

OPEN LETTERS.

The Crisis of the Civil War.

AT the celebration of the opening of the Northern Pacific Railroad, of which I was at that time the general manager, two of the guests present were President Chester A. Arthur and Secretary of War Robert Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln sent for me with a request for a brief interview, and stated that he desired information upon a subject that had elicited much discussion, and upon which a careful examination of the war records, both of telegrams and letters, failed to throw any light. He said that upon entering his father's room one morning, just after the battle of Gettysburg, he found him in great distress, and upon inquiring the cause, the President stated that information had just been received from General Haupt that General Meade had no intention immediately of following up his advantage; that he intended to rest for several days; that without an immediate movement of the army the enemy would be permitted to cross the Potomac and escape; that the fruits of victory would be lost and the war indefinitely prolonged. He asked if I had sent any letters, telegrams, or other communications in which this information had been given.

I replied that I had communicated such information either to the President or to General Halleck, but in what way I could not then remember.

Two years ago I commenced to write the memoirs of the operations of the Military Railroad Construction Corps, and in one of my letter-books found a full and satisfactory explanation. From this it appears that after spending the forenoon of Sunday, the day following Lee's retreat, with General Meade, I took an engine the same evening and repaired to Washington and as early as possible on Monday morning made personal report to General Halleck; informed him of the situation and the conclusions I had reached, that, unless General Meade could be induced to change his plans and move immediately, the enemy would certainly cross the river and escape. It was, no doubt, immediately after this interview that General Halleck called on the President and communicated the information that gave him so much distress.

The President and General Halleck have been severely criticized in some quarters for the words of censure sent to General Meade, which, it was claimed, did injustice to a gallant officer who had performed services of the highest value. Certain it is that the predictions in regard to the escape of Lee were verified: he was not disturbed for ten days; he crossed the Potomac July 14, 1863, and the war, which, in my opinion, might have been then substantially ended, was prolonged for two years with immense sacrifice of blood and treasure.

As the battle of Gettysburg was the turning-point in the great struggle, and as antecedent events with which no one now living is familiar except myself had apparently an important influence upon the result, my friends insist that it is a duty to place certain facts on record.

The position that I held in 1862 and 1863 was that of Chief of the Bureau of Military Railroads, charged with the duty of constructing, reconstructing, and operating all railroads used by the Government in the active operations of the war, but especially in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, where I directed operations personally. I reported directly to the Secretary of War and to General Halleck, but necessarily kept in constant communication with the general in command of the army in the field, that I might know his plans, his requirements in the way of transportation, and the lines to be operated upon.

When Lee was moving toward the Potomac for the invasion of Pennsylvania, I supposed as a matter of course that General Hooker would follow him up and that, as a necessary consequence, the base of supplies must be changed and the rolling-stock transferred from the line of the Orange and Alexandria to the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. I went to the front to consult with General Hooker, and found him under a tree two miles from Fairfax Station.

In answer to my inquiries, he replied that he did not intend to move until he got orders, and that he would follow them literally and let the responsibility rest where it belonged. He said that he had made suggestions that were not approved, and if he could not carry out his own plans he could not be held accountable for failure if he literally carried out instructions of which he disapproved.

Regarding the situation as critical, I returned as soon as possible to Washington and made report to General Halleck in person. General Halleck opened his desk and took out a bundle of papers, from which he selected several which he read to me. They were communications which had passed between General Hooker and the President, of which copies were always sent to General Halleck.

From these papers it appeared that Hooker's plan was to capture Richmond while the army of Lee was absent from it, and that the President had replied, in substance, that it would be a poor exchange to give Washington for Richmond; that if, as stated, the enemy was spread out in a long thin line, with one flank resting on Fredericksburg and the other on the Potomac, it would be much better to break through his line and beat him in detail. This was about the substance of these letters, as I remember them.

After reading these papers, General Halleck put on his cap and left the office, no doubt to confer with the President. In half an hour he returned, and quietly remarked, "Hooker will get his orders." This was all he said, but a few days after General Hooker was relieved at his own request, and the command conferred upon General Meade.

General Meade and I had been classmates at West Point, graduating in 1835. I appreciated the difficulties of his position. Called unexpectedly to the command of an army the several corps of which were scattered, and with no plan of operation required to

form his own plans and prosecute a campaign with but little time for consideration, it was certainly a most trying situation.

The following special orders were issued :

HEADQUARTERS OF ARMY,
ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, June 27, 1863.

Special Orders, No. 286.

Brigadier-General H. Haupt, United States Volunteers, is hereby authorized and directed to do whatever he may deem expedient to facilitate the transportation of troops and supplies to aid the armies in the field in Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

By command of Major-General Halleck.

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Assistant Adjutant-General.

June 28, 1863, General Meade telegraphed General Halleck, acknowledging the receipt of the order placing him in command of the army, and stated that he was ignorant of the exact condition of the troops and the position of the enemy.

I repaired promptly to Harrisburg, as the best point at which to obtain reliable information as to the situation. I found Colonel Thomas A. Scott at the depot, showed him my orders, and asked for a full report. He informed me that Lee, who had occupied the opposite side of the river in full force, had that morning, June 30, begun to retreat precipitately, in some cases leaving provisions uncooked, and the artillery being on a trot. After hearing a full explanation, with many details unnecessary to repeat, I told Colonel Scott that he was entirely in error as to the cause of Lee's retirement. My explanation of the movement was that Lee had just received information that Hooker had been relieved and Meade placed in command; that Lee knew that our army corps were widely scattered, and that some days would be required before Meade could get them in hand; and that the movement of Lee was clearly not one of retreat but of concentration, with a view to fall upon the several corps and crush them in detail, in which case Washington, Baltimore, and Philadelphia would fall into his possession; and I added emphatically, "We are in the worst position that we have occupied since the commencement of the war, and nothing but the interposition of Providence can save us from destruction."

Colonel Scott replied: "I think you are right. What can be done?"

I immediately, at 10 P. M., sent this telegram :

HARRISBURG, PENN., June 30, 1863.

MAJOR-GENERAL HALLECK, General-in-Chief: Lee is falling back suddenly from the vicinity of Harrisburg and concentrating all his forces. York has been evacuated. Carlisle is being evacuated. The concentration appears to be at or near Chambersburg. The object, apparently, a sudden movement against Meade, of which he should be advised by courier immediately. A courier might reach Frederick by way of Western Maryland Railroad to Westminster. This information comes from T. A. Scott, and I think it reliable.

H. HAUPT,
Brigadier-General.

Further information continued to be received, and at 12.45 A. M. I sent this second telegram :

HARRISBURG, PENN., July 1, 1863, 12.45 A. M.

MAJOR-GENERAL H. W. HALLECK, General-in-Chief.
Information just received, 12.45 A. M., leads to the belief that the concentration of the forces of the enemy will be

at Gettysburg, rather than at Chambersburg. The movement on their part is very rapid and hurried. They returned from Carlisle in the direction of Gettysburg by way of the Petersburg Pike. Firing about Petersburg and Dillsburg this P. M. continued some hours. Meade should by all means be informed and be prepared for a sudden attack from Lee's whole army.

H. HAUPT, *Brigadier-General.*
(And repeat to General Meade and General Schenck.)

General Meade subsequently informed me that he received these telegrams by courier in his tent at about 3 A. M. on the morning of July 1.

On July 1, I returned to Baltimore via Philadelphia, as the Northern Central had been broken, and organized transportation over the Western Maryland Railroad. J. N. DuBarry, superintendent of the Northern Central Railroad, was relieved at his own request, and Adna Anderson placed in charge, under whose efficient management thirty trains per day were passed over this road under extraordinary difficulties; and, as General Ingalls, Chief Quartermaster, stated, so efficient was the service that at no time were the supplies insufficient for three days' rations in advance.

I then directed my attention to the reconstruction of the Northern Central Railroad, on which nineteen bridges had been destroyed, as also all the bridges on the branches between Hanover Junction and Gettysburg. Before midnight of July 5, all these bridges between Gettysburg and Baltimore had been reconstructed and the telegraph line restored, and on Monday morning, July 6, General Meade was in communication with Washington both by rail and telegraph.

On Sunday morning, the day of Lee's retreat, I rode to Gettysburg in a buggy, and repaired early to General Meade's headquarters, where I found Generals Meade and Pleasonton, and remained with them about three hours. The scene is vividly impressed upon my memory, as also the conversation. We were seated at a small table, upon which was a map of the country,—Meade and Pleasonton on one side, I on the opposite side. General Meade was much surprised to learn that the bridges and telegraph lines had nearly been reconstructed, and that in a few hours he could begin to send his wounded to the hospitals. He remarked that he had supposed that the destruction of the railroads had been so complete that three weeks would be required for their reconstruction. After many incidents connected with the battle had been related, General Pleasonton made the remark that if Longstreet had concentrated his fire more and had kept it up a little longer, we would have lost the day; to which Meade made no reply, and appeared to acquiesce in this opinion.

After other matters had been disposed of, I remarked to General Meade that I supposed he would at once follow up his advantages and capture the remains of Lee's army before he could cross the Potomac. The reply was, "Lee's pontoon-trains have been destroyed, and the river is not fordable. My army requires a few days' rest, and cannot move at present." I was greatly surprised, and said decidedly, "General, I have a construction-corps that could pass that army in less than forty-eight hours, if they had no material except such as could be procured from barns and houses and trees from the woods; and it is not safe to assume that the enemy cannot do what we can." All my arguments and remonstrances proved unavailing, and I left, when the interview ended, fully convinced

that Lee would be permitted to escape, and that the fruits of the glorious victory would be lost.

The situation can be briefly explained. The Federal army had been occupying the Cemetery Ridge for several days. They were not so foot-sore that a march of thirty-five miles would have been impossible; they had ample supplies for at least three days, as the chief quartermaster informed me; they would have moved toward, not from, their proper base of supplies, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad; they had two good pontoon-trains with which to bridge the river at any desired point. I was quite familiar with the locations, having resided ten years at Gettysburg and made railroad surveys between it and the Potomac, and had walked over the same ground in one day ten miles further than it would have been necessary for the army to march.

The Confederates were depressed by defeat, short of ammunition, especially for artillery, they had a swollen stream not fordable in their front, no pontoon-bridges and no material immediately available for constructing others, no possibility of retracing their route up the Cumberland Valley, as that would have removed them further from their supplies on the south side of the Potomac, and, besides, the Cumberland Valley was occupied by the corps of General Couch, which had not been in action; they were apparently hemmed in a trap.

My opinion has always been that if Meade had moved at once to the Potomac, had occupied a defensible position below Lee's army, thrown bridges across and placed a moderate force with artillery on the south side, within supporting distance from the main army, it would have been impossible for Lee to receive supplies or reinforcements; the batteries, properly placed, would have prevented any attempts to construct bridges; and Lee would have been forced to capitulate. It would not have been necessary to risk an engagement; the enemy would have been checkmated.

I left Meade on Sunday, July 5, about noon, and the next morning, as I find from my records, I was in Washington and had a personal interview with General Halleck, in which the situation was fully explained; and this is the reason why no records were found of any letters or telegrams from me to General Halleck or the President referring to the Meade interview. I find, however, a letter to General Halleck, written from my office in Washington, Monday, July 6, referring to the interview with him in the morning, which throws light upon the subjects discussed at that interview. In this letter I assumed that Lee would escape, and suggested that, as a successful pursuit up the Shenandoah Valley would be hopeless, it was desirable at once to occupy the line of the Orange and Alexandria Railroad with a good cavalry force as far as Lynchburg, destroy telegraph lines and the bridges and tracks on both the roads leading from Richmond, occupy the passes of the Blue Ridge, isolate the army in the Shenandoah Valley, and attack when favorable opportunities offered. These were, of course, mere suggestions for the consideration of the General-in-Chief. The principal value of this letter at the present time is to show that as early as July 6 I had reached the conclusion that Lee would escape, and was occupied with plans of what should be done in that contingency.

The predictions were verified. Lee did escape, but not until July 14, on bridges constructed on the plans

that I had indicated as possible. Meade's army, instead of occupying the line of road east of the Blue Ridge and cutting the communications of the enemy, followed him in a hopeless chase up the Shenandoah Valley, and, when too late to be of efficient service, I was telegraphed to bring all my forces from the line of the Cumberland Valley Railroad and reconstruct with all possible expedition the Orange and Alexandria Railway, which again became the base of supplies.

The records show that even before the interview with General Meade I wrote to General Halleck, expressing apprehension that the pursuit would be so tardy as to lose the fruits of victory. On page 523 of Part III of the Gettysburg records there is a letter to General Halleck, dated Oxford, Pennsylvania, July 4, "11 A. M." This date is an error in the printed records; it should have been P. M., as the letter commences—"Night has overtaken me at Oxford. . . . Persons just in from Gettysburg report the position of affairs. I fear that while Meade rests to refresh his men and collect supplies Lee will be off so far that he cannot intercept him. A good force on the line of the Potomac to prevent Lee from crossing would, I think, insure his destruction."

This letter, it will be perceived, was written from Oxford, seven miles east of Gettysburg, before my interview with General Meade at an early hour the next morning. The fear expressed was so greatly intensified by my personal interview with General Meade that I felt it to be my duty to take an engine and proceed to Washington the same night, to make a personal report to General Halleck, who was my immediate superior.

Although the President seems to have been much exercised over the probability of Lee's escape, the communications between Generals Halleck and Meade, as published in the records, do not indicate disapprobation on the part of the authorities at Washington until the escape had been actually effected, on July 14, when the telegrams were of such character as to induce General Meade to ask to be relieved from the command of the army.

I can readily understand the situation from my relations to General Halleck and familiarity with his policy. Contrary to the generally received opinion, he was unwilling to give any other than very general instructions to the generals in the field. A single illustration will make this clear. At the battle of Fredericksburg I was with Burnside nearly all day in an upper room of the Phillips House overlooking the battle-field. After the battle I took an engine, ran to Aquia Creek, twelve miles, then boarded a steamer and proceeded as rapidly as possible to Washington. I called on President Lincoln and explained the situation. He asked me to walk with him to General Halleck's quarters on I street, near the Arlington. On arrival we found General Halleck at about 11 P. M. in his drawing-room with several officers. These were requested to withdraw, and the President then asked me to repeat my report to General Halleck, which I did. The President then directed General Halleck to telegraph orders to Burnside to withdraw his forces from the south side of the river. General Halleck rose from his seat, paced the room for some time in meditation, and then, standing in front of the President, said emphatically, "*I will do no such thing. If such orders are issued, you must issue them yourself. If we were personally present we might assume such responsibility. I hold that a general*

in command of an army in the field is, or ought to be, better acquainted with all the conditions than parties at a distance, and by giving peremptory orders a serious error might be committed." The President made no reply, but seemed much dejected. I then ventured the remark that I did not consider the situation so serious as he supposed. I explained more in detail the topographical features of the locality and the relative positions of the two armies. Our troops could not be fired upon, nor our bridges enfiladed by the batteries on Marye's Heights, without destroying the city, and I had no doubt that Burnside would retire his army during the night. When I finished, the President, with a deep sigh, remarked, "What you have just told me gives me a great many grains of comfort."

There can be, I think, no doubt that the President from the first shared with me the apprehension that Lee would escape and the war be indefinitely prolonged, but was deterred from interfering with General Meade by the position taken by General Halleck, who would not, unless personally present, assume the responsibility of giving orders.

General M. C. Meigs, Quartermaster-General, had great influence with the President, Secretary of War, and General Halleck, and was often present at their councils. I find among my papers a telegram to General Meigs, dated Frederick, July 8, in which I endeavored to secure his cooperation to induce more prompt action, in which this language is used, "I could build trestle-bridges of round sticks and floor with fence-rails. It is too much to assume that the rebels cannot do the same." I had previously made a similar remark to General Meade.

On July 9, General Halleck telegraphed to General Meade that "the evidence that Lee's army will fight north of the Potomac seems reliable."

This seems to me, under the circumstances, a very remarkable opinion for an officer of so much intelligence as General Halleck; but he may have had reasons for the opinion of which I am not advised. Lee was of necessity short of ammunition. With nearly 300 pieces of artillery in action for three days, it would seem to have been an impossibility for Lee to have retained sufficient ammunition to renew the offensive, and he could get neither ammunition, supplies, nor reinforcements until he could establish communications with the south side of the Potomac. In fact, it was not until July 10 that Lee succeeded in getting some ammunition via Martinsburg, probably carried over the river in rowboats, and this could have been intercepted by a small force on the south side. To me it seems extremely probable, in fact almost certain, that if Lee could have been prevented from getting ammunition to renew an attack, or from constructing bridges on which to cross the river, he would have been forced to capitulate without another battle. If he had attempted to escape by moving up the river, the difficulties of the position would not have been relieved. Meade, having the great advantage of pontoon-bridges, could always safely have maintained a sufficient force on the south side to intercept supplies. Lee's forces were certainly in no condition to renew the contest when they reached the Potomac, and although it might not have been wise to attack them in a strong, defensive position, it is certain that, without supplies, such position could not have been long maintained, and the Federal army could never again hope

for conditions more favorable for themselves. If no decisive move could be made north of the Potomac, it was vain to expect more favorable results on the south side, with the enemy reinforced, supplied, rested, and on their own territory, with communications intact and popular sympathy in their favor.

The records show that the opinions herein expressed are not afterthoughts, but were entertained at the time when the events occurred, and that no efforts were spared on my part to avert the great calamity of the escape of the Confederate army and the prolongation of the contest for two years, with the losses of life and treasure consequent thereon.

Soon after the battle of Gettysburg, for reasons not pertinent to this article, I ceased to be an active participant in the operations of the army; but the construction-corps that I had the privilege of organizing continued, under other officers, to perform most efficient service, and contributed greatly — perhaps it would not be too strong an expression to say was indispensable — to the success of General Sherman in his celebrated march to the sea. The facility with which bridges were reconstructed and broken communications restored enabled him to advance with confidence, leaving hundreds of miles of unprotected railroad communications in his rear.

Colonel Lazelle, formerly in charge of the publication of the records of the war, declared that the services of the Military Railroad Construction Corps had been of the greatest value to the Government, but that they had never been recognized or appreciated.

Herman Haupt.

Francis Davis Millet.

"BETWEEN TWO FIRES" is a good example of the work of one of the best-known of American painters. The story is well told, the painting is conscientious and unobtrusive, the figures are well drawn, and the composition is pleasing in color. It shows, perhaps, as well as any of Mr. Millet's pictures, what the qualities are that distinguish his work and have contributed to the painter's excellent position in contemporary art. He seems to have the same desire not to omit detail, and yet not to insist too much upon it, that appears in the work of the great Dutchmen. There is no dash or showy brush-work, though technically Mr. Millet's work is not tame; but the chief characteristic is a certain thoroughness, a straightforward earnestness of intention to be realistic, and the accomplishment of this purpose without making realism the only, or even the predominant, quality. There are charm of expression, healthy sentiment, very clever workmanship, and completeness in all that he does.

In a large picture of "Anthony Van Corlaer, the Trumpeter of New Amsterdam," a fine composition of six or seven figures; in "Rook and Pigeon," an excellent group of two men, with the scene in an English inn in the time of the Stuarts; in "A Waterloo Widow"; in "The Duet"; and in the picture of the traveler at the inn, which belongs to the Union League Club of New York, the painter's admirable qualities are well shown. The picture "Between Two Fires" has been purchased this year from the Royal Academy Exhibition by the Chantrey Fund.

In another line of subjects — those depicting scenes