr. Davis had rapidly promoted him all the way from colonel to lieutenant general, over the heads and to the great discouragement of colonels, brigadiers and major generals who had won high distinction upon hotly contested Confederate battlefields. And now, when the Federal forces were firmly established on the far Southern line of the Memphis and Charleston railroad, and when the very greatest generalship was obviously and peremptorily needed to save the Confederate cause in the South and West, the Richmond authorities selected this favorite, who had done no fighting, commanded no armies and manifested no military ability, to take control of Confederate defense at the most critical point of all.

The result was quite what might have been expected. Pemberton was badly defeated every time he gave battle and it was he who surrendered Vicksburg and the Mississippi river on the fourth of July after a brave but incapable defense. The history of that belongs to a later chapter. And even after this extraordinary demonstration of his unfitness and incapacity, and at a time when very many at the South seriously – though unjustly – suspected him of having deliberately betrayed their cause, Mr. Davis appointed this man to a post which seemed at least to give him authority to control General Lee himself. This latter appointment was so quickly and so hotly resented by an army that well nigh worshiped Lee, that Mr. Davis wisely modified it before it had time to provoke a protest that might have savored of mutiny.

When Rosecrans superseded Buell, on October 30, 1862, the Federal army was in process of concentration at and near Bowling Green. Within a few days the concentration was complete, and Rosecrans was ready for active campaigning with a great army, inspirited by recent successes, strongly reinforced, effectively reorganized and full of hopeful determination.

But in what direction to advance was an unsettled problem. Rosecrans was strongly urged from Washington to move at once into East Tennessee, threatening Chattanooga and giving encouragement to the Unionists in that quarter. But Nashville was in serious danger. It had been held by a comparatively meager garrison during the Perryville campaign, against a strong Confederate force under Breckinridge, and there was more than a chance that Breckinridge might now capture the position unless Negley, with the two divisions under his command there, could be promptly supported. The importance of Nashville to the Federal armies as a secondary base of supplies was very great. Whether Rosecrans should campaign to the east, west or south, his need of depots at Nashville must be imperative.

While he was pondering the question of an objective, Bragg settled it for him. The Confederate general had retired from Kentucky rather of his own choice than under compulsion. He had suffered no disaster. At Perryville indeed he had had the best of the fighting for a large part of the day, and he had retired in the night rather with the purpose of giving battle again at some more favorable point than with intent to avoid battle with an enemy in strongly superior force. That enemy had not seen fit to follow and press him, and so there had been no further trial of conclusions. The Confederates had indeed failed to capture Louisville and establish themselves on the Ohio, but they had met with so much success not only in the various actions fought but also in demonstrating their ability to advance or retreat at will, that they came out of the campaign feeling themselves, in effect, victors. They were full of spirit and eagerly ready for further campaigning.

With his army in this mood and with a secure base behind him at Chattanooga, Bragg promptly moved upon Murfreesboro, with manifest intent to join Breckinridge and carry Nashville with a rush, if Rosecrans should fail to succor that strategic key to the situation.

Murfreesboro lies on the Nashville and Chattanooga railroad, a scant forty miles southeast of Nashville. The country between is open and so completely unobstructed by physical features of difficulty, that the railroad shows scarcely a curve in its course between the two points.

In view of Bragg's advance there was but one course open to Rosecrans. He must strengthen the defenses of Nashville and concentrate there for defensive and offensive operations.

He promptly threw a strong force into Nashville and soon his entire army was concentrated there, except such detachments – and these were large – as were employed in rebuilding the railroad between Louisville and Nashville, which the Confederates had destroyed, and those other and still larger detachments which were necessary to defend that vitally important line of communication against the ceaseless activity of Forrest and Morgan, who were making themselves destructively ubiquitous.

Rosecrans's activity was such that he succeeded in rendering Nashville secure before Bragg could carry out his purpose of assailing that stronghold. Still Bragg did not despair of his purpose. He sent peremptory orders to the forces around Corinth, either to send him strong reinforcements

or to carry on such a campaign in their own districts as should compel Rosecrans to weaken himself at Nashville by sending heavy reinforcements to the west.

Meanwhile Bragg fortified himself at Murfreesboro, establishing his lines along and across Stone river – a little, easily fordable stream – about two miles in front of the town.

Rosecrans decided to assail him there, and to that end advanced with 47,000 men. His march began on the twenty-sixth of December, and by the thirtieth he was in position to assail his enemy with an effective force of 43,700 men. His plan of battle was to throw forward his left wing in force, envelope his enemy's right and crumple up his lines by pushing into action a ceaseless stream of fresh troops, wheeling his divisions to the right as they should be successively brought into action.

But Bragg was also an officer of great energy and activity, and he had under his command a force nearly if not quite equal to that of his foe. He was at disadvantage during Rosecrans's sudden and unexpected advance from Nashville, from the fact that he had sent away his cavalry under Wheeler, Forrest, and Morgan to assail Rosecrans's communications at a time when that general was not expected to take the initiative in a winter campaign in the field. But now that Rosecrans was in his front, and obviously intending immediate battle, Bragg in his turn determined to assume the aggressive and himself bring on the action. His plan was absolutely identical with that of Rosecrans, namely to push forward his left wing, envelope and crush his enemy's right and by successive right wheels to destroy his foe or drive him into retreat. Thus Rosecrans intended to begin the battle at one end of the line while Bragg meant to begin it at the other.

Each of course massed his forces at the point where he purposed to make his first assault, and each thus weakened his line at the point which his enemy was planning to assail.

As a consequence the initiatory advantage must of necessity lie with the force that should succeed in making itself the first aggressor, bringing on the battle before the other was ready and striking the other's weakest wing with his own strongest divisions.

That advantage fell to Bragg as a reward for his alertness in striking as soon as possible after dawn on the last day of the year. He had so extended his left as completely to overlap Rosecrans's right and he fell upon it in flank with resistless impetuosity. The force defending it was quickly crushed and the Confederates, advancing with enthusiasm, bent back the next division encountered, and after some strenuous fighting, forced it to retire upon a new line which Rosecrans had hastily established at right angles to that of the morning.

The fighting continued with desperate determination and great slaughter on both sides until nightfall. The advantage was conspicuously with the Confederates, though there was no decisive victory won. Rosecrans had held his position indeed, upon a part of his line, and had not been either destroyed or forced into retreat. But the Confederates had driven him from one half or more of the ground that he had held at the beginning of the battle, had captured twenty-eight of his guns and large numbers of prisoners, while their cavalry had marched entirely around him and fallen upon his communications in a way that very seriously threatened him with an isolation that must have involved his destruction.

Rosecrans had been badly worsted in battle, but he was not yet beaten. His army was not demoralized, and his own determination was not impaired. He took account of his ammunition, sent detachments to protect his communications, and resolved to hold his position and renew the battle on the following day, either as the assailant of his enemy or as the assaulted, as circumstances might determine.

But the next day was passed in inaction on both sides, and it was not until the second of January, 1863, that the battle was renewed. Even then it was renewed only in part and obviously with no disposition on either side to bring on a general engagement. Nevertheless there was very bloody fighting on the part of the detachments engaged, in which the Confederate general, Breckinridge, becoming involved and being subjected to a concentrated artillery fire at short range, lost nearly two thousand men.

Two days later and after desultory fighting, General Bragg abandoned his position at Murfreesboro and retired to Duck river, where he fortified. He reported his losses in this battle – which is variously known as Murfreesboro, and Stone river – at 10,000 men, and declared that he had taken 6,000 prisoners. He had also captured thirty guns and lost three. On the other hand, General Rosecrans reported a loss of 8,778 in killed and wounded, and about 2,800 in prisoners lost to the enemy – a total of somewhat less than 11,000. The two reports are hopelessly at variance and irreconcilable, as to the number of prisoners taken, as was usually the case with the reports of battle losses at that period of the war. They were usually inaccurate and never trustworthy, as every historian who has honestly tried to find out the truth has learned to his annoyance.

But whatever the exact losses were on either side, they were far greater than were those of many more famous battles, and about as great as those of the battles commonly accounted as of superior proportions. Thus the loss admitted by the Confederates at Murfreesboro out of a force of about 35,000 or 40,000 men, was nearly twice that which Lee, with a force of 68,000, suffered at Fredericksburg; while the admitted Federal loss at Murfreesboro, where the army numbered 43,700 men, was very nearly as great as that sustained by Burnside's army of 120,000 at Fredericksburg, including the fearful slaughter in the six terrible assaults upon Marye's Heights.

Obviously the battle of Murfreesboro must be accounted one of the bloodiest struggles of the war, as well as one of the most heroically contested on both sides. Its indecisiveness has been very interestingly summed up by General Van Horne in his "History of the Army of the Cumberland" as follows:

Neither army commander had fully executed his plan of battle, although General Bragg had approached very nearly the completion of his. He had turned a flank of the National army, bent back the right to the rear of the center, but had failed to turn its left or reach its rear, and hence had not gained the extreme advantages which he had anticipated in assuming the offensive and [which he] had seemingly attained at the grand crisis of the battle. He had assaulted boldly and persistently from first to last, but had completely exhausted his army without gaining a decisive victory. General Rosecrans had fought a battle radically different from the one he had proposed for himself. Instead of turning the right of the Confederate army and taking its center in reverse, according to his plan, he had been forced into the most emphatic straits in maintaining the defensive from flank to flank. Both commanders had lost heavily; General Bragg by continuous assaults with massed forces, and General Rosecrans by resistance at each point to superior numbers, and by frequent recessions under the guns of the enemy... A battle whose emergencies of offense and defense involves the use of all reserves, must necessarily be a bloody one.

It is seldom that an engagement of such dimensions has left two commanding generals so much in doubt as to the course that either would adopt, and hence each determined to await developments, and each was ignorant of the purpose of the other. Of the two General Bragg was the more hopeful.

In the end, as we have seen, both armies fell back and fortified, and campaigning ended in the southwest for that season.

Other events of that winter may be briefly summarized.

Mr. Lincoln's emancipation proclamation became effective on the first of January.

The Confederate Congress passed a second conscription bill in February extending age limits both ways and putting practically every able-bodied white man in the South into the army.

The Federal Congress, on the third of March, authorized the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus, thus virtually establishing martial law throughout the North.

A Confederate loan of \$3,000,000 was promptly subscribed for in Europe.

On the seventh of April the fleet off Charleston assailed the defenses of that city, but was beaten off with the loss of one ironclad, the monitor, Keokuk, sunk.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The Chancellorsville Campaign

However important the operations at the West and South might be, the vital seat of the war was always in Virginia.

There the contending armies ceaselessly threatened the two capitals, the conquest of either of which would have been decisive. There both sides concentrated their best armies. There was present the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia under Lee, of which General Hooker, after being overthrown and beaten by it, testified: "That army has, by discipline alone, acquired a character for steadiness and efficiency, unsurpassed, in my judgment, in ancient or modern times. We have not been able to rival it nor has there been any near approximation to it in the other rebel armies."

And there on the other side was present for duty that Army of the Potomac which had so distinguished itself for heroic devotion and unfaltering courage upon a score of desperately contested battlefields.

After Burnside's bloody defeat at Fredericksburg the authorities at Washington proceeded to swell the Army of the Potomac to vast proportions until as the spring of 1863 approached, its total was no less than 180,000 men and 400 guns.²

Meanwhile operations below Richmond had compelled Lee to detach about one fourth of his force, thus reducing his strength to a total of 58,100 men and 170 pieces of artillery.

There was one important difference, however. In Lee the Southerners had found their very ablest commander, a master of all the arts of war, and an absolute master of the hearts of all the men who served under his command.

The Army of the Potomac had been commanded in succession by McDowell, McClellan, Pope, McClellan again, and Burnside, no one of whom had manifested an ability to contend successfully with Lee, even with the unstinted resources given into the hands of each. The Army of the Potomac still lacked a capable commander and the lack was for long a determining factor of the problem.

Colonel Dodge, an officer of the United States army, and a historian of exquisite conscientiousness and high repute, puts the matter in these words:

Great as was the importance of success in Virginia, the Confederates had appreciated the fact as had not the political soldiers at the head of the Federal Department of War. *Our resources always enabled us to keep more men, and more and better material, on this battle ground than the Confederates could do; but this strength was constantly offset by the ability of the Southern generals³ and their independence of action as opposed to the frequent unskilfulness of ours, who were not only never long in command, but were then tied hand and foot to some ideal plan for insuring the safety of Washington.*

No impartial student of the history of the war can doubt that Colonel Dodge here touches the very marrow of the matter. In the operations in Virginia the North had more men, often by two or three to one, more guns and incalculably better supply departments. Their men were as good as the Southerners. Their guns were better, and their materials immeasurably superior both in quantity and quality. But until Grant was summoned from the West in 1864 to take command, the Army

² These are the figures given by Col. Theodore A. Dodge, U. S. A. , in his singularly able monograph on "The Campaign of Chancellorsville," pages 2 and 19.

³ Italics ours. Author.

of the Potomac was commanded by no general who had capacity enough to make effective use of these superior advantages in a contest of strategic wits with Lee.

The real problem which the Washington authorities were set to solve was to find a general equal to this task, and so long as Halleck remained commander in chief of the Federal forces, there was no hope of success in that search. Commander after commander had been set up only to be promptly and disastrously bowled down again by Lee, in spite of the enormous disparity of numbers, guns and equipment.

But neither Grant nor Sherman was among those who had been appointed to try conclusions with Lee.

Halleck was still supreme as the military counselor of Mr. Lincoln. Grant, in spite of his victories, was a peculiarly objectionable person to him, and Sherman labored under the serious disability of enjoying Grant's favor and esteem in a very high degree.

But after Burnside's failure it was necessary to find a new commander for the Army of the Potomac, and Mr. Lincoln selected General Joseph Hooker to make the next attempt.

General Hooker was an old army officer. He was thoroughly equipped so far as military education was concerned, and he was so ardent in the work of the soldier that his men had lovingly nicknamed him "Fighting Joe Hooker." But he had never commanded an army or planned a campaign. He had made the last and most brilliant of that series of heroic charges up Marye's Heights which Burnside had so foolishly ordered at Fredericksburg. He had made the charge under protest, correctly deeming it a needless sacrifice of men's lives in a hopeless undertaking. But he had made it with extraordinary gallantry and had persisted in it until, as he sarcastically said, "he thought he had lost as many men as he was ordered to lose."

Of his devotion as a soldier, and of his unusual capacity in subordinate command, he had given adequate proof in every battle in which the Army of the Potomac had been engaged, from Manassas to Fredericksburg. But his capacity to lead a great army against a great enemy was wholly conjectural. Mr. Lincoln suggested this in the extraordinary letter in which he announced to Hooker his selection for this supreme trust. That letter was as follows:

*Executive Mansion, Washington,
D. C. , January 26, 1863*

Major-General Hooker:

General: – I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appears to me to be sufficient reasons, and yet I think it best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier, which of course I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself; which is a valuable if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside's command of the army, you have taken counsel of your ambition, and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. 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 it, that I have given you the command. Only those Generals who gain success can set up dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done or will do for all commanders. I much fear that the spirit you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now

turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get any good out of an army while such a spirit prevails in it. And now, beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.

Yours very truly,

A. Lincoln.

Thus commissioned, Hooker undertook the task in which so many predecessors had failed – the task of overcoming Lee, breaking the resisting power of his really wonderful Army of Northern Virginia, conquering the Confederate capital and adding Virginia, with her pith and substance, to the list of states reconquered to the Union.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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