

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: A HISTORY.¹

THE REMOVAL OF McCLELLAN.—FINANCIAL MEASURES.— SEWARD AND CHASE.

BY JOHN G. NICOLAY AND JOHN HAY, PRIVATE SECRETARIES TO THE PRESIDENT.



THE latter part of September wore away in resting the exhausted Army of the Potomac, and beginning anew the endless work of equipment and supply — work which from the nature of the case can never be finished in an army of 200,000 men, any more than in a city of the same size. But this was a lesson which McClellan appeared never able to learn. So long as a single brigade commander complained that some of his men needed new shoes it seemed impossible for McClellan to undertake active operations until that special want was supplied. When that was done some company of cavalry was short a few horses, and the vicious circle of importunate demand and slow supply continued. On the 23d of September, General McClellan discovered signs of heavy reënforcements moving towards the enemy from Winchester and Charlestown. The fact of the enemy's remaining so long in his front, instead of appearing to him as a renewed opportunity, only excited in him the apprehension that he would be again attacked. He therefore set up a new clamor for reënforcements. "A defeat at this juncture would be ruinous to our cause. . . General Sumner with his corps and Williams's (Banks's) occupy Harper's Ferry and the surrounding heights. I think," is the doleful plaint with which the dispatch closes, "he will be able to hold his position till reënforcements arrive." Four days afterwards he writes again in the same strain:

This army is not now in condition to undertake another campaign. . . My present purpose is to hold the army about as it is now, rendering Harper's Ferry secure and watching the river closely, intending to attack the enemy should he attempt to cross to this side.

He is full of apprehension in regard to an attack upon Maryland, and prays that the river may rise so that the enemy may not cross.

² In his memoirs McClellan tries to create the impression that the President was satisfied with his delay at this time; but his private letters printed in the same volume leave no doubt of the contrary. He says, referring to the President's visit, October 2, "His ostensi-

The President, sick at heart at this exasperating delay, resolved at the end of the month to make a visit to McClellan's camp to see if in a personal interview he could not inspire him with some sense of the necessity for action. The morning report of the 30th of September showed the enormous aggregate of the Army of the Potomac, present and absent, including Banks's command in Washington, as 303,959. Of this number over 100,000 were absent, 28,000 on special duty, and 73,000 present for duty in Banks's command, leaving 100,000 present for duty under McClellan's immediate command. This vast multitude in arms was visited by the President in the first days of October. So far as he could see, it was a great army ready for any work that could be asked of it. During all his visit he urged with as much energy as was consistent with his habitual courtesy the necessity for an immediate employment of this force.² McClellan met all his suggestions and entreaties with an amiable inertia, which deeply discouraged the President. After a day and a night spent in such an interchange of views the President left his tent early in the morning and walked with a friend³ to an eminence which commanded a view of a great part of the camp. For miles beneath them, glistening in the rising sun, spread the white tents of the mighty hosts. The President gazed for a while in silence upon the scene, then turned to his friend and said: "Do you know what that is?" He answered in some astonishment, "It is the Army of the Potomac." "So it is called," responded the President; "but that is a mistake: it is only McClellan's body-guard." He went back to Washington taking little comfort from his visit; and after a few days of painful deliberation, getting no news of any movement, he sent McClellan the following positive instructions:

WASHINGTON, D. C., October 6, 1862.

MAJOR-GENERAL McCLELLAN: I am instructed to telegraph you as follows: The President directs that you cross the Potomac and give battle to the enemy

ble purpose is to see the troops and the battle-field; I incline to think that the real purpose of his visit is to push me into a premature advance into Virginia."

³ Hon. O. M. Hatch of Illinois, from whom we have this story.

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or drive him South. Your army must move now while the roads are good. If you cross the river between the enemy and Washington and cover the latter by your operations, you can be reinforced by 30,000 men. If you move up the valley of the Shenandoah, not more than 12,000 or 15,000 can be sent to you. The President advises the interior line, between Washington and the enemy, but does not order it. He is very desirous that your army move as soon as possible. You will immediately report what line you adopt and when you intend to cross the river; also to what point the reinforcements are to be sent. It is necessary that the plan of your operations be positively determined on before orders are given for building bridges and repairing railroads. I am directed to add that the Secretary of War and the General-in-Chief fully concur with the President in these instructions.

H. W. HALLECK, *General-in-Chief.*

These orders were emphasized a few days later by a repetition of the same stinging insult which Lee had once before inflicted upon McClellan on the Peninsula. Stuart's cavalry crossed the Potomac, rode entirely around the Union army, recrossed the river lower down, and joined Lee again without damage. McClellan seems to have felt no mortification from this disgraceful occurrence, which he used merely as a pretext for new complaints against the Government. He seemed to think that he had presented a satisfactory excuse for his inefficiency when he reported to Halleck that his cavalry had "marched 78 miles in 24 hours while Stuart's was marching 90." He pretended that he had at the time only a thousand cavalry. This led to a remarkable correspondence¹ between him and the Government, which shows the waste and destruction of military material under McClellan. By the reports from the Quartermaster-General's office, there were sent to the Army of the Potomac, during the six weeks ending the 14th of October, 10,254 horses and a very large number of mules. "The cost of the horses issued within the last six weeks to the Army of the Potomac," says General Meigs, "is probably not less than \$1,200,000." We may well ask in the words used by the Quartermaster-General in another place: Is there an instance on record of such a drain and destruction of horses "in a country not a desert"? Day after day the tedious controversy went on. This frightful waste of horses was turned by McClellan, as he turned everything, into a subject of reproach against the Government. To one of his complaining dispatches the President sent this sharp rejoinder: "Will you pardon me for asking what the horses

of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything?" And again: "Stuart's cavalry outmarched ours, having certainly done more marked service on the Peninsula and everywhere since." These dispatches elicited only new complaints, vindications, and explanations.

It was not alone the pretended lack of horses which kept him idle. In his dispatches to Washington he continually complained—and the complaint was echoed in the correspondence of his satellites and by his adherents in the press—that the army was unable to improve the fine weather on account of the deficiency of all manner of supplies.² The Secretary of War, thinking it necessary at last to take notice of this widespread rumor, addressed¹ a letter to the General-in-Chief demanding a report upon the subject. General Halleck reported that on several occasions where General McClellan had telegraphed that his army was deficient in certain supplies it was ascertained that in every instance the requisition had been immediately filled, except in one, where the Quartermaster-General was forced to send to Philadelphia for the articles needed. He reported that there had been no neglect or delay in issuing all the supplies asked for, and added his belief "that no armies in the world, while in campaign, have been more promptly or better supplied than ours." The General-in-Chief further reported that there had been no such want of supplies as to prevent General McClellan's compliance with the orders, issued four weeks before, to advance against the enemy; that "had he moved to the south side of the Potomac he could have received his supplies almost as readily as by remaining inactive on the north side." He then goes at some length into a detailed and categorical contradiction of General McClellan's complaining dispatches. But we need not go outside of the General's own staff for a direct denial of his accusations. General Ingalls, the Chief Quartermaster of the Army of the Potomac, makes this just and sensible statement in a letter to the Quartermaster-General dated the 26th of October:

I have seen no real suffering for want of clothing, and do not believe there has been any only where it can be laid directly to the charge of regimental and brigade commanders and their quartermasters, and I have labored, I hope with some effect, in trying to instruct them. I have frequently remarked that an army will never move if it waits until all the different commanders report that they are ready and want no more supplies. It has been my pride

¹ War Records.

² This mania of General McClellan's for providing camp material sometimes assumed an almost ludicrous form. It suddenly occurred to him on the 7th of October to telegraph to the Quartermaster-General asking

how long it would take to give him three or four thousand hospital tents. Meigs answered that a sufficient supply had already been sent him, and that to provide the additional number he spoke of would take a long time and half a million of dollars.

to know the fact that no army was ever more perfectly supplied than this has been, as a general rule.

The President, weary of the controversy, at last replies:

Most certainly I intend no injustice to any, and if I have done any I deeply regret it. To be told, after more than five weeks' total inaction of the army, and during which period we have sent to the army every fresh horse we possibly could, amounting in the whole to 7,918,¹ that the cavalry horses were too much fatigued to move, presents a very cheerless, almost hopeless, prospect for the future, and it may have forced something of impatience in my dispatch. If not recruited and rested then, when could they ever be?

General Halleck, in a letter on the 7th of October, had urged McClellan to follow and seek to punish the enemy. He says:

There is a decided want of legs in our troops. They have too much immobility, and we must try to remedy the defect. A reduction of baggage and baggage trains will effect something, but the real difficulty is, they are not sufficiently exercised in marching; they lie still in camp too long. After a hard march one day is time enough to rest. Lying still beyond that time does not rest the men.²

The President's proclamation of emancipation had been promulgated to the army in general orders on the 24th of September. It will be remembered that General McClellan, in his manifesto from Harrison's Landing, had admonished the President against any such action. His subsequent negotiations with the Democratic politicians in the North had not tended to make him any more favorably disposed towards such radical action. His first impulse was to range himself openly against the proclamation. We are informed by General W. F. Smith that McClellan prepared a protest against it, which he read to some of his intimate friends in the army. The advice of Smith, and perhaps of others, induced him not to commit so fatal a breach of discipline. For a moment he thought of throwing up his commission. In a private letter of September 25 he said:

The President's late proclamation, the continuation of Stanton and Halleck in office, render it almost impossible for me to retain my commission and self-respect at the same time.³

He could not, however, pass over with entire silence an order of such momentous importance; and so after two weeks of meditation,

having heard from his friends in New York,⁴ he issued on the 7th of October a singular document calling the attention of the officers and soldiers of his army to the President's proclamation. He made absolutely no reference to the proclamation itself. He used it, as he says, simply as an opportunity for "defining the relations borne by all persons in the military service towards the civil authorities," a relation which most of his army understood already at least as well as himself. In a few commonplace phrases he restates the political axiom that the civil authority is paramount in our government and that the military is subordinate to it. He therefore deprecated any intemperate discussion of "public measures determined upon and declared by the Government" "as tending to impair and destroy the efficiency of troops"; and significantly adds, "The remedy for political errors, if any are committed, is to be found only in the action of the people at the polls." There is no reason to believe that this order of General McClellan's was issued with any but the best intentions. He believed, and he thought the army believed, that the President's antislavery policy was ill-advised and might prove disastrous. He therefore issued this order commanding his soldiers to be moderate in their criticisms and condemnations of the President, and to leave to the people at the polls the work of correcting or punishing him. When the troops of the Army of the Potomac had an opportunity of expressing at the polls their sense of the political question at issue between Lincoln and McClellan, the latter had occasion to discover that there was a difference between the sentiment of staff headquarters and the sentiment of the rank and file.

The President's peremptory order to move, which we have mentioned as having been issued on the 6th of October, having produced no effect, he wrote to General McClellan on the 13th of the month a letter so important in its substance and in its relations to subsequent events that it must be printed entire. Having already given the general his orders and told him what to do, he now not only tells him how to do it, but furnishes him unanswerable reasons why it should be done.

EXECUTIVE MANSION,

WASHINGTON, D. C., October 13, 1862.

MAJOR-GENERAL McCLELLAN.

MY DEAR SIR: You remember my speaking to you of what I called your over-cautiousness. Are you not over-cautious when you assume that you cannot do what the enemy is constantly doing? Should you not claim to be at least his equal in prowess, and act upon the claim? As I understand, you telegraphed General Halleck that you cannot subsist your army at Winchester unless the railroad from Harper's Ferry to that point be put in

¹ It was really many more than this.

² War Records.

³ "McClellan's Own Story," p. 615.

⁴ He wrote, October 5: "Mr. Aspinwall [then at McClellan's camp] is decidedly of the opinion that it is my duty to submit to the President's proclamation." ["McClellan's Own Story," p. 655.]

working order. But the enemy does now subsist his army at Winchester, at a distance nearly twice as great from railroad transportation as you would have to do, without the railroad last named. He now waggons from Culpeper Court House, which is just about twice as far as you would have to do from Harper's Ferry. He is certainly not more than half as well provided with waggons as you are. I certainly should be pleased for you to have the advantage of the railroad from Harper's Ferry to Winchester, but it wastes all the remainder of autumn to give it to you, and in fact ignores the question of time, which can not and must not be ignored. Again, one of the standard maxims of war, as you know, is to "operate upon the enemy's communications as much as possible without exposing your own." You seem to act as if this applies against you, but cannot apply in your favor. Change positions with the enemy, and think you not he would break your communication with Richmond within the next twenty-four hours? You dread his going into Pennsylvania, but if he does so in full force, he gives up his communications to you absolutely, and you have nothing to do but to follow and ruin him. If he does so with less than full force, fall upon and beat what is left behind all the easier. Exclusive of the water line, you are now nearer Richmond than the enemy is by the route that you can and he must take. Why can you not reach there before him, unless you admit that he is more than your equal on a march? His route is the arc of a circle, while yours is the chord. The roads are as good on yours as on his. You know I desired, but did not order, you to cross the Potomac below instead of above the Shenandoah and Blue Ridge. My idea was that this would at once menace the enemy's communications, which I would seize if he would permit.

If he should move northward I would follow him closely, holding his communications. If he should prevent our seizing his communications and move toward Richmond, I would press closely to him, fight him, if a favorable opportunity should present; and at least try to beat him to Richmond on the inside track. I say "try"; if we never try, we shall never succeed. If he makes a stand at Winchester, moving neither north nor south, I would fight him there, on the idea that if we cannot beat him when he bears the wastage of coming to us, we never can when we bear the wastage of going to him. This proposition is a simple truth, and is too important to be lost sight of for a moment. In coming to us he tenders us an advantage which we should not waive. We should not so operate as to merely drive him away. As we must beat him somewhere or fail finally, we can do it, if at all, easier near to us than far away. If we cannot beat the enemy where he now is, we never can, he again being within the intrenchments of Richmond.

Recurring to the idea of going to Richmond on the inside track, the facility of supplying from the side away from the enemy is remarkable—as it were, by the different spokes of a wheel extending from the hub toward the rim, and this, whether you move directly by the chord or on the inside arc, hugging the Blue Ridge more closely. The chord-line, as you see, carries you by Aldie, Hay Market, and Fredericksburg; and you see how turnpikes, railroads, and finally the Potomac, by Aquia Creek,

meet you at all points from Washington; the same, only the lines lengthened a little, if you press closer to the Blue Ridge part of the way.

The gaps through the Blue Ridge I understand to be about the following distances from Harper's Ferry, to wit: Vestal's, 5 miles; Gregory's, 13; Snicker's, 18; Ashby's, 28; Manassas, 38; Chester, 45; and Thornton's, 53. I should think it preferable to take the route nearest the enemy, disabling him to make an important move without your knowledge, and compelling him to keep his forces together for dread of you. The gaps would enable you to attack, if you should wish. For a great part of the way you would be practically between the enemy and both Washington and Richmond, enabling us to spare you the greatest number of troops from here. When at length running for Richmond ahead of him enables him to move this way, if he does so, turn and attack him in the rear. But I think he should be engaged long before such point is reached. It is all easy if our troops march as well as the enemy, and it is unmanly to say they cannot do it. This letter is in no sense an order.

Yours truly,

A. LINCOLN.

In the absence of any definite plan or purpose of his own, General McClellan accepted this plan of the President's, giving in his report a characteristic reason, that "it would secure him the largest accession of force." But even after he adopted this decision the usual delays supervened; and on the 21st, after describing the wretched condition of his cavalry, he asked whether the President desired him "to march on the enemy at once or to await the reception of new horses," to which, on the same day, the President directed the General-in-Chief to send the following reply:

Your telegram of 12 M. has been submitted to the President. He directs me to say that he has no change to make in his order of the 6th instant. If you have not been and are not now in condition to obey it, you will be able to show such want of ability. The President does not expect impossibilities, but he is very anxious that all this good weather should not be wasted in inactivity. Telegraph when you will move and on what lines you propose to march.

With the exercise of a very little sagacity General McClellan should have discovered from the tone of this dispatch that the President's mood was taking on a certain tinge of austerity. Nevertheless he continued his preparations at perfect leisure, and four days afterwards he sent a long letter asking for definite instructions in regard to the details of guards to be left on the upper Potomac; to which he received a reply saying that "the Government had intrusted him with defeating and driving back the rebel army in his front," and directing him to use his own discretion as to the matters in question. As General McClellan in his dispatch had referred with some apprehension to the probable march of Bragg's army

eastward, General Halleck concluded his answer with this significant intimation: "You are within twenty miles of Lee, while Bragg is distant about four hundred miles."

He finally got his army across the Potomac on the 1st of November. It had begun crossing on the 26th of October, and as the several detachments arrived in Virginia, they were slowly distributed on the eastern slope of the Blue Ridge under the vigilant and now distrustful eye of the President.

There is no doubt that the President's regard and confidence, which had withstood so much from General McClellan, was now giving way. The President had resisted in his behalf, for more than a year, the earnest and bitter opposition of the most powerful and trusted friends of the Administration. McClellan had hardly a supporter left among the Republican senators, and few among the most prominent members of the majority in the House of Representatives. In the Cabinet there was the same unanimous hostility to the young general. In the meeting of the 2d of September, when the President announced that he had placed McClellan in command of the forces in Washington, he was met by an outbreak of protest and criticism from the leading members of the Government which might well have shaken the nerves of any ruler. But the President stood manfully by his action.¹ He admitted the infirmities of McClellan, his lack of energy and initiative; but for this exigency he considered him the best man in the service, and the country must have the benefit of his talents, although he had behaved badly. We need not refer again to the magnanimity with which the President had overlooked the insolent dispatches of General McClellan from Savage's Station and Harrison's Landing. He closed his ears persistently during all the months of the winter and spring to the stories which came to him from every quarter in regard to the tone of factious hostility to himself which prevailed at McClellan's headquarters. But these stories increased to such an extent during the summer and autumn that even in his mind, so slow to believe evil, they occasioned some trouble. Soon after the battle of Antietam an incident came to his hearing of which he felt himself obliged to take notice. Major John J. Key, brother to Colonel Thomas M. Key, of McClellan's staff, was reported to have said, in reply to the question, put by a brother officer, "Why was not the rebel army bagged immediately after the battle near Sharpsburg?" "That is not the game. The object is that neither army shall get much advantage of the other; that both shall be kept in the field till they are exhausted, when we will make a com-

promise and save slavery." The President sent an aide-de-camp to Major Key to inform him of this grave charge, and to invite him to disprove it within twenty-four hours. A few minutes after this notice was sent, the Major appeared at the Executive Mansion in company with Major Turner, the officer to whom the remark had been made. A trial, as prompt as those of St. Louis dispensing justice under the oak at Vincennes, then took place. The President was judge and jury, attorney for the prosecution and for the defense, and he added to these functions that of clerk of the court, and made a record of the proceedings with his own hand, which we copy from his manuscript:

At about 11 o'clock A. M., September 27, 1862, Major Key and Major Turner appear before me. Major Turner says: "As I remember it, the conversation was, I asked the question why we did not bag them after the battle at Sharpsburg. Major Key's reply was, 'That was not the game: we should tire the rebels out and ourselves; that that was the only way the Union could be preserved, we come together fraternally, and slavery be saved.'" On cross-examination Major Turner says he has frequently heard Major Key converse in regard to the present trouble, and never heard him utter a sentiment unfavorable to the maintenance of the Union. He has never uttered anything which he, Major T., would call disloyalty. The particular conversation detailed was a private one.

Upon the reverse of this record the President made the following indorsement:

In my view it is wholly inadmissible for any gentleman holding a military commission from the United States to utter such sentiments as Major Key is within proved to have done. Therefore let Major John J. Key be forthwith dismissed from the military service of the United States.

The President's memorandum continues:

At the interview of Major Key and Major Turner with the President, Major Key did not attempt to controvert the statement of Major Turner, but simply insisted and tried to prove that he was true to the Union. The substance of the President's reply was that if there was a game even among Union men to have our army not take any advantage of the enemy when it could, it was his object to break up that game.

Speaking of the matter afterwards the President said, "I dismissed Major Key because I thought his silly, treasonable expressions were 'staff talk,' and I wished to make an example."²

He was still not ready to condemn General McClellan. He determined to give him one more chance. If McClellan, after Antietam, had destroyed the army of Lee, his official position would have been impregnable. If, after Lee had recrossed the Potomac, McClellan

¹ Welles, "Lincoln and Seward," pp. 195, 196.

² J. H., Diary.

had followed and delivered a successful battle in Virginia, nothing could afterwards have prevented his standing as the foremost man of his time. The President, in his intense anxiety for the success of the national arms, would have welcomed McClellan as his own presumptive successor if he could have won that position by successful battle. But the general's inexplicable slowness had at last excited the President's distrust. He began to think, before the end of October, that McClellan had no real desire to beat the enemy. He set in his own mind the limit of his own forbearance. He adopted for his own guidance a test which he communicated to no one until long afterwards, on which he determined to base his final judgment of McClellan. If he should permit Lee to cross the Blue Ridge and place himself between Richmond and the Army of the Potomac, he would remove him from command.¹

When it was reported in Washington that Lee and Longstreet were at Culpeper Court House, the President sent an order, dated the 5th of November, to General McClellan, which reached him at Rectortown on the 7th, directing him to report for further orders at Trenton, New Jersey, and to turn the command of the Army of the Potomac over to General Burnside. General Buckingham delivered his message first to Burnside and then came with him to McClellan's tent. McClellan says in his memoirs that with the eyes of the two generals upon him he "read the papers with a smile"; but when they were gone, he turned to finish a letter he had been writing, and broke out in the heartfelt ejaculation, "Alas for my poor country!"² He took credit to himself in after years for not heading a mutiny of the troops. He said, "Many were in favor of my refusing to obey the order, and of marching upon Washington to take possession of the Government."³

Thus ended the military career of George Brinton McClellan. Now that the fierce passions of the war, its suspicions and its animosities, have passed away, we are able to judge him more accurately and more justly than was possible amid that moral and material tumult and confusion. He was as far from being the traitor and craven that many thought him as from being the martyr and hero that others would like to have him appear. It would be unfair to deny that he rendered, to the full measure of his capacity, sincere and honest service to the Republic. His technical knowledge was extensive, his industry untiring; his private character was pure and upright, his in-

tegrity without stain. In the private life to which he retired he carried with him the general respect and esteem and the affection of a troop of friends; and when by their partiality he was afterwards called to the exercise of important official functions, every office he held he adorned with the highest civic virtues and accomplishments. No one now can doubt his patriotism or his honor, and the fact that it was once doubted illustrates merely the part which the blackest suspicions play in a great civil war, and the stress to which the public mind was driven in the effort to account for the lack of results he gave the country in return for the vast resources which were so lavishly placed in his hands.

It was in this native inability to use great means to great ends that his failure as a general lay. It was in his temperament to exaggerate the obstacles in front of him, and this, added to his constitutional aversion to prompt decisions, caused those endless delays which wasted the army, exasperated the country, and gave the enemy unbroken leisure for maturing his plans and constant opportunity for executing them. His lethargy of six months in front of Washington, to the wonder and scorn of the Southern generals; his standing at gaze at Yorktown, halted with his vast army by Magruder's men in buckram; his innocent astonishment at Williamsburg at finding that the rebels would not give up Richmond without a fight; his station astride the Chickahominy, waiting for the enemy to grow strong enough to attack him, while his brave soldiers were fading to specters with the marsh fevers; his refusal to assume the offensive after the Confederate repulse at Seven Pines; his second refusal of the favors of the fortune of war when Lee took his army north of the Chickahominy and Porter fought him all day with little more than one corps, but with splendid courage; his starting for the James, in this crisis of his fate, when he should have marched upon the scantily guarded city of Richmond; his final retreat from Malvern Hill to Harrison's Landing, breaking the hearts of the soldiers who had won on that field a victory so complete and so glorious—all these mistakes proved how utterly incapable he was of leading a great army in a grand war. No general had ever been offered such wonderful opportunities, and they continued to be offered to him to the end. When Pope had drawn away the enemy from Richmond, and given him an unmolested embarkation, and had fought with undaunted valor against Lee's army, before which at last he was forced to give way for the want of relief which he had the right to expect from McClellan, the President, magnanimously ignoring all his own causes of quarrel, gave to McClellan

¹ These are the President's own words, taken down at the time they were uttered.

² "McClellan's Own Story," p. 660.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 652.

once more his old army, reënforced by Pope's, and sent him against an enemy who, in a contempt for his antagonist acquired in the Peninsula, had crossed the Potomac and then divided his army in half. As a crowning favor of chance this was made known to McClellan, and even this incalculable advantage he frittered away, and gave Lee forty-eight hours in which to call in his scattered battalions. After Antietam, for six long weeks of beautiful autumn weather he lingered on the north bank of the Potomac, under the constant pressure of the President's persuasions, and afterwards under the lash of his orders and reproaches, unable to make up his mind to pursue the enemy so long as he could find excuse for delay in a missing shoelace or a broken limber.

The devoted affection which he received from his army was strange when we consider how lacking he was in those qualities which generally excite the admiration of soldiers. When Sumner, swinging his hat, charged in front of his lines at Savage's Station, his white hair blowing in the wind; when Phil Kearney, who had lost his bridle arm in Mexico, rode in the storm of bullets with his reins in his teeth, his sword in his right hand, there was something which struck the imagination of their troopers more than far more serious merits would have done. But no one ever saw General McClellan rejoicing in battle. At Williamsburg, the first Peninsula fight, while Hooker and Kearney and Hancock were in the thick of the conflict, he was at the wharf at Yorktown, very busy, doing an assistant quartermaster's duty; the day of Fair Oaks he spent on the north side of the river; when at Beaver Dam Creek and Gaines's Mill the current of war rolled to the north side, he staid on the south bank; during the retreat to the James he was far in advance, selecting with his intelligent engineer's eye the spots where Sumner, Franklin, and the rest were to fight their daily battles; and even in the fury and thunder of Malvern Hill—the most splendid feat of arms ever performed by the Army of the Potomac, a sight which a man with the true soldier blood in his veins might give his life to see—he spent the greater part of those glorious hours, the diapason of his greatest victory booming in his ears, in his camp at Haxall's or on board the gun-boats, coldly and calmly making his arrangements for the morrow's retreat and for the coöperation of the navy; and at Antietam, the only battle where he really saw his own troops attacking the enemy, he enjoyed that wonderful sight “all day,” says General Palfrey,

“till towards the middle of the afternoon, when all the fighting was over, on the high ground near Fry's house, where he had some glasses strapped to the fence, so that he could look in different directions.” We make no imputation on his courage: he was a brave man; but he was too much cumbered with other things to take part in his own battles.

With such limitations as these it is not likely that posterity will rank him among the leading generals of our war. The most his apologists ask for him is a place among the respectable, painstaking officers of the second order of talent, the “middle category of meritorious commanders”;¹ but when we see such ardent friends and admirers of his person as General Webb and General Palfrey brought by a conscientious and careful study of his career to such a conviction of his continuous mistakes as they have expressed, we may well conclude that the candid historian of the future will have no sentiment but wonder when he comes to tell the story of McClellan's long mismanagement of a great, brave, and devoted army, backed by a government which strained every nerve to support him, and by a people whose fiery zeal would have made him the idol of the nation if he had given them the successes which their sacrifices deserved, and which were a dozen times within his grasp.

We have evidence from a candid and intelligent, if not altogether impartial, witness of the impression made upon the peace party of the North by the dismissal of General McClellan from command. On the 8th of November, 1862, Lord Lyons, the British minister at Washington, arrived in New York from a visit to England. The Democrats, or the Conservatives, as he called them, had carried the State and elected Mr. Seymour governor. He found them in great exultation over their victory. They imagined that the Government would at once desist from the measures which they had denounced as arbitrary or illegal; or, if not at once, they were certain that after the 1st of January, when Mr. Seymour would be inaugurated, the Government would not dare to exercise its war powers within the limits of the State of New York. They confided to the urbane and genial representative of the British Government much more spacious hopes than these—hopes which they were not yet ready to avow to their own countrymen;² that the President would “seek to terminate the war, not to push it to extremity; that he would endeavor to effect a reconciliation with the people of the South and renounce the idea

¹ Swinton, “Army of the Potomac,” p. 229.

² I listened with attention to the accounts given me of the plans and hopes of the Conservative party. At the bottom I thought I perceived a desire to put

an end to the war even at the risk of losing the Southern States altogether; but it was plain it was not thought prudent to avow the desire. [Letter of Lord Lyons to Earl Russell, Nov. 17, 1862.]

of subjugating or exterminating them."¹ But these rising hopes, Lord Lyons says, "were dashed by the next day's news." The dismissal of General McClellan caused "an irritation not unmixed with consternation and despondency. The general had been regarded as the representative of Conservative principles in the army. Support of him had been made one of the articles of the Conservative electoral programme. His dismissal was taken as a sign that the President had thrown himself entirely into the arms of the extreme Radical party, and an attempt to carry out the policy of that party would be persisted in." The "party" and the "policy" referred to were, of course, the Republican party of the nation and the policy of carrying the war through to the end, and saving the Union intact by all the means within the power of the Government; and in this forecast the Conservative gentlemen of New York, who sought the accomplished envoy of Great Britain to unbosom to him their joys and their griefs, showed that however they may have been lacking in patriotism or self-respect, they were not deficient in either logic or sagacity.

FINANCIAL MEASURES.

THE wisdom displayed by Mr. Lincoln in choosing his Cabinet, not from among his personal adherents, but from among the most eminent representatives of the Republicans of the country, shone out more and more clearly as the war went on, and its enormous exigencies tested the utmost powers of each member of the Government. A great orator and statesman has said that in this respect Mr. Lincoln showed at the outset that nature had fitted him for a ruler, and accident only had hid his earlier life in obscurity.

I cannot hesitate [says Mr. Evarts] to think that the presence of Mr. Seward and Mr. Chase in the great offices of State and Treasury, and their faithful concurrence in the public service, and the public repute of the President's conduct of the Government, gave to the people all the benefits which might have justly been expected from the election of either to be himself the head of the Government, and much else besides. I know of no warrant in the qualities of human nature to have hoped that either of these great political leaders would have made as good a minister under the administration of the other, as President, as both of them did under the administration of Mr. Lincoln. I see nothing in Mr. Lincoln's great qualities and great authority with this people which could have commensurately served our need in any place, in the conduct of affairs, except at their head.²

We do not question that posterity will confirm this sober and impartial judgment of one

of the most intelligent of contemporary observers. Lincoln, Chase, and Seward were, by a long interval, the first three Republicans of their time, and each, by what would almost appear a special favor of Providence, was placed in a position where he could be of most unquestioned service to the country. Had either of the three, except Lincoln, been President, the nation must have lost the inestimable services of the other two. We have already dwelt at some length upon the responsibility which devolved during these years upon the Secretary of State, and upon the unfailing courage, sagacity, and industry with which he met it. Before recounting an incident which threatened for a time to deprive the President of the powerful assistance of his two great subordinates, it will be necessary to review, in a manner however brief and inadequate, some of the main points in the administration of the finances during the war.

The Republican party came to power at a time when its adversaries had reduced the credit of the country to a point which now appears difficult to believe. Even before the election of Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Cobb, the Secretary of the Treasury, was compelled to pay twelve per cent. for the use of the small sums necessary to meet the ordinary expenses of the Government, and early in the session of Congress which began in December, 1860, after the election of Mr. Lincoln, amid the gathering gloom of imminent civil war, Congress authorized the issue of ten millions of Treasury notes, payable in one year, to be issued at the best rate obtainable by the Secretary of the Treasury. That officer having advertised for bids for half the amount authorized, only a small sum was offered, the rates ranging from twelve to thirty-six per cent. The Secretary accepted the offers at twelve, obtaining, even at that exorbitant rate, the meager sum of half a million dollars. Afterwards a syndicate of bankers, upon hard conditions proposed by themselves, took the remaining four and a half millions at twelve per cent. A month after, when Mr. Cobb had retired and Mr. Dix had assumed the charge of the Treasury, the slight increase of public confidence derived from the character of the new Secretary enabled him to dispose of the other five millions at an average of ten and five-eighths per cent. In February, Congress having authorized a further loan of twenty-five millions at six per cent., Mr. Dix was able to obtain eight millions at a discount of ten per cent. It was in this depressed and discouraging state of the public finances that Mr. Chase took charge of the Treasury. Without any special previous experience, without any other

¹ Letter of Lord Lyons to Earl Russell, Nov. 17, 1862.

² W. M. Evarts, Eulogy on Chase delivered at Dartmouth College.