

VALOR AND SKILL IN THE CIVIL WAR.

I.—WAS EITHER THE BETTER SOLDIER ?



HERE appears to have been gathered, by many of the readers of the war literature of the day, a distinctly erroneous impression to the effect that the South fought better than the North ; or, to put it in another way, that the Southerner was the better soldier.

Those who have well studied the subject, or who intelligently served through the war, do not share this opinion ; but there is, in the events of the war, superficially considered, a certain basis for the assumption. This has, however, its very clear limitations.

The South had a certain task to accomplish, and certain means to accomplish it with. The North had its larger task, and larger means. If we will carefully consider what these respective tasks were, and the manner of their working out, it will appear as a result that the North performed its gigantic undertaking not only in a creditable and businesslike manner, but in a manner which will stand the test of historical comparison.

It is not difficult to state the task of the South. It was simply to conquer its independence. No student of the war, no old soldier, no American, but harbors the warmest admiration for what the Southerner did. He began the war with a vow to win or to die in the last ditch. He did not win, but he did actually do the other thing. He gave up the struggle because he had practically used up his last man and fired his last cartridge. Nor he nor any other could do more.

What was the task of the North ? In 1861 the population of the South was five and a half millions, including slaves. As some part of the population had, of necessity, to raise breadstuffs, cotton, and beef, and the slaves did this work, so that nearly all the whites could bear arms, the blacks can fairly be counted as a part of the population, so far as this question is concerned. The suggestion of a constant danger of servile insurrection is best answered by the fact that there was no such insurrection, and that the South was never called on to deplete the ranks at the front to forestall one. The total population of five and a half millions may thus, with perfect fairness, be taken as a factor in the proposition. The population of the North was un-

der twenty millions, that is, but three and a half times as great. From this had to be drawn all the men and material with which to suppress this greatest of the rebellions of history.

If we will turn back to our own Revolution, we shall find that the population of the United Kingdom alone was five times as great as that of the colonies. And yet, Great Britain was unable, after seven years of stanch effort, to reduce these revolted colonies to obedience. If we will go back a half generation further, to old Frederick, we shall find that in the Seven Years' War the population of the allies was twenty times as great as that of Prussia. And yet the allies failed, in those seven years, to wrest Silesia from the iron grip of this "Last of the Kings." Parallel cases might be multiplied, but the above suffices to illustrate the query advanced and its answer.

If a hundred years ago Great Britain, with more than five times their population, failed in seven campaigns to subject the colonies ; if Austria, Russia, France, Sweden, and the Imperial forces combined were unable, in seven campaigns, to overwhelm that grim old Brandenburg monarch, surely we may feel that our work was not ill done, if in five campaigns, with a population of but three and a half to one, we succeeded in crushing out the rebellion of 1861.

And though Frederick, while equally brilliant in victory, was assuredly greater than any modern captain in reverse, it might, perhaps, be claimed that, in Virginia, Lee was all but as much superior to most of the generals opposed to him as the Prussian king to Prince Karl, Field-Marschals Browne and Daun, and the others with whom he had to do. Such superiority was not as marked in the West as in the East ; but the average general officer of the South won his stars by service and not by political scheming, and he certainly largely outranked the average general of the North. At all events the Southern management of military affairs was sufficiently better than ours to warrant the above parallelism as a reasonably fair one.

Another point is noticeable. Frederick rarely had in the field more than one-quarter of the force of his enemies ; but on the battlefield, by superior strategy, central position, interior lines, and nimble legs, he usually managed to oppose to them one-half as many at the point of actual contact. Owing to its extraordinary exertions, the South had under arms,

until the last third of the war, an average of about three-quarters of the force of the North. And we shall see that at the point of actual contact the forces of the North and the South were not far from equal up to 1864.

TABLE OF NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN FORCES UNDER ARMS.

Date.	Federals.	Confed's.	Per cent.
Jan. 1, 1861.....	16,000 ..	Arming	
July 1, 1861.....	186,000 ..	150,000 ..	80
Jan. 1, 1862.....	576,000 ..	350,000 ..	60
March 1, 1862....	637,000 ..	500,000 ..	80
Jan. 1, 1863.....	918,000 ..	690,000 ..	78
Jan. 1, 1864.....	860,000 ..	400,000 ..	47
Jan. 1, 1865.....	959,000 ..	250,000 ..	26
March 31, 1865..	980,000 ..	175,000 ..	18
May 1, 1865.....	1,000,000 ..	none	

Moreover, out of this none too great margin the North was compelled, partly by the nature of its task, and partly in consequence of its frequently absurd political strategy, to keep a much larger number than the South on detached service. Compared, then, with what other nations have accomplished, it may be claimed that the statistics of our war abundantly demonstrate that the North did the business of suppressing the Rebellion in a workmanlike and respectable, not to say handsome manner, leaving, under the circumstances, no great room for adverse criticism. In yielding our sincerest admiration to the splendid efforts of the South we must not lose sight of the noble work of the North, nor of the conditions under which it was accomplished.

Again, to take up the impression prevailing that the Southerners were better fighters than the Northerners. This is also disproved by the figures. As has been frequently pointed out, the Southern troops throughout the war were a homogeneous body. The Northern troops were never so much so, and after the first two years were largely made up of "rag, tag, and bobtail." The Southerner felt that he was fighting for his home and fireside. This greatest of all inspirations we lacked. He fought with an intimate knowledge of the *terrain*, with the aid of every farmer—indeed, of every woman—as a spy. He was more in earnest, as a rule, as will be every soldier whose fields and homestead are being wasted and burned. Until the end, there was in the South never a day when there was actual danger of the war being stopped by political opposition. How was it in the North? The South had only the North to fight. The North had the South, and the most unreasonable part of its own population besides, to contend with.

I think it will be generally admitted, even by Southern soldiers, that some of the troops of the Army of the Potomac were always as good as any equal number in the Army of

Northern Virginia. I am rather inclined to think that, estimating arms, rationing, and material, fifty thousand men of the three arms could have been picked out of the Potomac army superior to any fifty thousand in Lee's. It is certain that out of the two an army of one hundred thousand men could have been selected, of as high a grade in every characteristic as, and of a higher grade of intelligence and adaptability than, any troops that ever bore arms. The Army of the Potomac was always weakened by the admixture of poor material, far more than its gallant adversary. If the old *cadres* could have been kept full, instead of reinforcements coming in the shape of new regiments, that army, at two-thirds its average strength, would have been a far better fighting machine. Grant's Virginia campaign illustrates this fact. I have no disposition to discuss the political conditions which necessitated our system of recruiting or the management of the armies. My question is purely a military one. But how many of us there were who for months carried about empty commissions to the grades we had honestly earned, but on which we could not be mustered, because by hard fighting our regiments had been reduced below the prescribed standard, and who gazed, heart-sick, at the brand-new shoulder-straps of the men who, at the eleventh hour, had helped to raise a new regiment. Such was rarely the case in the Southern armies.

The Army of the Potomac always had some of the best corps commanders. Not so with its chiefs. Certainly that army never enjoyed the advantage of having the same commander and practically the same generals of corps, divisions, and brigades, duly promoted, year in and year out, as did the Army of Northern Virginia. All these facts militated as much against the efficiency of the Northern as they contributed to that of the Southern troops. And yet, barring errors in command, what stanch work the much-tried Potomac army did through its four years' life. Whatever is said about the forces in Virginia applies, though modified by the difference in conditions, and often by the difference in commanders, equally to the Western armies.

It is no doubt true that the Southern advantage of defensive war, interior lines, knowledge of the topography of the theater of operations, and superior strategy, enabled them, from smaller means, to oppose us at the point of actual contact with equal numbers. But it is not true that, at the point of contact, man for man, the Southerner fought better. Look at the following items of numbers actually engaged. The figures cover the years 1861, 1862, and 1863, the period before the South was quite overmatched. They have been diligently

- compared with the best authorities, and are as accurate as such comparison can make them. The numbers have been taken without bias, and were computed in each case without an idea of what their tabulation would show. While there is occasionally exhibited by some critics a disposition to trim statistics, or to deny the accuracy of even the Official War Records, it is thought that the fairness of the following items will be generally admitted. Certainly no reasonable or admissible variation will alter the conclusion which must be drawn from them.
- JULY 21, 1861.**—At Bull Run, Virginia, McDowell had 28,000 men; Beauregard, 25,000. The result of the day's fighting was an apparent Union success, until, late in the afternoon, Johnston came in on the Union flank with 5000 fresh troops, when victory changed to defeat.
- AUGUST 10, 1861.**—At Wilson's Creek, Missouri, Lyon had 5000 men; Price and McCulloch, over 10,000. In spite of these great odds it was a hardly won Confederate victory.
- OCTOBER 21, 1861.**—At Ball's Bluff, Virginia, Baker had 1900 men; Evans, 3200. Though the Federals fought bravely, their defeat was of the worst.
- NOVEMBER 7, 1861.**—At Belmont, Missouri, Grant had 3100 men. The enemy at first had but 1000, but Polk gradually reinforced this body up to 5000 or 6000. Confederate victory.
- JANUARY 19, 1862.**—At Mill Springs, Kentucky, Thomas, with about 6000 men, utterly defeated Zollicoffer, with an equal number.
- FEBRUARY 14-16, 1862.**—Grant attacked Fort Donelson, Tennessee, garrisoned by 20,000 men, with a force not exceeding 15,000. He was subsequently reinforced up to 25,000 men. Brilliant Union success.
- MARCH 6-8, 1862.**—At Pea Ridge, Arkansas, Curtis with 12,000 men won a handsome victory over Price and Van Dorn, with a force of over 26,000, of which 16,000 were of good quality, and the rest raw levies and Indians.
- MARCH 23, 1862.**—At Winchester, Virginia, with 7000 men, Shields won a victory over Jackson, who had about 4200 on the field.
- APRIL 6-7, 1862.**—At Shiloh, Tennessee, Grant, with 40,000 men, was driven into a desperate corner on April 6, by A. S. Johnston and Beauregard, with an equal number. Next day, Buell, with his fresh troops, and with Grant in reserve, probably 50,000 men in all, defeated Beauregard, whose 30,000 men still left fought, nevertheless, most handsomely to retain their advantage.
- MAY 5, 1862.**—At Williamsburg, Virginia, Hooker, with some 10,000 men, bore the brunt of the fight, against Longstreet's equal force, from early dawn till late in the afternoon, when Kearny relieved him. Later, Hancock's and Peck's brigades came into action. In all, some 20,000 Union troops engaged, probably, 12,000 to 14,000 Confederates. Longstreet held his ground till night, and then retreated.
- MAY 8, 1862.**—At McDowell, Jackson, with some 8000 men, badly defeated Milroy and Schenck, with 3500.
- MAY 25, 1862.**—At Winchester, Jackson, with some 18,000 men, defeated Banks, with 5000.
- MAY 27, 1862.**—At Hanover Court House, Fitz John Porter, with 10,000 men, won a handsome victory over Branch, with 9000. Branch's forces at the beginning of the fight were quite scattered.
- MAY 31, 1862.**—At Seven Pines (or Fair Oaks), Virginia, Keyes fought alone, but unsuccessfully, against great odds till after 3 P. M., when Kearny came up. Then Keyes and Kearny, 19,000 against 39,000, held their ground till Sumner came in on their right flank. The Union force was then some 32,000 men; the Confederates, under G. W. Smith, Longstreet, and D. H. Hill, were some 40,000. Huger's forces were not actually in the fight until the following day. The next day, June 1, the Union forces recovered a part of the lost ground, and during the night the Confederates fell back towards Richmond.
- JUNE 8, 1862.**—At Cross Keys, Virginia, Ewell, with 5000 men, defeated Fremont, with 12,000.
- JUNE 9, 1862.**—At Port Republic, Tyler and Carroll, with 3500 men, held their ground against Jackson's 12,000 for several hours.
- JUNE 26, 1862.**—At Meadow Bridge (or Mechanicsville), McCall, with 9000 men, inflicted grievous loss on A. P. Hill, with 14,000. McCall held his ground till night, and then retired.
- JUNE 27, 1862.**—At Gaines' Mill, Porter, with 35,000 men, held the bulk of the Confederate Army—at least 60,000 strong—at bay all day, retiring after night fell. The victory remained with Lee, but Porter's fighting was magnificent.
- JUNE 29, 1862.**—At Allen's Farm, Richardson and Sedgwick, 16,000 men, easily held head against a brilliant attack by McLaws and Griffith, with 7000, retiring at night.
- JUNE 29, 1862.**—At Savage's Station, Sumner and Franklin, with 26,000 men, held back four brigades of Magruder and McLaws, with about 10,000, retiring at night. These two actions were affairs of the rear guard of the Army of the Potomac. The Confederate attacks were handsomely made.
- JUNE 30, 1862.**—Franklin, with a part of Sedgwick, some 18,000, held the approaches of White Oak Swamp against Jackson, whose corps was about 36,000 strong. There was no chance in this detail for Jackson to attack.
- JUNE 30, 1862.**—At Glendale, Hooker, McCall, and part of Sedgwick—18,000—held their ground against the staunchest efforts of Longstreet, A. P. Hill, Huger, and Magruder, some 20,000, retiring at night.
- JULY 1, 1862.**—At Malvern Hill, McClellan had about 60,000 men at hand; Lee, probably 50,000 men. The Confederate attacks were confined to fifteen brigades of Magruder, D. H. Hill, and Huger, say 34,000 men, against Porter, Couch, Morell, Kearny, Caldwell, Sickles, Meagher, say 40,000 men. This was a clear Union victory.
- AUGUST 8, 1862.**—At Cedar Mountain, Virginia, Banks's 7500 men made so smart an attack on Jackson's force of 21,500, that the Confederates retired from the field at night. Banks also withdrew. Much the larger part of Jackson's force was engaged.
- AUGUST 28, 1862.**—Near Gainesville, Virginia, the brigades of Gibbon and Doubleday, with 5000

- men, made a gallant fight against Ewell and Taliaferro, with six brigades, some 7000; but accomplished no result. The Federals held the field till 1 A. M.
- AUGUST 29, 1862.—At Groveton, Reynolds, Sigel, Reno, Heintzelman, and Stevens, 26,000 men, attacked Jackson's 25,000, but without result. On the same day, Hatch, with 5000 men, had a sharp fight with two brigades of Hood's, some 3800 men, without definite result.
- AUGUST 30, 1862.—At the Second Bull Run (a continuation of the two preceding battles), Pope had about 58,000 men to Lee's 51,000. Practically, the whole force was engaged on both sides. Brilliant Confederate victory.
- SEPTEMBER 1, 1862.—At Chantilly, Reno, Stevens, and Kearny, 11,000 strong, held A. P. Hill, with 8000, in check.
- SEPTEMBER 14, 1862.—Two divisions of Reno, Meade, Hatch, and Ricketts, 22,000 strong, forced Turner's Gap, on South Mountain, Maryland, defended by D. H. Hill and two divisions of Longstreet, all but 14,000 strong.
- SEPTEMBER 14, 1862.—Slocum and Brooks, with 6500 men, drove McLaws, with 4000 to 5000, from Crampton's Gap.
- SEPTEMBER 16-17, 1862.—At Antietam, Maryland, Lee's 40,000 men fought a most stubborn battle against McClellan's 75,000 men, of whom some 25,000 were not engaged. Lee put in his last man, and though forced to retire, he did so at his leisure.
- SEPTEMBER 19, 1862.—At Iuka, Mississippi, Price's 13,000 men defeated Rosecrans's head of column, Hamilton's division, of 5000 men. But, as Ord was approaching from the north, Price deemed it prudent to retire.
- OCTOBER 3-4, 1862.—At Corinth, Mississippi, the forces were about 22,000 on a side, and Rosecrans defeated Van Dorn.
- OCTOBER 8, 1862.—Buell, with 20,000 men, defeated Bragg, with an equal number, at Perryville.
- DECEMBER 7, 1862.—At Prairie Grove, Arkansas, the Federal general Blunt defeated Hindman. Forces about 10,000 each.
- DECEMBER 13, 1862.—The numbers in contact at Fredericksburg, Virginia, are impossible to estimate; nor was this a ranged battle. It was a gallant, but wrong-headed, attempt to do the impossible.
- DECEMBER 31, 1862.—At Stone's River, Kentucky, Rosecrans, with 43,000 men, though at first driven back by Bragg's 47,000, managed to hold his own, and retain the field of battle. No praise is too high for the fighting on both sides.
- MAY 2-5, 1863.—Chancellorsville was the most brilliant of Lee's victories. Here, by his splendid tactical dispositions, with 60,000 men, he defeated Hooker with twice the number. But looking only at the actual fighting, on May 2, at Dowdall's Tavern, Jackson, with 22,000 men, defeated Howard, with 10,000; on May 3, at Fairview, Stuart, with 37,000 men, drove in Sickles and Couch, with 32,000; on the same day, at Salem Church, four Confederate brigades of 10,000 men defeated Brooks, with 9000; on May 4, at Banks's Ford, Lee, with 25,000 men, defeated Sedgwick, with 20,000. The fighting of the Confederates was as superb as Lee's tactics. Wherever engaged, the Unionists fought with equal credit, but pluck was unavailing against Hooker's hebetude.
- MAY 16, 1863.—At Champion's Hill, Mississippi, Grant had 15,000 men actually engaged, against Pemberton's 16,000. The latter suffered a disastrous defeat.
- JULY 1-4, 1863.—Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. There is much dispute as to the numbers engaged, but 68,000 Confederates against 82,000 Federals is not far from the mark. On the first day Hill and Ewell much outnumbered as well as defeated the First and Eleventh Corps; on the second day the fight of the Third Corps, with some reinforcements, against Hood and McLaws was about an even thing as to numbers and result, and the same applies to the fighting on Cemetery Hill; on the third day that part of the column under Pickett, Pettigrew, and Trimble which reached our line was speedily outnumbered by the forces which rushed in towards the threatened point.
- SEPTEMBER 19-20, 1863.—At Chickamauga, Georgia, Rosecrans, with 55,000 men, was badly defeated by Bragg, with 65,000. But the stand here made by Thomas on Horse-shoe Ridge, against the repeated assaults of vast odds, will be forever memorable.
- NOVEMBER 23-25, 1863.—At Chattanooga, Grant had about 60,000 men; Bragg, over 40,000. The defeat of the latter was overwhelming.

This list of fifty battles gives twenty victories to the Confederates, an equal number to the Federals, and leaves ten which may fairly be called drawn. In these fifty battles, at the point of fighting contact, the Confederates outnumbered the Federals by an average of about two per cent.

As regards brilliant assaults upon regular works, the Confederates were never called on to show such devotion as was manifested by the Federals at Fredericksburg, the several assaults at Vicksburg and Port Hudson, Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg. Few trials of fighting qualities, in any war, go beyond some of these.

As will be seen from the table of forces, after the winter of 1863-64 the Union forces so vastly outnumbered the Confederate, that comparison of the merits of actual fighting becomes more difficult. We can deduce little from the battles except stanch purpose on the Federal, and brilliant courage, coupled with marvelously able military management, on the Confederate side. But if one will take the pains to tabulate the numbers actually engaged during all but the last months of the crumbling away of the Confederate armies, there appear plainly two facts: first, that the Confederates, by superior management and better position, opposed to the Federals fully equal numbers at the point of fighting contact; and secondly, that of the combats during the entire struggle the Federals had their full share of the victories.

It is certain that the statistics of the war rob the wearers of the blue and the gray of the

right to boast one at the expense of the other. Neither can claim superiority in actual battle. The case bears enough semblance to Greek meeting Greek to satisfy the reasonable aspirations of either "Yank" or "Johnny."

And in this connection it may not be amiss, once more, to give our national self-esteem a *bonne bouche* in the following table:

TABLE OF LOSSES IN SUNDRY BATTLES OF THE EIGHTEENTH AND NINETEENTH CENTURIES.

	Percentage of killed and wounded of number engaged.
Prussians.— Up to Waterloo, in eight battles	18.42
“ At Königgrätz	3.86
Austrians.— Up to Waterloo, in seven battles	11.17
“ Since in two	8.56
French.— Up to Waterloo, in nine battles	22.38
“ Since in nine	8.86
Germans.— Since 1745, in eight battles	11.53
English.— In four battles	10.36
Federals.— In eleven battles	12.89
Confederates.— In eleven battles	14.16

From this table it is manifest that, excepting only the troops of Frederick and of Napoleon, the American volunteer has shown himself equal to taking the severest punishment of any troops upon the field of battle. The wonderfully pertinacious tactics of those two great captains, rather than the discipline of their troops, explains the excess of loss of their battles. And while the capacity to face heavy loss is but one of the elements which go to make up the soldier, it is perhaps of them all the most telling.

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II.—WHICH WAS THE BETTER ARMY?

It is a Northern tradition that no army ever entered the field better organized than the Army of the Potomac; that McClellan alone had the science of army construction fixed in his mind. Of the leading officers of both sides many were his classmates; all of them studied from the same books, and received instruction from the same wise lips; many were high in rank, mature in age, had remained in continuous service, and were familiar with the handling of troops. Any one of them with the same opportunity possibly might have equaled, if not have bettered, the by no means perfect

¹ Yet General Lee was dissatisfied with the organization of his army, for on May 21, 1863, he wrote to General Hood: "You must so inspire and lead your brave division as that it may accomplish the work of a corps. I agree with you as to the size of the corps of this army. They are too large, for the country we have to operate in, for one man to handle. I saw it all last campaign. I have endeavored to remedy it,—this in a measure at least,—but do not know whether I shall

organization of the Federal army. It was laid down in military primers that so many men made a regiment, so many regiments a brigade, a number of brigades a division, a few divisions a corps, and the combination of corps made the army. The old army that fought in Mexico and served for years on the frontier was built on these rules. European armies were formed on the same general plan.

That the formation of an army from zealous but untrained volunteers required a vast deal of labor, none will deny; that the arming and supplying of such an army and the gathering together of all its immense trains required a deal of forethought and wisdom, all will admit; but the fallacy that grew up in the minds of a people unused to war, that in only one man, among all our skilled officers, was this power of organization ripe and complete, would, if true, be a blot upon the boasted intelligence and ability of Northern men.

The chief trouble with the "marvelous" formation of the Army of the Potomac was the fact that it always seemed necessary to reorganize it. McClellan divided it into seven corps, thereby giving the army seven almost independent commanders—seven men with different ideas and ambitions, who could never be fully relied upon for effective coöperation in the emergency of battle. Upon the accession of Burnside to power, reorganization began: the independence of corps commands was done away with, and the army formed into three grand divisions of two or more corps each, and designated the Right, Center, and Left Grand Divisions. Under Hooker this idea went to pieces, and we find the seven corps in use again. When Grant came east, though the Army of the Potomac had more men than ever before, he reduced the formation to three corps, thus showing his disapproval of the multiplicity of small commands, and his commendation of Lee's plan, from the start, of building his army in large parts.¹ In view of the four years of terrible bloodshed; in view of the fact, that, although backed by vast power and wealth, it was impossible to conquer the smaller Army of Northern Virginia, half equipped and half supplied, except by wearing them out—the assertion is ventured that it was superior to the Army of the Potomac in its formation. While the brigades of the Confederate army were no larger than those of the Federal

succeed. . . . I agree with you also in believing that our army would be invincible if it could be properly organized and officered. There never were such men in an army before. They will go anywhere and do anything if properly led. But there is the difficulty: proper commanders, where can they be obtained? But they are improving, constantly improving."—EDITOR.

army, its divisions were nearly twice as large; rarely less than four brigades, they were oftener six and seven. The commanders of such divisions became men of wide experience in that most vital necessity of a successful soldier, the ability to handle large bodies of troops, and they were enabled to maintain their grasp on affairs when suddenly called by the exigencies of battle to assume still wider command. The corps formation was in the same proportion larger and more substantial than that of the Union army, four and sometimes five of their large divisions being incorporated into one corps as against the usual Federal corps of three small divisions. The commander of a Confederate corps became a general officer in every sense of the word. His command was a *corps d'armée*, and his duties fell little short of those of a chief. Had this system of larger divisions and corps been carried out in our army, the Federal commanders would have been accustomed to handle large forces when they were called, one after another, to assume vast responsibilities, and a different story might possibly have been told of the war. History need not be studied very deeply to ascertain the value and power of these large corps when thrown suddenly upon some weak point in the opposing lines. To mention one of many instances: On the afternoon of the last day's fight at the Second Bull Run, disaster was made a certainty when Longstreet, with his five divisions, suddenly struck the Federal flank. When we understand fully the stubborn, though unavailing, resistance made against him, it does not require a very large imagination to realize how futile would have been his movement had he thrown the force of a Federal corps against us; for one does not require a military education to comprehend that a Federal corps of eight or nine brigades could not be thrown into action with the sledge-hammer force of a corps consisting, as Longstreet's did that day, of fifteen brigades. This corps was the equal of three opposing Federal corps in the number of brigades and men, and was operated under the guidance of one brain, whereas the same movement on our side would have been controlled by three different corps commanders, thus imperiling success through the splitting up of authority and action. Such a *coup de main* as Longstreet's, or as Jackson's at Chancellorsville, has rarely been successful when trusted to the coöperation of several commanders. Union rosters show corps with five, six, and rarely over nine brigades distributed among three divisions. The Confederate roster shows twenty or more brigades to a corps. The Ninth Corps, from the beginning, had, with temporary exception, only two brigades to a division, so that many Confederate divisions were as

large as this corps, and had one head, a major-general, as compared with three major-generals and a corps commander for the Union corps. The rosters show that in six corps of the Army of the Potomac twenty-four major-generals, or officers holding that authority, were in command of corps and divisions containing forty-five brigades, while in two corps of the Army of Northern Virginia only eleven generals of that rank were in command of forty-one brigades, showing in the Union army a scattering of command and consequent weakness in power. By such subdivision the plums of power were made numerous, and the applicants for them proved plentiful. The extra stars and powerful positions were sought not wholly through the medium of valor and experience, but through political means.

Another serious objection to so many small commands was the large detail for staff work. Under McClellan's organization these details were lavish in the extreme. The daily reports of the Federal army always had to be reduced nearly one-quarter to get at the actual fighting strength. Each brigade, each division, and each corps, no matter how small, must have its staff, its guards, its wagon train. A division of twice the size would scarcely have required more. The experienced soldier will readily understand what thirteen fewer major-generals means in the way of effective service,—thirteen fewer little kings with princely retinues to be drawn from the active body,—and also, still better, the difference in detail if two corps commanders were to take the place of six or seven, each with its staff, commissariat, quartermaster, ordnance, medical, inspection, and signal departments, pioneers, guards, and wagoners, to each division and corps.

With respect to the discipline of the two armies, McClellan says of the Confederate army that it was "the equal in heroism of any that ever met the shock of battle"; Hooker says, "Its discipline was unsurpassed by any army of ancient or modern times"; and many others pay the same glowing tributes. What but discipline made it so perfect in form that Lee, caring for it with the gentleness of a woman, yet ruled it with a rod of iron? The rank and file of the two armies differed widely: one was built upon intelligence, education, and equality; the other governed by intelligence, but formed largely of a less intelligent force. Discipline in one army could never attain its perfect height owing to this equality, but in the other a hundred years of rule by the higher over the lower made such rule and discipline possible. Such a force thrown into battle was almost resistless, and the question of organization or discipline in the Army of Northern Virginia needs no other

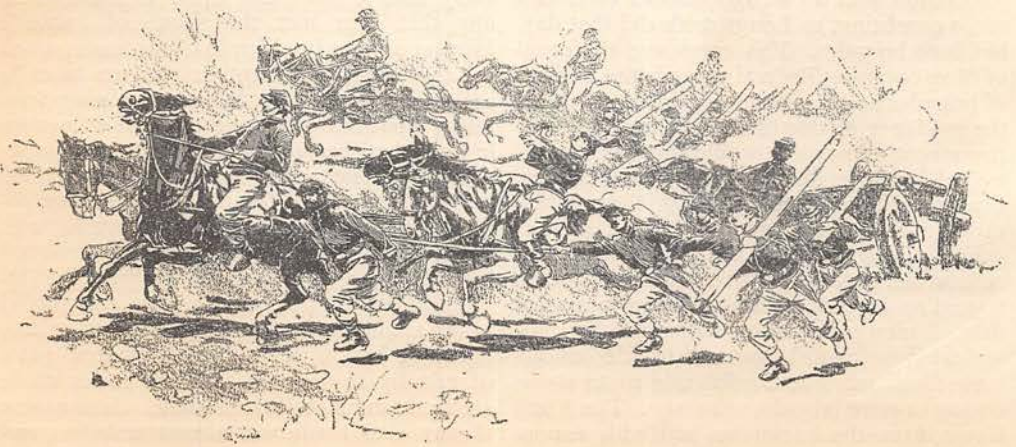
answer than a reading of the roll of battles fought on Virginia soil from Bull Run to Appomattox.

Yet the valor of rank and file avails but little if the man at the head is not stanch and strong. The Confederates trusted Lee, almost with adoration; but the Army of the Potomac had trusted so many times, only to be cast into the depths of despair, that trust had become almost a forgotten memory. Wherein did the South, with small area and limited population, have any better facilities for calling skilled men to lead them than did the vast and populous North? Why was the old army capable of furnishing better soldiers in its recreant officers than in its loyal ones? Why were Southern leaders in command for the war, while every roar of battle gave us a new one? One answer may be that the unfortunate commanders of the Potomac army were by their very organization unused to wide command. The small corps gave no opportunity to acquire the experience necessary suddenly to assume control of seven times their usual command, and in contact with men whose daily duties had given them that indispensable experience they went down like a row of bricks. Lee, with only the instruction of an insignificant war, led his ill-supplied army from victory to victory, year after year, beating back with terrible losses the wonderfully organized, perfectly equipped, lavishly supplied, abundantly officered Army of the Potomac. The Army of Northern Virginia was apparently organized to *stay*; its commanders were allowed time to gain experience in their duties and to learn

thoroughly the management of troops, and when this was accomplished they were trained soldiers, quick in action, valorous in battle, and able to grasp and execute the emergencies of the conflict. Our officers were shifted with every turn of the wind, and before an officer could learn his duties or gain control of his troops, jealousy, defeat, or political machinations secured dismissal or transfer; McClellan, McDowell, Franklin, Sumner, Porter, Hooker, Heintzelman, Keyes, Couch, Burnside, Sigel, Pleasonton, and so on — oh, how long the list! In the words of another: "The Army of the Potomac was better than its commanders; it marched and fought and hungered and thirsted for four years, hardly ever animated by victory. It showed, in all that it achieved and endured, that it was an admirable instrument for the hand that knew how to wield it, but it never had the good fortune to be commanded by a soldier worthy of it. It fought to the end, it did its work, and gained its crown, but its path was long and rough and seldom cheered."

The ten thousand Union soldiers who fell in death or wounds before the heights of Fredericksburg, and the seventeen thousand lost at Chancellorsville, were the equals in bravery of any soldiers in the annals of warfare; so were the twenty-odd thousand who bathed Gettysburg's ridge with blood, or the fourscore thousands carried from the fields of Virginia when Grant was in command. The leaders who guided the operations of our army upon so many disastrous fields will, alone, bear criticism or comparison, and in the calmness of the future will be called to judgment.

Charles A. Patch,
U. S. Volunteers.



GOING INTO ACTION UNDER FIRE. (FROM A WAR-TIME SKETCH.)

OPEN LETTERS.

"Valor and Skill in the Civil War."

IN THE CENTURY for May, 1890, there appeared an exceedingly interesting article entitled "Valor and Skill in the Civil War." The article was divided into two parts, the first written by Colonel Theodore Ayrault Dodge of the United States Army, the second by Charles A. Patch of the United States Volunteers. The whole article is in so friendly a spirit that we are obliged to believe in the intention of the writers to be fair. Yet in the part written by Colonel Dodge occur some very misleading and erroneous statements. It is the purpose of this article to call attention to some of these statements, but without any design of discussing the question "Was either the better soldier?" In arguing that the Southern Confederacy was not as greatly overmatched as some nations that had been more successful, Colonel Dodge says:

If we will turn back to our own Revolution, we shall find that the population of the United Kingdom alone was five times as great as that of the colonies. And yet Great Britain was unable, after seven years of staunch effort, to reduce these revolted colonies to obedience. If we will go back a half generation further, to old Frederick, we shall find that in the Seven Years' War the population of the allies was twenty times as great as that of Prussia. And yet the allies failed in those seven years to wrest Silesia from the iron grip of this "Last of the Kings." . . . If a hundred years ago Great Britain, with more than five times their population, failed in seven campaigns to subject the colonies; if Austria, Russia, France, Sweden, and the Imperial forces combined were unable, in seven campaigns, to overwhelm that grim old Brandenburg monarch, surely we may feel that our work was not ill done, if in five campaigns, with a population of but three and a half to one, we succeeded in crushing out the rebellion of 1861.

Colonel Dodge seems to overlook the fact that the broad Atlantic, separating Britain from her revolted colonies, was worth to the cause of America thousands of men. He also leaves entirely out of the count France, Spain, and Holland, which powerful nations all combined against Great Britain. At Yorktown the allied armies of France and the United States more than doubled the effective force under Cornwallis, and, besides, a powerful French fleet made certain the victory which secured American liberty. In the war of the Revolution Great Britain was the party overmatched and not the United States. Again, in the Silesian or Seven Years' War Frederick had as his allies Britain, Hanover, and Hesse, whose combined army, under the able leadership of Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick, did splendid service for the Prussian king. When at the close of his sixth campaign all subsidies from England were stopped by the Earl of Bute (after George II.'s death), Frederick was reduced to as great straits as was the Southern Confederacy at the close of 1864. Prussia was at her last gasp; but the death of the Czarina converted the most powerful of Frederick's enemies into a fast friend, and the Czar Peter III. joined his army to that of Prussia, while Sweden also retired from the alliance against him. Thus by timely help when all seemed lost Frederick was saved. Alone and unaided the Confederacy struggled for four

years against a foe whose population outnumbered its own in the ratio of three and one-half to one, and whose armies were swelled by thousands of recruits from the nations of Europe. Again, Colonel Dodge says:

Owing to its extraordinary exertions, the South had under arms, until the last third of the war, an average of about three-quarters of the force of the North. And we shall see that at the point of actual contact the forces of the North and the South were not far from equal up to 1864.

To prove this statement he introduces the following extraordinary

TABLE OF NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN FORCES UNDER ARMS.

Date.	Federals.	Confederates.	Per cent.
January 1, 1861..	16,000	Arming.	
July 1, 1861.....	186,000	150,000	80
January 1, 1862..	576,000	350,000	60
March 1, 1862....	637,000	500,000	80
January 1, 1863..	918,000	690,000	78
January 1, 1864..	860,000	400,000	47
January 1, 1865..	959,000	250,000	26
March 31, 1865..	980,000	175,000	18
May 1, 1865;....	1,000,000	None.	

From what source did Colonel Dodge get the above figures? In the greatest war-history ever published, viz. "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," we find, Vol. IV., p. 767, an article entitled, "Notes on the Union and Confederate Armies." In these notes we find, taken from the official records, a table showing the number of men enlisted in the army and navy of the United States during the civil war. This number amounted to 2,778,304. There is another table, also taken from the official records, showing the whole number of men enrolled—present and absent—in the active armies of the Confederacy on each 1st of January:

Jan'y 1, 1862	Jan'y 1, 1863	Jan'y 1, 1864	Jan'y 1, 1865
318,011	465,384	472,781	439,675

The writer of the "Notes" adds:

"Very few, if any, of the local land forces, and none of the naval, are included in the tabular exhibit. If we take the 472,000 men in service at the beginning of 1864 and add thereto at least 250,000 deaths occurring prior to that date, it gives over 700,000. The discharges for disability and other causes and the desertions would probably increase the number (inclusive of the militia and naval forces) to over 1,000,000."

Now, every one knows that the Confederate armies were much smaller in 1864 than in 1862 or 1863, and in 1865 they were smaller still. Hence it is evident that the absent list included sick, disabled, prisoners of war, and deserters. Every soldier knows that in an active campaign the absent from proper causes soon number a large proportion of the force enrolled, and that in garrison duty there is always a large proportion of sick. On page 290, Volume VII., "Southern Historical Society Papers," Adjutant-General Cooper, of the Confederate army, says: "I can only state from general recollection that during the two last years of the

war, the monthly returns of our armies received at my office exhibited the present active force in the field nearly one-half less than the returns themselves actually called for, on account of absentees by sickness, extra duty, furlough, desertions, and other casualties incident to a campaign life."

Of the 439,675 *present and absent* on the first of January, 1865, the Army of Northern Virginia is credited with 155,000 and the Army of Tennessee with 86,995. Now it is a well-known fact that at that very time the Army of Northern Virginia had less than 60,000 effectives for the field and the Army of Tennessee could not have mustered 20,000 effectives. At this rate the total available force of the Confederacy at that time must have been less than 150,000 men. Now the official records show conclusively that the Confederacy never at any time had 690,000 men enrolled present and absent; 472,000 present and absent is the largest number enrolled at any time, and that, too, on the 1st of January, 1864, when everybody acquainted with the facts knows that the Confederate armies were smaller than in either of the previous years. The writer of "Notes on the Union and Confederate Armies," as we have seen, estimates that, inclusive of the militia and naval forces, there were enlisted in the Confederate armies from first to last more than a million men. When we consider that the militia consisted of old men, boys, and disabled soldiers who had already been once enrolled, 100,000 would be a liberal estimate for the militia and naval forces of the Confederate States, which would bring the total number of enlistments considerably below a million. But suppose we concede the correctness of the estimate of the writer of the "Notes." Then, if 2,700,000 enlistments in the Union armies give as the largest force under arms at any one time only one million men, surely 1,000,000 total enlistments in the Confederate armies ought to give as the largest force under arms at any one time only a little over 370,000 men, inclusive of militia and naval forces.

We also think that Colonel Dodge's list of battles contains several mistakes. At Fort Donelson the Confederates did not have over 15,000. Grant brought against them about 27,000, of whom, he claims, 6000 or 7000 were guarding trains.

At Cedar Mountain, Virginia, Banks had on the field from first to last 17,900 men instead of 7500, and he was driven entirely from the field. Jackson, who had 20,000 men with him, held the field and buried the dead, and on the second day after the battle retired behind the Rapidan to wait the arrival of Lee. At Perryville, Kentucky, Buell had, according to the official records, 54,000 men, about half of whom were actually engaged, and Bragg 16,000. Each side claimed the victory, but Bragg's loss was only three-fourths that of Buell. At Murfreesboro', or Stone's River, Tennessee, according to the official records Rosecrans had 43,000 men, while Bragg had 37,000 instead of 47,000. At Antietam, or Sharpsburg, according to McClellan's report the Union army numbered 87,000, and about 60,000 took part in the actual fighting. According to Lee's report the Confederate army numbered less than 40,000. If Malvern Hill, from which the Union army retired at night without waiting for the renewal of the Confederate attack, was a Union victory, then most assuredly Antietam, where Lee repulsed nearly twice his numbers and

offered battle all the next day without being attacked, was a Confederate victory.

Colonel Dodge also makes the following statement: "As regards brilliant assaults upon regular works, the Confederates were never called on to show such devotion as was manifested by the Federals at Fredericksburg, the several assaults at Vicksburg and Port Hudson, Spotsylvania, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg."

How about the persistent and successful assaults of the Confederates upon McClellan's fortified lines at Richmond, their successful attack upon Hooker's entrenched lines at Chancellorsville, their attack upon a force equal to their own behind strong field-works at Corinth, their brilliant but hopeless assault at Knoxville, and their brilliant and almost successful assault upon superior forces strongly posted at Gettysburg?

The aim of this article is merely to get at the facts of history. The Union and Confederate soldiers made each a noble record of heroic deeds, of which all Americans may well be proud.

Joseph T. Derry,
Formerly of the 1st and 63d Georgia Regiments.

COLONEL DODGE'S REJOINER.

I DID not suppose that my article would provoke controversy; I awaited criticism. Mr. Derry has stated his objections fairly. They are hard to answer, because, whether he is right or wrong, my conclusion remains unimpeached. What I sought to show was that, after all is said, the business of suppressing the insurrection of the South was fairly well done by the United States, compared with the military work of other times and countries; and that, taking the actual fighting done, there was not much to choose between Yankee and Southron. Suppose the table of forces under arms to be corrected to conform to that in Vol. IV. of the "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War," it will not change the conclusion that, "compared, then, with what other nations have accomplished, it may be claimed that the statistics of our war abundantly demonstrate that the North did the business of suppressing the Rebellion in a workmanlike and respectable, not to say handsome, manner, leaving, under the circumstances, no great room for adverse criticism." Suppose each emendation Mr. Derry makes to the list of battles to be allowed, it will not alter the percentages so as to invalidate the conclusion "that the Confederates . . . opposed to the Federals fully equal numbers at the point of fighting contact; and secondly, that of the combats during the entire struggle the Federals had their full share of victories." If we should allow that statistics exhibit an excess at the point of fighting contact of ten per cent. on the side of the Federals, it does not seem to me that the conclusion would be altered one jot. What I wrote and my statistics tend to show *substantial equality*. In such a case, ten per cent. might be disregarded. We should call two armies of ten and eleven thousand, or fifty and fifty-five thousand men, respectively, substantially equal; and had my figures, when tabulated, shown an excess of ten per cent. in favor of the Federals, I should have considered the case proved, as I should if, out of fifty battles, either side had an excess of three or four.

My article was written in Florence early in 1887, without ready access to records or statistics. I think that Vol. IV. of "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War"

was not then out. I had not seen the War Records table. It must of course be taken as accurate, and mine, made some years ago, as faulty. I could not now exhume the sources of the Southern items of my table. The Northern items are from the Provost-Marsh-General's accounts. My table was first published in 1883. The table referred to in Vol. IV. of "Battles and Leaders" does not include "local land forces" of the Confederacy. Taking these at ten per cent. of those at the front, "the South had under arms, until the last third of the war, an average of about three-fifths the force of the North," and not "about three-fourths," as stated in my article. Or, throwing out "local land forces" entirely, "the South had about fifty-five per cent. of the force of the North." While this error in my figures is not thereby excused, the argument is in no material degree weakened by the variation. By a fair allowance for garrison work which the North had to do and the South had not, the original statement of three-quarters would stand.

At the time of making my battle-estimate I corresponded with the War Records Office, asking it to make for me the figures of men at the point of fighting contact in the battles tabulated; but the Bureau was practically unable to do so without taking indefinite time and more pains than I could ask. No official records, that I am aware of, have been made of the men at the point of fighting contact. I made mine by taking the brigades and divisions known to have been engaged, and estimating their force as well as possible when it was not given by some good authority. The numbers were set roundly. My premise depends strictly on estimates of men *at the point of fighting contact*, and I think my estimates are very close. For instance, if Chancellorsville were taken as an example, we would have a total of one hundred and thirty thousand men pitted against about fifty-eight to sixty thousand. But the men who actually fought were, not to count the assault on Fredericksburg Heights:

May 2d, at Dowdall's,	22,000	Confed's against	10,000	Federals.
" 3d, at Fairview,	37,000	" "	32,000	" "
" 3d, at Salem Church,	10,000	" "	9,000	" "
" 4h, at Banks's Ford,	25,000	" "	20,000	" "

This makes a very different showing. Every Northerner who fought at the front recognizes the brilliant gallantry of the South. Many of us carry ever-present mementos of their hard fighting. The higher the Southern capacity to fight, claimed or proved by statistics, the better the work done by the North in carrying the war through to a successful issue. I do not insist on every item of my figures being beyond dispute; but it still seems to me that "no reasonable or admissible variation will alter the conclusion which must be drawn from them."

Mr. Derry points out fairly the difference between the conditions of the contestants in our Revolution and in our Civil War. There can be no exact historical parallel found. To illustrate my point, the one I chose remains good, especially as Anglo-Saxons were concerned in both wars.

Is not Mr. Derry inaccurate in what he says of Peter III. and Frederick? The Russian alliance with Frederick was terminated by Peter's death some four months after it was made. The help was timely and useful, but it was neither that which saved Frederick,

nor the withdrawal of Sweden from among his enemies. The work of Ferdinand of Brunswick, while excellent, was of negative value in the campaigns of Frederick. Mr. Derry is right in saying that neither the Revolution nor the Seven Years' War is a close parallel; but each is illustratively good.

Mr. Derry's rule-of-three estimate of forces is ingenious, but I doubt if it will work in practice. Very slight difference in the methods of organization or of raising troops North and South would throw out this calculation.

While it is "impossible to argue the question to a satisfactory conclusion on theories and opinions," and while I owe an apology to the readers of THE CENTURY for not correcting my table of forces up to date, the primary value of the statistics is to prove or disprove "either to be the better soldier." *Quoad hoc*, I do not see wherein the figures given have been falsified, nor do I think the premises capable of alteration so as to draw any other than my conclusion.

I thank Mr. Derry for his frank and kindly criticism.

Theodore Ayrault Dodge.

"Does Vivisection Help?"

IN the May number of THE CENTURY Mr. Thomas W. Kay endeavors to weaken my case against vivisection as a method of advancing the healing art. He asks, "How can the great mortality in countries where no physicians exist be accounted for?" and goes on to urge that the increase of doctors always implies increase in the average of human life.

His question and his answer are alike beside the mark, so far as my argument is concerned. I merely explained what the "expectant treatment" was. I do not imagine that it is very largely followed by those who are chiefly responsible for the health of the community. As a fact, it is found that people do get well *without* doctors, just as they die *with* them. Of course the presence of a number of doctors in any country means a certain amount of civilization, and this means, in its turn, good sanitation, and improved hygienic conditions. With these things vivisection has nothing to do. I do not attach much importance to medical or surgical statistics. A famous and witty American physician (was it Dr. Bigelow?) once said, "You can tell as many lies with figures as with words, and bigger ones."

Mr. Kay says the improvement in modern surgery is largely due to greater dexterity in operating, which dexterity is "obtained by practising on the living animal, either man or beast." I do not know what goes on in American schools of surgery, but I am positive that no English surgeons learn dexterity in operations on human beings by practising on animals. I was for four years a pupil at the largest hospital in London, and I never knew a single instance where a surgeon attempted to fortify himself for an operation on a patient by practising on a beast. Mr. Kay says that Mr. Lawson Tait has acquired his manual dexterity and his diagnostic skill only by experiments on women. In a certain sense every surgical operation is an experiment; but there are experiments and experiments. There are operations which are so uniformly fatal that it is merely another sort of murder to perform