

securing that important point and relieving east Tennessee. New Orleans, by far the largest city in the South, had been firmly held by the National forces ever since Farragut captured it, in April, 1862. There were also numerous points on the coast of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida where the Stars and Stripes floated every day in assertion of the nation's claim to supreme authority. Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, West Virginia, and Tennessee—all confidently counted upon by the Confederates at the outset—were now hopelessly lost to them. The territory covered by Confederate authority had been steadily diminishing. Faulty though it was, if the military process thus far pursued had been kept up, it must ultimately have destroyed the Confederacy. And there was no military reason (using the word in its narrow sense) why it could not be kept up; for the resources of the North, in men and material, were not seriously impaired. All the farms were tilled, all the workshops were busy, the colleges had almost or quite their usual number of students; and there were not nearly so many young women keeping books or standing behind counters as now. Moreover, the ports of the North were all open, and the markets of the world accessible. It is true that the currency and the national securities were at a discount, and it was certain that their value would be diminished still further by the prolongation of the war; but this was not fatal so long as our own country produced everything essential.

The necessity for a swifter process was more political than military. There was a half-informed populace to be satisfied, and a half-loyal party to be silenced. The subtlest foe was in our own household; and the approach of the Presidential and Congressional elections, unless great National victories should intervene, might bring its opportunity and seal the fate of the Republic.

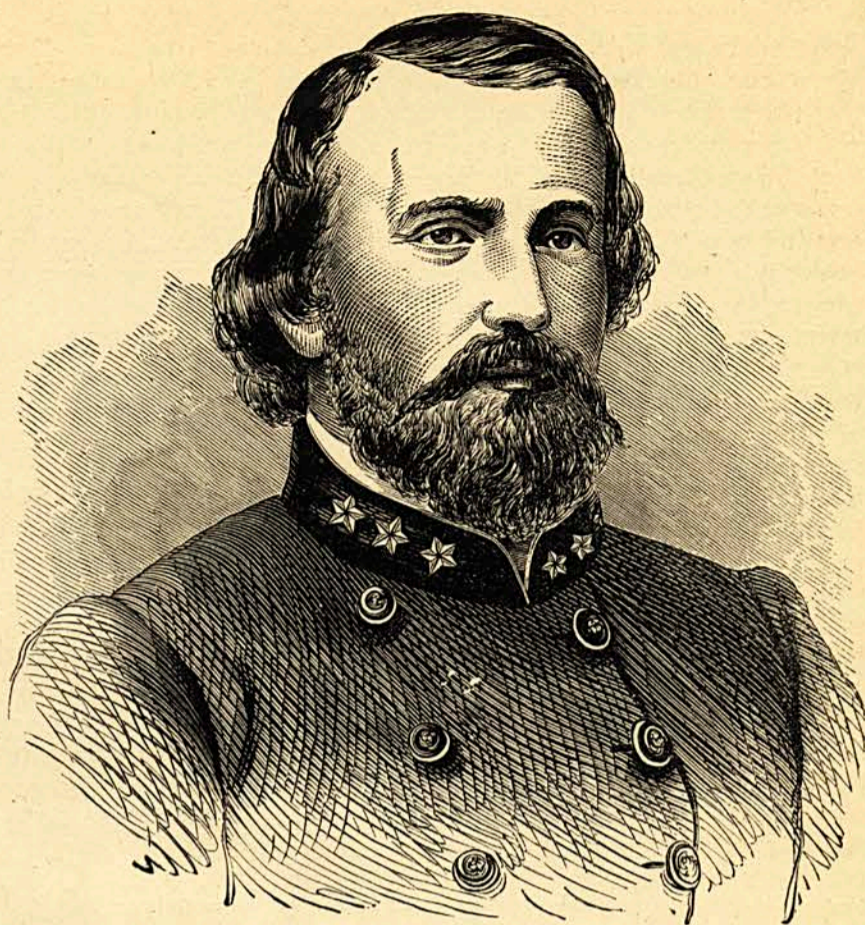
The one thing required was a single supreme military head for all the armies in the field. The faulty disposition by which, in many of the great battles, the several parts of an army had struck the enemy successively, instead of all at once, existed also on the grander scale. There was no concert of action between the armies of the East, the West, and the Southwest; so that large detachments of the Confederate forces were sent back and forth on their shorter interior lines, to fight wherever they were most needed. We had one general that from the first had gone directly for the most important objects in his department, and thus far had secured everything he went for. Accordingly Congress passed a bill reviving the grade of lieutenant-general in February, 1864, and President Lincoln promptly conferred that rank upon Ulysses S. Grant. Only Washington

and Scott had previously borne this commission in the United States service, and through three years of the war we had nothing higher than a major-general in the field. Rank was cheaper in the Confederacy, where there were not only lieutenant-generals but several full generals. Some of the corps commanders in Lee's army, at the head of 10,000 men, had nominally the same rank (lieutenant-general) as Grant when he assumed command of all the National forces in the field. When Lincoln handed Grant his commission, they met for the first time. A year and a month later, the war was ended, Grant was the foremost soldier in the world, and Lincoln was in his grave.

Grant fixed his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac, thus placing himself where, on the one hand, he could withstand interference that might thwart the operations of a subordinate, and where on the other he would personally conduct the campaign against the strongest army of the Confederacy and its most trusted leader.

He planned a campaign in which he considered the Army of the Potomac his centre; the Army of the James, under Butler, his left wing; the Western armies, now commanded by Sherman, his right wing; and the army under Banks in Louisiana a force operating in the rear of the enemy. In its great features, the plan was this: that all should move simultaneously—Butler against Petersburg, to seize the southern communications of the Confederate capital; Sherman against Johnston's army (then at Dalton, Ga.), to defeat and destroy it, if possible, or at least to force it back and capture Atlanta with its workshops and important communications; Banks to set out on an expedition toward Mobile, to capture that city and close its harbor to blockade-runners; Sigel to drive back the Confederate force in the Shenandoah valley, and prevent that fertile region from being used any longer as a Confederate granary; while the Army of the Potomac, taking Lee's army for its objective, should follow it wherever it went, fighting and flanking it until it should be captured or dispersed.

South of the Rapidan is a peculiar region 12 or 15 miles square, known as the Wilderness. Some of the earliest iron-works in the country were here, and much of the ground was dug over for the ore, while the woods were cut off to supply fuel for the furnaces. A thick second growth sprang up, with tangled underbrush, the mines were deserted, the furnaces went to decay, and the whole region was desolate, save a roadside tavern or two, and here and there a little clearing. Chancellorsville, where a great battle was fought in May, 1863, was on the eastern edge of this Wilderness. The bulk of Lee's army was now (May, 1864) on its western edge, with a line of observation along the Rapidan, and head-quarters at Orange Court-House. The Army of the Potomac was north of the Rapidan, opposite the Wilderness. It was now organized in three infantry corps, the Second, Fifth, and Sixth—commanded respectively by Generals Winfield S. Hancock, Gouverneur K. Warren, and John Sedgwick—and a cavalry corps commanded by General Philip H. Sheridan; General George G. Meade being still in command of the whole. Burnside's corps, the Ninth, nearly 20,000 strong, was at Annapolis, and nobody but General Grant



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knew its destination. He knew too well that there was a leak somewhere in Washington, through which every Government secret escaped to the Confederates; and he therefore delayed till the last moment the movement of Burnside's corps to a point from which it could follow the Army of the Potomac across the Rapidan within 24 hours.

The Army of Northern Virginia consisted of two infantry corps, commanded by Richard S. Ewell and Ambrose P. Hill, with a cavalry corps commanded by General James E. B. Stuart; the whole commanded by General Robert E. Lee; while, as an offset to Burnside's corps, General James Longstreet's was within call. The exact number of men in either army cannot be told, as reports and authorities differ; nor can the approximate numbers be mentioned fairly, unless with an explanation. The method of counting for the official reports was different in the two armies. In the National army, a report that a certain number of men were present for duty included every man that was borne on the pay-rolls, whether officer, soldier, musician, teamster, cook, or mechanic, and also all that had been sent away on special duty. This was necessary, because they were all paid regularly, and the money had to be accounted for. In the Confederate army there was no pay worth speaking of, and the principal object of a morning report was to show the exact effective force available that day; accordingly, the Confederate reports included only the men actually bearing muskets or sabers, or handling the artillery; all officers, musicians, teamsters, etc., being excluded from the count. Counted in this way, Lee had 60,000 or perhaps 65,000 men—for exact reports are wanting, even on that basis. If counted after the fashion in the National army, his men numbered about 80,000. Grant puts his own numbers, everything included, at 116,000, and thinks the preponderance was fully offset by the fact that the enemy was on the defensive, seldom leaving his intrenchments, in a country admirably suited for defence, and with the population friendly to him. As each side received reinforcements from time to time about equal to its losses, the two armies may be considered as having, throughout the campaign, the strength just stated.

It was clearly set forth by General Grant at the outset that the true objective was the Army of Northern Virginia. In that lay the chief strength of the Confederacy.

The intention was to have the simultaneous movement of all the armies begin as near the 1st of May as possible. It actually began at midnight



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