

The overland campaign of 1864 opens with an army of 130,000 pitted against an army of 50,000; and yet, almost immediately, at the Wilderness, defeat, like the sword of Damocles, was seen hanging by a hair. When Lee struck Grant's column of march on the flank, Grant found his hands too full; he could not manipulate his great host. It was size, and size only, that saved his army; for Lee at first with but two thirds of his force present (General Hill not yet having arrived), found it a physical impossibility to strike more than half of the army of the Potomac at one blow; and before he had time, taking it thus in detail, to strike at all, Grant withdrew. At the North Anna we find Grant ridiculously checkmated; and as we see the bloody, futile, senseless charges on the works at Spottsylvania Court House and Cold Harbor, all ideas that we have of Grant's genius vanish, and we are almost compelled to doubt that he possessed common sense. As we pass over the field of Cold Harbor and see the dead lying in long windrows, bruised and mutilated, and all caused by the exasperation of one man, who "hammered continuously," and whose boast it was that he never maneuvered, we cannot keep thinking how well it would have been for himself, his country, humanity, and posterity if he had maneuvered.

The last few months of the siege of Petersburg and Richmond were a lamentable farce. The mine fiasco dispels any remaining traces of belief in Grant's ability; and as we see him impotently besieging a line of works, held by men standing fifteen feet apart, we are confirmed in our belief of his total lack of ability. Lee was nearly circumvallated; the Weldon and Southside railroads were in Grant's hands; Sheridan had almost independently won his great success at Five Forks; and yet Lee, like the consummate strategist that he was, slipped out, and led Grant a lengthy chase along the Appomattox. When, at length, on April 9, 1865, Grant was successful, he captured a force of 8,000 ragged, hungry, dissatisfied men, and the greatest general North America has seen.

It may be said that Grant's plan of hammering continuously was the only feasible plan; that maneuvering had too often been unsuccessfully tried; and that his project of ending the war, at whatever cost, was the best. True, he would undoubtedly have been honored if he had thus crushed Lee at one blow; but when we see him at first egotistically ignore Lee's recognized ability, then reject with contempt everything approaching strategy, and finally fail ignominiously—and at what a cost—in his substitute for strategy, we are compelled to see that the first part of the overland campaign was nothing but a great, bloody, unsuccessful experiment.

General McClellan was too cautious, too systematic, and lacked sufficient of that subtle instinct, which, more than rules, makes success; but it is true that these faults were on the side of merit rather than that of demerit. It is true that placed, as he was, in command of the first campaign of any magnitude, he was outrageously hampered, and compelled to oppose the bigotry of the administration; and equally true is it that the removal of McDowell's powerful corps of 45,000 men at the critical point in the Peninsula campaign, contributed more than anything else to his defeat. Still, had he possessed those qualities with which he was accredited, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he would have gained more decisive victories than he did. Had he made a sudden and immediate assault upon the works at Yorktown, preferably at Dam number 1, midway between Lee's and Wynn's mills, where the water was but waist deep, and where a reconnaissance did cross, he could easily have driven Magrader's small force and captured Richmond before an efficient

opposition could have been brought against him. He failed to appreciate the value of time; and, while he dug impotent ditches, and with infinite toil forwarded huge siege guns, the golden opportunity passed. His only chance for fame he let slip; and when, at length, he reached the vicinity of Richmond, and got astride the Chickahominy—an exceedingly hazardous movement under all circumstances—he found a most efficient opponent. In the the battle of Fair Oaks, McClellan's personality is overshadowed by the ability of Sumner; and, after the battle, he allowed another long interval to elapse in impotency. Jackson appeared almost upon the Union communications at Hanover Court House; and another opportunity was lost. In this retreat from within sight of the steeples of Richmond to Harrison's Landing, McClellan appears to have been frightened into a display of brilliancy; but the general who, under the influence of fear, makes brilliant retreats from positions of which his lethargy deprived him, is certainly not above mediocrity. The detention of Jackson in the White Oak swamp and the delay of Lee's forces in moving out upon the Charles City and Newmarket roads must, however, be considered lucky accidents.

In the Antietam campaign, McClellan was, from the first, aided by finding Lee's order of march; but even this immense advantage was more than counterbalanced by his old fault—lack of dispatch. Had he pushed forward quickly, he could easily have passed Crampton's Gap, held only by McLaws, and relieved Harper's Ferry. This would have placed him almost upon Lee's communications, strangled Lee's plan in its infancy, and prevented the battle of Antietam. As it is, history shows here, if nowhere else, the viciousness of indecision. In the battle itself the interest centres at Dunker's Chapel; and as we see the fragmentary, spasmodic assaults, first Hooker, then Mansfield, and lastly Sumner, all thrown back in confusion and disorder; as we see the wave of battle sweeping back and forth over the same open clearing; and as we think of what might have been accomplished by one immediate, united, decisive effort, our anger and contempt involuntarily rise. McClellan attempts to shift the responsibility upon Burnside by accusing him of deliberate disobedience of orders to attack Lee's centre and right. This Burnside denies; and in his report states that he carried Antietam bridge with the bayonet at one o'clock. His recognized courage together with his previous as well as subsequent high reputation as a corps commander are too well established for us to suspect him of cowardice. McClellan was essentially an organizer. He was a methodical general; but his methods showed strange lack of judgment. He was bound down by theory, and lacked individuality. His successes were few; but his failures, brought about by indecision, were many.

General Pope heralded his accession to power with the blare of trumpets. He made his first lamentable error when he published his order, urging the army of the Potomac to do like their western brethren—"See only the backs of their enemies." In his campaign from the Rapidan to Bull Run culminating in the second battle of Manassas, his efforts availed but little against the mighty genius of Lee; and the only Union general that we see is General Warren, the engineer. General Pope fought one campaign, lost one battle; and then stepped out, not as he stepped in, but amidst silence dark, deep, and desolate.

General Burnside, who, upon accession to command, occupied the painful position of a man with greatness thrust upon him, is deserving of pity. The position of commanding general was unsought by him, and was accepted in trepidation. He mistrusted his power to succeed; and the sequel, bloody and horrible, shows that in his honesty and simplicity