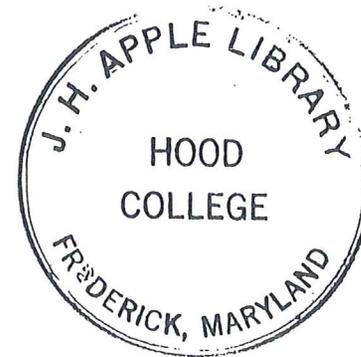


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Antietam

Essays on the 1862 Maryland Campaign

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The Autumn of 1862
A Season of Opportunity

White's Ford on the Potomac River near Leesburg, Virginia, presented a memorable scene on September 4-7, 1862. The weather was brilliantly fine, with bright sunshine playing off the water of the historic river that symbolized the division between North and South. Wildflowers grew thickly along the banks, their vivid colors standing out against dense foliage of towering trees that framed the Potomac. Long lines of veterans of the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia, victors in recent battles with the Army of the Potomac outside Richmond and on the rolling plains of Manassas, made their way across the river into Maryland. Above the winding columns, the careless chatter of soldiers mixed with strains of "Maryland, My Maryland" played by Confederate bands on the east side of the Potomac. It was a grand panorama of an army in motion, only slightly flawed by the obviously ragged appearance of the Southern soldiers.

The Confederacy's leadership sensed opportunity in late summer and early autumn 1862. As R. E. Lee's soldiers tramped into Maryland, Southern fortunes on the battlefield rapidly approached their crest. Far to the west, forces under Generals Braxton Bragg and Edmund Kirby Smith soon would move into the bluegrass region of Kentucky—between them, the raids into Maryland and Kentucky would mark the high point of the South's military effort. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia shouldered the principal burden of making this great Southern counteroffensive a success. While it is true that in a strictly military sense the war would be won in the western theater, where Ulysses S. Grant, William Tecumseh Sherman, and George H. Thomas eventually overmatched their Confederate opponents, many people *perceived* the eastern theater to be the critical arena. Much of the Northern and Southern public, important politicians on both sides, and foreign observers and governments focused on the well-traveled one hundred-mile strip of disputed land between Washington



Army of Northern Virginia Crossing at White's Ford on the Potomac

and Richmond for signs of victory. The opposing capitals were there, the most famous armies were there—the war must be decided there.

Abraham Lincoln found the tendency of his fellow countrymen to concentrate on the Virginia theater very frustrating. He had decided quite early that the West was the crucial geographical region, yet most Northerners failed to grasp this fact. That failure stood in stark relief in early summer 1862 when the North plunged into gloom over George B. McClellan's inability to capture Richmond during the Seven Days campaign. Lee had not beaten the Army of the Potomac, had not even driven it from the Peninsula below Richmond, yet most people interpreted McClellan's campaign as an utter fiasco. Lincoln commented on this phenomenon in a letter of August 4, 1862, to French Count Agénor-Etienne de Gasparin: "The moral effect was the worst of the failure before Richmond. . . . I believe it is true that in men and material, the enemy suffered more than we." In answering Gasparin's call for more victories (by which he clearly meant victories in the East), Lincoln alluded to the lack of Northern appreciation of the Federal triumphs at Forts Henry and Donelson, Shiloh, Nashville, and New Orleans: "It seems unreasonable that a series of successes, extending through half-a-year, and clearing more than a hundred thousand square miles of country,

should help us so little, while a single half-defeat should hurt us so much." Although certainly unreasonable, this eastern bias was a reality that made Lee's movements loom all the larger in September 1862.

A combination of diplomatic, political, and military factors formed an equation of potential opportunity for the Confederacy in the fall of 1862. The governments of England and France watched events with special interest. The *London Times* set the tone for many in Britain when it observed that the Seven Days, which it called a severe Union defeat, had been one of the epochal battles of the century. "After pouring forth blood like water and fertilizing the fields of Virginia with thousands of corpses," stated the *Times* in late July, "the North finds itself obliged to begin all over again, with credit destroyed, a ruined revenue, a depreciated currency, and an enormous debt." A firm believer that the South must demonstrate its independence before Britain intervened as an arbitrator, Prime Minister Viscount Palmerston overlooked Federal activities west of the Appalachians and interpreted the Seven Days as a turning point. He wrote the queen on August 6 that England should propose an armistice in October, when the results of the fall campaigning in Virginia presumably would be known (and presumably would favor the South).

Lee's victory at Second Manassas on August 29–30 added to the expectation of probable Northern failure. Palmerston thought General John Pope's Army of Virginia had gotten a "very complete smashing" that placed at risk Washington and Baltimore, while Lord John Russell, who as head of the Foreign Office had resisted British interference in the American upheaval, concluded that Lee's movement north presaged an end to the war. By mid-September (it took news at least ten days to travel from America to England), Palmerston spoke of Britain and France proffering "an arrangement upon the basis of separation" between the warring sections. Chancellor of the Exchequer William Gladstone favored outright recognition of the Confederacy; in these three men, the South had powerful supporters who might sway a cabinet that contained several members devoted to strict neutrality. The English people were divided on the question. Historians long thought class governed British attitudes toward the American war, with working-class, antislavery sentiment for the Union and aristocratic, privileged classes for the slaveholding Confederacy. In fact, economic self-interest blurred class lines. So long as the North did not declare emancipation a war aim, the pervasive abolitionist impulse in England would not coalesce behind the Lincoln government.

Emperor Louis Napoleon of France waited for England to make the first move. Confederate independence would abet his scheme to create a vassal state in Mexico and bring more cotton to French ports, but after the Russians declined a French suggestion for Anglo-French-Russian mediation in late July 1862 the emperor decided that British action was vital. French Foreign Minister Antoine Edouard Thouvenel averred in late summer that no "reasonable statesman

in Europe" doubted that the Confederacy would win the war. French minister to the United States Baron Henri Mercier advised his superiors in Paris on September 2 that Union setbacks during the Seven Days and at Second Manassas had created an atmosphere conducive to mediation in the North. On September 17, the day of the battle of Antietam, Lord Russell agreed with Palmerston that Britain should offer to mediate "with a view to the recognition of the independence of the Confederates." Should such mediation fail, added Russell, "we ought ourselves to recognize the Southern States as an independent State." He concluded with the observation that a Federal defeat in Maryland would prepare the North to receive Britain's proposal.

Confederate representatives in Europe predicted as early as the end of July that recognition was imminent. In Liverpool, United States Consul Thomas Dudley seconded this reading of events when he stated on July 19 that all of Europe was against the North and "would rejoice at our downfall." Lee and his army held the key to diplomatic movement on the Continent. Another win for the Army of Northern Virginia might well bring recognition for the Confederacy. In their optimism, Southerners thought back to the alliance with France in 1778 and the French ships and soldiers that tipped the scales in favor of George Washington's army at Yorktown. But parallels between 1778 and 1862 were flawed. European military intervention on the side of the Confederacy was highly unlikely; moreover, the Lincoln administration left no doubt that despite any setback on the battlefield it would rebuff mediation. In sum, a diplomatic opportunity of unknown magnitude hung tantalizingly before the Confederacy in September 1862.

It seemed also within the reach of Southern arms to influence Northern politics. The Lincoln administration anticipated determined opposition from Democrats on a range of issues in the summer and fall of 1862; unless Federal armies produced victories in the autumn campaigns the Republicans stood to suffer in the November off-year elections. Apart from their long-standing differences with the Republicans over economic issues, Democrats argued that draconian measures such as Lincoln's selective suspension of the writ of habeas corpus mocked individual rights. They resented the Militia Act of July 17, 1862, which gave the president broad powers to coerce service in federal militia units. They blanched when Lincoln, facing a severe shortage of men, issued a call for three hundred thousand nine-month militiamen in the first week of August, and the War Department sent instructions on enrollment and draft procedures to the states.

Perhaps most galling to the Democrats was increasing pressure from many Republicans to add emancipation as a Northern objective. The war had changed, insisted outraged Democrats. They supported a war to preserve the Union and its constitutional safeguards for citizens' rights, but the conflict had become a gross distortion of that original crusade. Unbridled federal power had grown arrogant and oppressive, threatening to compel whites to die for the freedom

of blacks. Northern Democrats expressed their unhappiness and frustration in words and, increasingly, with acts of violence.

The extent of antiwar sentiment north of the Potomac was well known but imperfectly understood in the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis and R. E. Lee read newspaper accounts of a developing peace party. Lee thought the presence of his army north of the Potomac for several weeks in the fall of 1862 would galvanize Northern opposition to the war. Five days after the first of his infantry had crossed the Potomac at White's Ford, he wrote Davis that the time seemed propitious for the Confederacy to suggest that the United States recognize its independence. More than a year of fighting had brought intense suffering "without advancing the objects which our enemies proposed to themselves in beginning the contest." "The rejection of this offer would prove to the country that the responsibility of the continuance of the war does not rest upon us," reasoned Lee, "but that the party in power in the United States elect to prosecute it for purposes of their own." In offering peace, the South could "enable the people of the United States to determine at their coming elections whether they will support those who favor a prolongation of the war, or those who wish to bring it to a termination, which can but be productive of good to both parties without affecting the honor of either."

Lee and Davis held high hopes for the state of Maryland. Had not that slave state been kept in the Union by Federal bayonets? In April 1861 citizens of Baltimore had rioted against the 6th Massachusetts Regiment. Marylanders had been arrested and incarcerated without benefit of the writ of habeas corpus. Thirty-one secessionist members of the state legislature, together with the mayor of Baltimore, had been imprisoned for several weeks during the fall of 1861. Similar heavy-handed measures had ensured a unionist majority in the legislature elected in November 1861. Some Marylanders arrested on political grounds still languished in prison when the Army of Northern Virginia entered the state; neither they nor any of those released earlier had seen any evidence against them. "In no case has an arrest been made on mere suspicion," Lincoln had stated in September 1861, ". . . but in all cases the Government is in possession of tangible and unmistakable evidence, which will, when made public, be satisfactory to every loyal citizen." The president's words rang hollow to thousands of Marylanders who wondered if their liberties would stand in abeyance for the duration of the war. Lee thought the influence of his victorious army might embolden citizens of Maryland to step forward in active support of the Confederacy, after which they could once again "enjoy the inalienable rights of freemen, and restore independence and sovereignty to your State."

Lee and Davis were correct in assuming that a Southern victory or a protracted stay north of the Potomac would hurt the Republicans in November. They went too far, however, in thinking that even a resounding Democratic victory would bring Northern recognition of Confederate independence. They



General Robert E. Lee

confused Democratic unhappiness with the direction of the war with sentiment receptive to disunion. Only extreme Democrats countenanced the notion of a sovereign Confederacy; most were devoted to a conservative prosecution of the conflict embodied in the slogan "The Constitution as it is, the Union as it was." Lee and Davis similarly misread Maryland (Bragg and Kirby Smith made the same mistake in Kentucky), for the western part of the state, through which the Army of Northern Virginia passed, was staunchly unionist. The eastern shore and Baltimore held most of Maryland's secessionists, who were far from the liberating influence of Lee's forces. Success on the battlefield in Maryland probably would have earned few recruits for Lee's army. More important, Democratic political gains triggered by such a victory almost certainly would not have led to mediation of the question of Southern independence. Confederate opportunity to affect Northern politics through military success thus was limited to influencing *how* rather than *if* the North would continue to wage the war for the Union.

The resolution of one momentous issue did depend largely on the outcome of Lee's raid into Maryland. Lincoln had decided in midsummer to issue a proclamation of emancipation. Pressed by elements of his party to move more quickly, and weary of obstinate refusals by the Border States to consider any type of emancipation, Lincoln had announced his intention to the cabinet on July 22. Debate among his advisers convinced the president to hold off until the North won a military victory; otherwise, as Secretary of State William H. Seward said, the proclamation would appear to be "the last measure of an exhausted government, a cry for help." Once issued, Lincoln's proclamation would alter the nature of the war, making it a struggle for freedom as well as for restoration of the Union. Northern victory would cost the South its slaves, thereby shattering its social and economic fabric. The proclamation also would render it nearly impossible for Britain, which had abolished slavery in the 1830s, to support a slave-based Confederacy against a North fighting for emancipation. Ironically, Lee knew nothing of his chance to influence Lincoln's course on emancipation, though it was potentially the most profound of the opportunities present in the autumn of 1862.

Politics and diplomacy figured in Lee's conception of what his army might accomplish across the Potomac, but his principal goals were military. John Pope's Army of Virginia and George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac lay "weakened and demoralized" in the vicinity of Washington. That presented an opportunity to flank the Federal capital by marching into Maryland. This would not be an invasion—Lee had no intention of holding any Union territory indefinitely—but a great raid during which the Confederates would maintain a flanking posture northwest of Washington for most if not all of the fall season. Such a course offered diverse potential value. The Federals would have to position themselves north of the Potomac to guard Washington, thereby freeing northern Virginia

of contending armies and allowing the Confederates to strengthen the defenses of Richmond. Lee would hold the initiative in Maryland, whereas in Virginia he could do little more than wait for the next Union effort to turn his position and strike at the Southern capital. The raid would bring desperately needed supplies from Maryland and perhaps Pennsylvania to the Army of Northern Virginia. At the same time, the fall harvest in the Shenandoah Valley and elsewhere in Virginia might be gathered in safety. When the approach of winter exhausted supplies in Maryland, Lee would withdraw to Virginia.

Lee expressed no fear of aggressive Union reaction to his raid. Reports through the first week of September indicated that the Federals were concentrating in their fortifications at Washington and Alexandria. Should a Northern force stir itself to press Lee, he would have the advantage of fighting on the tactical defensive in a place of his choosing. "The only two subjects that give me any uneasiness," Lee wrote Davis on September 4, "are my supplies of ammunition and subsistence." The former was not an immediate problem: "I have enough for present use, and must await results before deciding to what point I will have additional supplies forwarded." The farms of western Maryland would answer needs for food and fodder. Lee summed up his analysis of the military, political, and diplomatic opportunities of early autumn 1862 in the opening sentence of a letter to Davis on September 3: "The present seems to be the most propitious time since the commencement of the war for the Confederate Army to enter Maryland."

Lee manifestly believed he could take advantage of at least some of the opportunities that beckoned. But was his army equipped to carry out a major campaign across the Potomac in early September 1862? If it was not, the glimmering possibilities at home and abroad were but so many dancing mirages. Most writers have proceeded from the assumption that the South could have attained more if only certain crucial episodes had gone differently—if, for example, Lee's orders for the campaign had not fallen into McClellan's hands on September 13. A close look at the Army of Northern Virginia as it entered and maneuvered in Maryland during the first ten days of the raid—before any fighting took place—suggests otherwise.

The numerical strength of the Army of Northern Virginia on the eve of the campaign was at best marginally adequate to undertake an operation that might result in battle against Federal forces approaching one hundred thousand soldiers. Two months of hard fighting and marching had extracted a grievous toll. One careful observer wrote that when the army was at Frederick, Maryland, on September 7 its "divisions had sunk to little more than brigades, & brigades nearly to regiments." Though impossible to estimate with precision, Lee's effectives at the time he crossed the river probably totaled 40,000 to 45,000 infantry, 5,500 cavalry, and 4,000 artillery—in all, 50,000 to 55,000 men. Critical shortages of clothing and equipment added to a grim situation. Lee himself

admitted to Davis on September 3 that "the army is not properly equipped for an invasion of an enemy's territory." "It lacks much of the material of war," Lee stated, "is feeble in transportation, the animals being much reduced, and the men are poorly provided with clothes, and in thousands of instances are destitute of shoes." This sobering information appeared in the same letter wherein Lee told Davis it was "the most propitious time since the commencement of the war" to carry the war northward. With scarcely half the men and but a fraction of the material resources of his foe, Lee could expect very little margin for error in Maryland.

Lee could look with assurance to his principal subordinates. James Longstreet and Stonewall Jackson had matured in the crucible of fighting on the Peninsula and during the campaign of Second Manassas. Together with Lee, they would do much to make the Army of Northern Virginia a formidable instrument—in time one of the legendary field commands. Although each was injured in early September, they could be relied upon for solid direction at the top. No less an asset was Jeb Stuart, whose skill in screening and reconnaissance and presence of mind on the battlefield assured Lee of superlative cavalry support. William Nelson Pendleton provided indifferent direction to the artillery, though able young subordinates substantially offset his ineptitude.

Lower levels of command presented a darker picture. Attrition among generals had been frightful since late June. Colonels led eight of Stonewall Jackson's fourteen brigades, and with Richard S. Ewell out of action because of his wound at Groveton and A. P. Hill under arrest due to a dispute with Jackson, not one of his divisional commanders held the appropriate rank of major general. Longstreet's wing was in better shape, although John Bell Hood, Longstreet's fiercest fighter, was under arrest as a result of a silly quarrel with Brigadier General Nathan "Shanks" Evans over some ambulances captured at Second Manassas. Losses among field and company grade officers in both Jackson's and Longstreet's wings had been so high since June that efficiency and discipline suffered serious declines.

Lee's emphasis on the need to provision his army in Maryland told the story of food and fodder in the Army of Northern Virginia. Men and animals alike suffered cruel shortages. Testimony on this point is so overwhelming and well known that a single example will suffice to convey the gravity of Lee's plight. A soldier in James L. Kemper's brigade of D. R. Jones's division remembered that as the army turned north on September 2 after the battle of Chantilly, "[our] haversacks were all turned wrong side out and the very dust of the crackers were scraped out and devoured." The next day there was "still no sign of our commissary wagons, and not a mouthful of food did we have all day." September 4 brought some green corn, and for three days the soldiers relied on that bowel-churning fare. On September 8 this soldier wrote simply, "[W]e are hungry, for six days not a morsel of bread or meat had gone into our stomachs—and

our menu consisted of apples and corn." Horses and mules were in a similar state. The lack of shoes among Lee's men posed another barrier to effective maneuver. A soldier from Georgia put this crisis very succinctly: "I had no shoes. I tried it barefoot, but somehow my feet wouldn't callous. They just kept bleeding." Try as he might, this man could not keep up with his unit.

In ragged clothing, poorly shod, and inadequately nourished, the men of the Army of Northern Virginia, as well as the animals that toiled alongside them, were not physically prepared for an active raid into Maryland and Pennsylvania. And Lee's admission of as much on September 3 did not portend a successful campaign.

The morale of the Army of Northern Virginia as it embarked on its raid deserves closer scrutiny than it has received from historians. Nearly every writer dwells on the massive amount of straggling. An army that crossed the Potomac with 50,000 to 55,000 men mustered fewer than 40,000 bayonets at Sharpsburg on September 17. The loss of so many of his men chastened Lee. "Our great embarrassment," he wrote Davis on September 13, "is the reduction in our ranks by straggling, which it seems impossible to prevent with our present regimental officers. Our ranks are much diminished—I fear from a third to one-half of the original number." Alexander Cheves Haskell, member of a South Carolina family that sent seven brothers into the Confederate army, wrote home just after Antietam that, "Our army is small, but fights gloriously. . . . Great numbers of men have straggled off, until none but heroes are left." Young Brigadier General William Dorsey Pender of A. P. Hill's division noted in exasperation on September 19: "In one of my regt's the other day. . . six out of 10 officers skulked out. . . . More than half my brigade went off the same day. Oh dear, oh dear, our army is coming to a pretty pass." Stern warnings, hangings (especially in Jackson's command), and other harsh measures failed to stop the flood of soldiers dropping away from their units.

What had happened? Why did the army, following two resounding victories, hemorrhage at such an alarming rate? The traditional explanations are familiar: thousands of men fell out of the ranks because their unshod feet gave out; malnourishment and diarrhea left others too weak to carry on; others still, especially those from western North Carolina, felt uncomfortable moving north to fight on enemy soil (they had enlisted to defend their homes). All of these men, the usual argument goes, rejoined their units as soon as the army returned to Virginia.

Taken as a group, these factors undoubtedly account for a large percentage of the men who were not present at Antietam. They do not, however, explain the phenomenon of Lee's losing fully one-third of his army. Lee himself admitted to Davis on September 21 (when the army was back in Virginia) that his force "remained greatly paralyzed by the loss to its ranks of many stragglers. I have taken every means in my power from the beginning to correct this evil, which

has increased rather than diminished." Many soldiers never entered Maryland, stated Lee, while others who did move north "kept aloof." "The stream has not lessened since crossing the Potomac [recrossing the river back into Virginia]," Lee concluded, "though the cavalry has been constantly employed in suppressing it." What Lee described was more than straggling—it was straggling in tandem with large-scale desertion. Desertion is an ugly word that few who have studied the Maryland campaign have been willing to use, but desertion it was that kept men away from their units *during* and *after* the campaign.

Lee also acknowledged that his soldiers were plundering beyond the control of their officers. Although he devoted considerable time to stopping this wanton destruction of private property, Lee confessed to Davis that he was having little success: General John R. Jones, who was assigned to round up those absent from their commands, reported ten days after Antietam that he had sent approximately six thousand back to the army, but that the area around Winchester was still "full of stragglers." "Many of them have deliberately thrown away their shoes so they would have an excuse for being away," said Jones in disgust, and the "number of officers back here was most astonishing." This shocking situation indicated more than a lack of sufficient food and shoes. Clearly, an unprecedented percentage of the Army of Northern Virginia suffered from low morale and lax discipline and simply refused to fight in Maryland. Alexander Haskell's comment was most revealing—the steadfast heroes fought magnificently at Antietam, but they fought without the help of thousands of their compatriots.

The loss of veteran company and field grade officers doubtless contributed to poor discipline and morale during the Maryland campaign. The wearing toll of more than two months of strenuous marching punctuated by heavy combat also played a role. William Garrett Piston has suggested that the shift from Joseph E. Johnston's to Lee's leadership may have been a third factor. Many soldiers in the army considered Lee a stand-in for the popular Johnston, who, they believed, would return following his recuperation. By the first of September, some of these men may have seen all they wanted of Lee's style of generalship. In three months under Lee's direction, the army had suffered more than thirty-five thousand battle casualties (Antietam would add another ten thousand). This was bloodshed on an unimaginable scale; it might have fostered feelings among some of the men that if they survived until Johnston resumed command they had a better chance of living a full life. Whatever the complete story of the straggling and desertion in the Army of Northern Virginia, it seems incontrovertible that morale and discipline were uneven. Lee did not go north with an army that had the self-confidence, devotion to its commander, and profound willingness to do anything asked of it that would be its trademark in another few months.

Because of these problems and the material odds against them, Lee and his army probably lacked the capacity to achieve a decisive victory or maintain

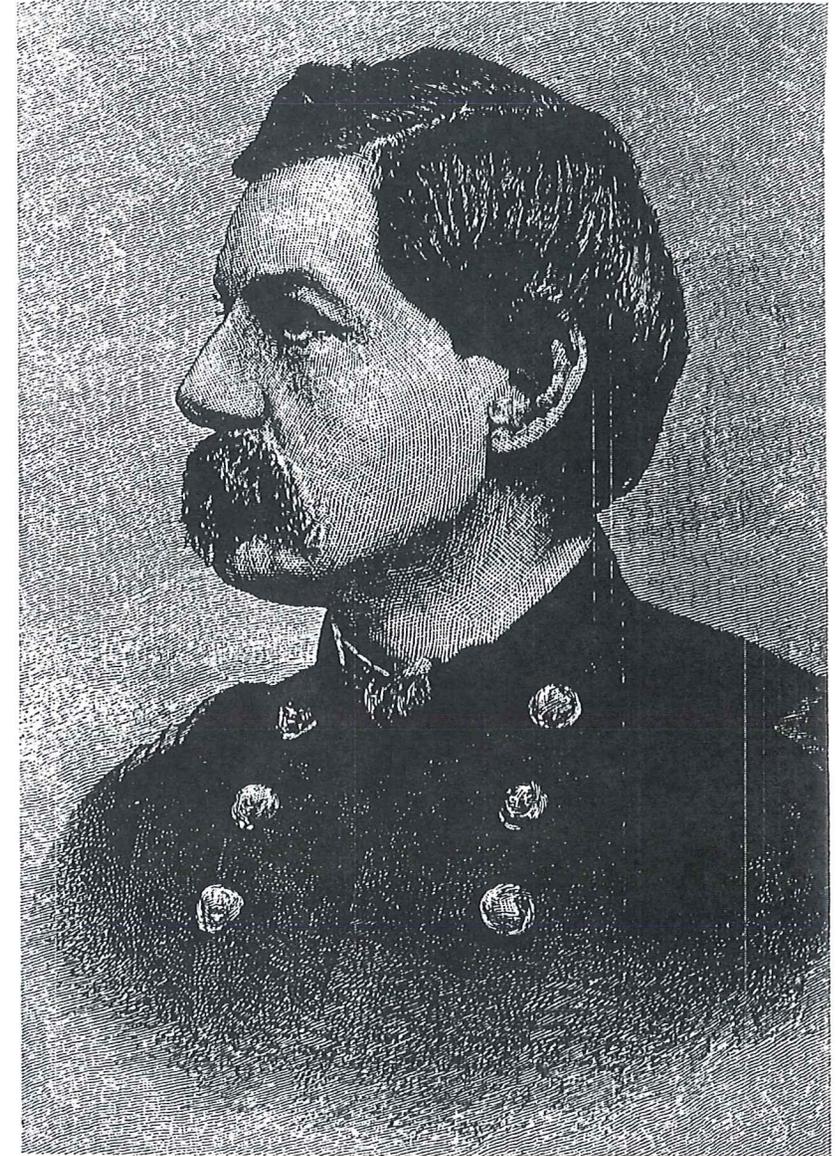
a protracted presence in the North. Porter Alexander, who was perhaps the most astute of all the Confederates who wrote about the war, argued that in light of inferior Southern strength and supplies, "a drawn battle, such as we did actually fight, was the best *possible* outcome one could hope for." Only McClellan's unbelievable timidity and failure to fight his entire army, added Alexander, permitted even that unsatisfactory result. Barring egregious errors or criminal sloth on the part of his opponent, Lee's army reasonably stood scant chance of seizing the political, diplomatic, and military opportunities that have fascinated students of the Maryland campaign.

The real opportunity that autumn lay in Federal hands. Confronted with a range of potential rewards, the audacious Lee had calculated the risks and chosen to go north. He relied on a period of Federal confusion and inaction after Second Manassas to permit his establishment of a good position in Maryland before having to confront any menace from the Army of the Potomac. But Lee underestimated George B. McClellan's brilliance in rallying Pope's dispirited troops. Within days McClellan restored morale and built confidence among the ranks of his combined force, and Lincoln discerned that a beautiful opening lay before the Federals. Lee's army was vulnerable once it had crossed into Maryland, its safe passage to Virginia dependent on the Potomac's fords. The farther north Lee went, thought Lincoln, the more tenuous his position. Unaffected by the hysteria that gripped much of the North following news of the Confederate raid, Lincoln concentrated on offensive operations. Receiving reports on September 12 that the enemy was crossing back into Virginia, he urged McClellan, "Please do not let him get off without being hurt." Three days later the president implored his general to "destroy the rebel army, if possible."

Lincoln's hopes were not fanciful. The fall of 1862 was the only time in the war that one major army in the East had an opportunity to destroy another major army. Many generals loved to talk about fashioning Cannae-type victories, but McClellan actually had such an opportunity in mid-September 1862 with Lee's outnumbered army backed against the Potomac at Sharpsburg. When Lee decided to stay north of the Potomac and offer battle, he gave McClellan the most incredible military opportunity of the conflict. Porter Alexander termed Lee's action the greatest blunder he ever committed and marveled at McClellan's good fortune: "Not twice in a lifetime does such a chance come to any general. Lee for once has made a mistake, & given you a chance to ruin him if you can break his lines, & such game is worth great risks."

Great risks and great opportunities were the leitmotifs of the 1862 Maryland campaign. Willing to risk all in pursuit of opportunities he and his government saw before them, Lee misjudged the resources of his army. That miscalculation thrust before the Federals a most dazzling opportunity for which McClellan, despite Lincoln's prodding and the fortuitous capture of Lee's plans, declined to risk anything. The stakes in September 1862 were as high as they ever

got in a war that would drag on for another two and a half years. The campaign in Maryland, with its horrific climax at Antietam, did much to determine the outcome of that mighty struggle.



Major General George Brinton McClellan

The Maryland Campaign in Perspective

The broad consequences of the 1862 Maryland campaign exceeded those of any other operation of the American Civil War. The events of that autumn marked a watershed in the conflict. Soldiers and civilians alike strove to discover exactly what had been won and lost in a military sense. People behind the lines struggled to come to terms with hideous casualty lists. Photographic evidence from the battlefield at Antietam altered forever romantic conceptions of war. Abraham Lincoln took a momentous step toward emancipation, while European leaders recast their thinking about the likelihood of Confederate independence. Maryland remained firmly in the Union; Republicans breathed a bit more easily about the coming Northern elections. Complex in execution and impact, the Maryland campaign qualified as a pivotal event of the war.

In the area of military results, only the magnitude and horror of the fighting were beyond conflicting interpretation. A Pennsylvania soldier groping for the right words to describe the carnage stated simply, "No tongue can tell, no mind conceive, no pen portray the horrible sights I witnessed this morning." "Great God," wrote a Georgian to his wife the day after the battle, "what awful things I have to chronicle this morning! . . . One of the most awful battles that was ever fought was fought yesterday[.] [It] commenced at daylight and continued all day until dark. . . . This war will have to stop before long, as all the men will be killed off." Similar statements from other men appalled by the savagery of the battle abound in the literature on Antietam.

The overall military result of the campaign was more open to question. Almost from the moment the guns fell silent in the gathering dusk of September 17, 1862, people expressed contradictory reactions about what had transpired. Lee's official report and congratulatory order to his troops understandably emphasized the positive aspects of the expedition. The Confederate army had cleared Federals from northern Virginia, captured Harpers Ferry and its garrison, provisioned itself from western Maryland, and maintained a position near the south

bank of the Potomac after its withdrawal. As for his soldiers' conduct in the battle, Lee told Davis with obvious pride that, "History records but few examples of a greater amount of labor and fighting than has been done by this army during the present campaign." To the Army of Northern Virginia, Lee expressed "admiration of the indomitable courage it has displayed in battle and its cheerful endurance of privation and hardship on the march." Absent was any hint of the straggling and desertion that had plagued Lee's movements; however, in a letter to Davis on September 25 Lee admitted that the army did not "exhibit its former temper and condition." James Longstreet, who doubtless was privy to Lee's thinking in the aftermath of the raid, recorded after the war that "General Lee was not satisfied with the result of the Maryland campaign."

Opinion from the Southern ranks generally spoke of success. Letters, diaries, and postwar accounts mentioned the prisoners and guns taken at Harpers Ferry, the steadfast courage of the men at Antietam, and McClellan's failure to drive the Army of Northern Virginia from the battlefield on September 18. "At night we lay down on our arms," remembered a Virginian of the night of September 17. "The next morning, expecting a renewal of the battle, we were up bright and early. But the enemy was badly whipped and did not make a demonstration during the day." Chaplain Nicholas A. Davis of Hood's Texas Brigade stated shortly after the campaign that "Harper's Ferry had fallen, and its rich prizes were ours." Davis emphasized that "our march to and across the river was undisturbed—This, of itself, will show to the world the nature of McClellan's victory. And if he had beaten and driven us, . . . why did he allow us to pass quietly away after holding the field a whole day and night?"

John Hampden Chamberlayne, a Virginia artilleryman, cautioned his sister not "to suppose we were driven out of Maryland; no such thing; our campaign is almost unexampled for quickness & completeness of success." "We have done much more," Chamberlayne insisted, "than a sane man could have expected." In *The Lost Cause*, published in 1866, Edward A. Pollard suggested that the campaign had "few parallels in history for active operations and brilliant results." Pollard noted sarcastically that if "McClellan was under the impression that he had won a victory, he showed but little disposition to improve it, or to gather its fruits."

Confederate General Jubal A. Early ably enumerated the positive facets of the Maryland raid in his postwar autobiography. After forcing Union armies away from Richmond and out of northern Virginia, Lee "had crossed the Potomac, captured an important stronghold defended by a strong force, securing a large amount of artillery, small arms, and stores of all kinds. . . ." At Antietam he "fought a great battle with the newly reorganized and heavily reinforced and recruited army of the enemy, which later was so badly crippled that it was not able to resume the offensive for nearly two months." Lee then stood "defiantly on the banks of the Potomac, the extreme northern limit of the Confederacy,"

and from that position menaced Washington while at the same time freeing Richmond from direct threat. When the Federals finally moved into Virginia again, stated Early, Lee was in perfect position "to interpose his army, and inflict a new defeat on the enemy."

A few Confederates confessed doubts about their accomplishments in Maryland. Four days after Antietam, Walter H. Taylor of Lee's staff somewhat bitterly counseled his sister not to "let any of your friends sing 'My Maryland'—not 'my Western Maryland' anyhow." "We do not claim a victory. . .," conceded Taylor, "It was not decisive enough for that." The young staff officer did add bravely that if either side had an edge at Antietam, "it certainly was with us." Brigadier General William Dorsey Pender informed his wife Fanny that he had heard but one feeling expressed about the raid into Maryland, "and that is a regret at our having gone there. Our Army has shown itself incapable of invasion and we had better stick to the defensive." A member of the Rockbridge Artillery made no effort to soften his blunt assessment: "The yankees slitley got the best of the fight in Maryland! You ought to have Seen us Skeedadling across the Potomac and the yankees close in our rear." South Carolinian Alexander Cheves Haskell praised the fighting qualities of the Confederates at Antietam, but stressed that huge numbers of their comrades had abandoned the army. "We are in far better condition in every respect," he affirmed from the Virginia side of the Potomac on September 28, "than when we first invaded the cold, treacherous soil of Maryland."

Voices on the Federal side also reflected mixed judgments about the military results of the campaign. Politics and personal loyalty colored many Northern attitudes—friends and supporters of the Democratic McClellan in one camp, Republicans and McClellan's enemies within the Union army arrayed against them. McClellan himself stood at one extreme, a pillar of unrelenting self-congratulation. He took pains to impress Mrs. McClellan with the magnitude of his achievement: "I feel some little pride in having, with a beaten and demoralized army, defeated Lee so utterly and saved the North so completely." "I have the satisfaction of knowing," he continued, "that God has, in His mercy, a second time made me the instrument for saving the nation." General-in-Chief Henry W. Halleck received, on September 19, McClellan's bombastic assurance that "our victory was complete. The enemy is driven back into Virginia. Maryland and Pennsylvania are now safe." Neither at the time nor in his postwar writings did McClellan grant that his conduct of the campaign had been anything less than brilliant.

For many Northerners, the fact of Lee's retreat signified a Union victory. Alpheus S. Williams, a divisional leader in the Federal Twelfth Corps, believed that "we punished the Rebels severely in the last battle. The number of dead they left on the field was enormous. In some places whole regiments seem to have fallen in their tracks." The Confederates sneaked back to Virginia, said

Williams: "Their invasion of Maryland has been a sad business for them." George G. Meade, who as commander of the Army of the Potomac would repel a second Confederate raid nine months hence, pronounced Lee's Maryland adventure "the most lamentable failure." Although his unit did not fight at Antietam, Colonel Robert McAllister of the 11th New Jersey sent a letter to his family on September 21 that echoed McClellan's own estimate of the campaign: "McClellan has done well—gained a decided victory, saved Washington, Maryland, and Pennsylvania, and given the Rebels a hard stroke." "How splendidly his men fought under him, compared to what the troops did under Pope," McAllister added. Edward K. Wightman of the 9th New York arrived on the battlefield just after the Army of Northern Virginia had retreated. "The impression among our soliders," he found, "is that the war is finished. They think the battle of Wednesday the greatest of the war and decisive." A young officer from Massachusetts who heard the gunfire from Antietam but missed the battle recalled that it "was claimed as a victory by the Army of the Potomac because they held the field."

Some Federals sensed that McClellan had frittered away a splendid opportunity. Robert Goldthwaite Carter of Massachusetts and his three brothers, whose letters form a wonderful chronicle of the war in the East, considered Antietam at best a partial victory. One of the Carters had difficulty understanding why "McClellan did not let our corps finish up the 'rebs,'" and especially why the Federal commander allowed Lee to stand along Antietam Creek undisturbed throughout September 18 and then to cross the Potomac safely. Another brother also lamented the fact that the Confederates got away "to our shame, without much loss to their rear guard." "If McClellan had only attacked again early Thursday morning," observed disappointed Northern newspaper correspondent Albert D. Richardson two days after Antietam, "we could have driven them into the river or captured them. . . . It was one of the supreme moments when by daring something, the destiny of the nation might have been changed." Union First Corps chief Joseph Hooker agreed. An officer who visited the wounded general in Keedysville on September 19 recorded that he "talked a great deal about McClellan not renewing the attack yesterday."

No one in the North experienced deeper disappointment than Abraham Lincoln. He had considered Lee's movement into Maryland a wonderful opening for a Federal counterstroke. Far from home and tied to the fords on the Potomac, Lee was vulnerable to determined pressure. Antietam made a good start on the business of finishing Lee, but McClellan's inactivity on September 18 allowed the Confederate chieftain to extricate his army from a dangerous position. Lincoln prodded and implored McClellan to move, until finally, when seven weeks had passed and Lee remained ensconced in the northern frontier of Virginia, Lincoln removed Little Mac from command. A reading of Lincoln's correspondence with McClellan in that seven weeks conveys the depth of his disappointment

and frustration. So too does Gideon Welles's entry in his diary for September 19, 1862: "Nothing from the army, except that, instead of following up the victory, attacking and capturing the Rebels, they, after a day's armistice, are rapidly escaping across the river." And then, in exasperation, the dour secretary of the navy went on, "McClellan says they are crossing, and that Pleasonton is after them. Oh dear!"

What is a fair reckoning of the military ledger sheet of the 1862 Maryland campaign? The Confederate side is a fascinating blend of accomplishment and useless loss, of brilliant leadership on the battlefield and questionable strategic decisions after September 15. Lee's movement north represented an effort to take the war out of Virginia, gather food and fodder, threaten Washington from the west, and prevent another Union incursion south of the Potomac before the onset of winter. He accomplished the first three of these, and managed also to postpone the next Federal drive toward Richmond until Ambrose E. Burnside's unusual winter campaign that ended ignominiously for the Union at Fredericksburg in mid-December. Mounting a raid rather than an invasion, Lee knew he would have to fall back to Virginia at some point, preferably in late fall. The battle of Antietam compelled him to withdraw sooner than he wished. But because McClellan allowed him to maintain a position immediately south of the Potomac, Lee was able to accomplish from northern Virginia what he had planned to do in western Maryland or southern Pennsylvania. The captures at Harpers Ferry constituted a bonus that Lee did not envision at the outset.

Against these positive results must be reckoned the loss of more than a quarter of the Army of Northern Virginia. The vast majority of those casualties came at Antietam, where Lee stood to gain not a single military advantage. After the fighting on South Mountain, Lee retained no viable offensive options. Harpers Ferry had fallen. No hope of surprise remained; an overwhelmingly more powerful foe was closing in from the east. The astute Porter Alexander subsequently observed that on September 15 "our whole army was back on the Va. side of the Potomac except Longstreet's & Hill's divisions. These could have been easily retired across the river, & we would, indeed, have left Maryland without a great battle, but we would nevertheless have come off with good prestige & a very fair lot of prisoners & guns, & lucky on the whole to do this, considering the accident of the 'lost order.'" Lee erred badly in choosing to give battle at Sharpsburg—it was, thought Alexander, his "greatest military blunder." His back was against the river, only Boteler's Ford invited escape should a crisis arise, and the disparity in numbers virtually guaranteed that the army would face a bitter contest.

Ironically, this battle that Lee should not have fought proved a showcase for the Confederate high command. Lee, Jackson, and Longstreet directed a tactical masterpiece, and their soldiers added heroic luster to a reputation already high.

They also fell in such numbers that the Confederate government in Richmond hesitated to publish casualty lists for fear of the effect on the home front.

While fighting at Antietam was a mistake, Lee's decision to stay on the field another day and contemplate a counterattack amounted to sheer folly. The usual explanations are well known: Lee wanted the men to stand their ground lest morale drop; Lee knew the cautious McClellan would risk no further assaults; or, Lee felt confident of his army's ability to repulse the enemy. These rationalizations wither under even the slightest scrutiny. Lee realized all too well that morale already sagged among thousands of his soldiers. How would potentially catastrophic defeat along the river improve it? The second argument is equally flimsy. McClellan had attacked for twelve hours on September 17. How could Lee possibly know he would fail to resume those efforts on the eighteenth? As for the contention that Lee's army could repulse the enemy, the seventeenth had been a series of near disasters for Lee, and no factor had changed in his favor. Another round of similar assaults on September 18 almost certainly would break his army. In *R. E. Lee: A Biography*, Douglas Southall Freeman steps back in awe of Lee's resolute stand on the eighteenth: "What manner of man was he who would elect after that doubtful battle against vast odds to stand for another day with his back to the river?" The answer is that the R. E. Lee of September 18, 1862, was a man who irresponsibly placed at peril his entire army.

If Lee's gravest error was in striving to do too much with a limited force, McClellan's was in asking too little of a powerful one. High marks must be his for restoring confidence and discipline to a recently defeated army. He also forced Lee out of Maryland, a principal Federal goal in the campaign. In his mind that may have been enough. McClellan wanted a restoration of the old Union with the least possible cost in blood. He may have thought Antietam impressive enough to convince Southerners that independence was beyond their grasp, whereas a more decisive triumph might provide a springboard for Republicans to solidify their political grip on the nation and construct a new Union without slavery.

The salient feature of the entire Maryland campaign, however, was McClellan's opportunity to inflict a catastrophic defeat on Lee's army. No other commander on either side during the Civil War enjoyed a comparable situation. Following receipt of Lee's Special Orders No. 191, McClellan dawdled while the Army of Northern Virginia lay scattered across western Maryland. On September 15–16 he allowed Lee to concentrate his far-flung units near Sharpsburg. Porter Alexander's critique of McClellan at Antietam conveys a proper sense of disbelief: Lee managed a tactical draw on that day only "by the Good Lord's putting it into McClellan's heart to keep Fitz John Porter's corps entirely out to the battle, & Franklin's nearly all out." "I doubt whether many hearts but McClellan's would have accepted the suggestions, even from a Divine source," noted

Alexander wryly. "For Common Sense was just shouting, 'Your adversary is backed against a river, with no bridge & only one ford, & that the worst one on the whole river. If you whip him now you destroy him utterly, root & branch & bag & baggage. . . . & such game is worth great risks. Every man must fight & keep on fighting for all he is worth.'" "No military genius," concluded Alexander, "but only the commonest kind of every day common sense, was necessary to appreciate that."

Priceless openings had come and gone over three crucial days, and Lee's decision to hold his lines on September 18 was McClellan's ultimate opportunity. Reinforced during the night, he outnumbered Lee nearly three to one. Thousands of his men were fresh, the enemy fatigued beyond telling. But once again McClellan lacked the fortitude to let his loyal soldiers seek complete victory. For all the talk of McClellan's love for his men, one fact stands out—he doubted their ability to defeat Lee's veterans. Their valor the day before on the rolling hills west of Antietam Creek fully matched that of the Confederate defenders. Their numbers should have told then; they would have told on September 18. They waited and watched through a long, tense day, and then it was over. The Army of Northern Virginia marched away that night to execute an undisputed crossing at Boteler's Ford. The Army of the Potomac possessed the requisite elements to deliver a fatal blow. Destruction of Lee's army would have uncovered Richmond and crippled Southern morale; it might have ended the war. Because McClellan chose not to force the issue, his military performance in Maryland must be judged harshly.

The absence of a clear-cut military decision in Maryland both bewildered and discouraged civilians in the North and South. Lee had hoped a successful raid would lead Northerners to examine the utility of continuing the war. But while his brief sojourn in Maryland prompted renewed scrutiny of Northern military leadership, it triggered no groundswell of support for a negotiated peace leading to Confederate independence. Many Northerners adopted an attitude similar to that of Republican war correspondent Whitelaw Reid, who pointed out that while the Confederates "certainly did not entirely succeed, if we claim the success, they can retort with force that never was victory more dear or barren." "Nor can any charity explain away that terrible, fateful delay after claiming a glorious victory," continued Reid. "It will not do to say our men were exhausted. If the vanquished and dispirited army had strength enough to gather up its fragments and retreat, the victorious army must have had strength enough to follow." "Let no weary patriot be deceived," Reid warned in summary. "We, indeed, took no steps backward at Antietam Creek, but we took very few forward."

Civilian sentiment south of the Potomac was generally pessimistic. Robert Garlick Hill Kean of the Confederate Bureau of War characterized Jefferson Davis in his diary as being "very low down after the battle of Sharpsburg."

Davis confessed to Secretary of War George Wythe Randolph that the Confederacy's "maximum strength had been laid out, while the enemy was but beginning to put forth his." A young woman in Front Royal, Virginia, recorded with apprehension that "reports concerning the Sharpsburg battle are confirmed. . . . our army are certainly recrossing the river. It looks rather gloomy for our prospects in Md. and I cannot possibly understand it all." The government did not at first disclose official figures for casualties—"a bad sign for us," thought Catherine Edmondston of Halifax County, North Carolina. "The possession of Harpers Ferry was claimed by us as worth the advance into Maryland," wrote Edmondston, "& yet we cannot hold it. God be with us! Turn not away Thy face, O God, but be with our army a help in time of need." Despite early stories in the *Richmond Enquirer* and elsewhere that Antietam was a stunning Confederate victory, few Southerners believed for long that the Maryland campaign had been more than a bloody standoff at best.

For Northerners, Antietam signaled a special turning point in the war. Photographers reached the battlefield before the dead had been buried—a first in American history. Their probing cameras captured the horrors along the Hagerstown Pike, east of the Dunker Church, and in the ghastly Sunken Road. In October 1862, Mathew Brady's New York gallery placed on exhibit a series of views entitled "The Dead at Antietam." Long lines of people passed through the gallery, including a reporter for the *New York Times* who described the experience in an article published on October 20. "Mr. Brady has done something to bring home to us the terrible reality and earnestness of war," he wrote. "If he has not brought the bodies and laid them in our door-yards and along the streets, he had done something very like it. . . ." *Harper's Weekly* and *Atlantic Monthly* also carried stories about the photographs, and *Harper's* included woodcuts of some of the death studies. Profoundly moved, those who saw the pictures would never again think of battle as carefully dressed ranks of brave men moving gallantly forward. Their understanding of war now included images of the twisted bodies of North Carolinians and Louisianians, of dead horses and broken equipment, and of a blasted landscape.

Apart from the debatable issue of military success, Lee's raid into Maryland was a profound failure. The most telling consequence came on September 22, 1862, when Lincoln told his cabinet that he would issue a preliminary proclamation of emancipation. Lincoln conceded that "the action of the army against the rebels has not been quite what I should have best liked. But they have been driven out of Maryland, and Pennsylvania is no longer in danger of invasion." That was victory enough to spare the proclamation any tinge of desperation. Should the states in rebellion refuse to return to the Union by January 1, 1863, said the president, their chattels "shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free." Vigorous and sometimes ugly debate ensued across the North, where millions of whites who hated or feared blacks resisted the notion of fighting

in part to cast off the slaves' shackles. The South reacted with violent scorn, pointing out that Lincoln was freeing slaves only where he lacked the power to do so. What he really wanted, Southerners argued, was to precipitate a race war in the Confederacy. Lincoln's exemption of loyal Border States and all areas of the Confederacy under Federal control as of January 1, 1863, also led a few abolitionists in the North and Europe to charge hypocrisy. A number of twentieth-century historians have raised the same cry.

These critics displayed a poor grasp of the proclamation. Lincoln saw it as a war measure aimed at hastening Confederate defeat. Under the Constitution, he could seize material from the rebellious Confederacy; however, he lacked authority to take personal property from citizens residing in areas loyal to the United States government. He had done what was possible, and thereby helped open the way for nearly two hundred thousand black men to fight in Federal armies. The proclamation also foreclosed the option of reunion on the basis of the status quo ante bellum. The South's social and economic structure was doomed unless Confederate armies won independence on the battlefield. With issuance of the proclamation, the struggle became a total war for Union and freedom.

Lee's retreat from Maryland and the Emancipation Proclamation both influenced events in Europe. At flood tide in early September, Southern hopes for help from Europe receded quickly. Prime Minister Palmerston believed that "these last battles in Maryland have rather set the North up again." "The whole matter is full of difficulty," he thought, "and can only be cleared up by some more decided events between the contending armies." In a letter to Lord Russell on October 2, Palmerston suggested that "ten days or a fortnight more may throw a clearer light upon future prospects." William Gladstone and Russell continued their agitation for recognition through October. On the seventh of that month, Gladstone delivered his memorable paean to the Confederacy in a speech at Tyneside: "Jefferson Davis and other leaders of the South have made an army; they are making, it appears, a navy; and they have made what is more than either, they have made a nation."

The loud cheers that greeted those strident phrases were long forgotten when the British cabinet took up the question of recognition on October 28, 1862. With Palmerston made cautious by Antietam, the vote went against Russell and Gladstone. Shortly thereafter the cabinet also refused a French plan calling for Britain, France, and Russia to suggest a six-month armistice and suspension of the blockade. News of the Emancipation Proclamation further undercut friends of the South. American Minister to England Charles Francis Adams wrote happily that British antislavery sentiment was working to "annihilate all agitation for recognition." Adams undoubtedly overstated the impact of Lincoln's proclamation, for even some abolitionists in England continued to support the Confederacy.

Neither Lee's withdrawal from Maryland nor the proclamation guaranteed that Europe would stay aloof, but together they helped persuade the British to wait until military developments favored the Confederates. Southern arms ultimately proved unequal to the daunting task of compiling enough victories to bring European intercession.

Lee's expectation of gathering recruits in Maryland came to little. Indeed, Southern illusions about pro-Confederate Marylanders waiting to break free of Union oppression disappeared even before the battle of Antietam. As early as September 7, Lee cautioned Davis that "notwithstanding individual expressions of kindness that have been given," he did not "anticipate any general rising of the people in our behalf." The next day, September 8, Lee issued a proclamation informing Marylanders that "our army has come among you, and is prepared to assist you with the power of its arms in regaining the rights of which you have been despoiled." No more than a few hundred Marylanders stepped forward to join the thin ranks of the Army of Northern Virginia.

The numerous Germans in western Maryland turned a distinctly cold shoulder to the intruders. The ragged clothing and gaunt frames of the Confederates, as well as their lice and pungent odor, put off even sympathetic civilians. In Frederick, citizens joyously welcomed McClellan's troops after the Army of Northern Virginia had moved on to the west. "Happy homelike faces beamed on us. . .," wrote a Massachusetts soldier of his arrival in Frederick, "the people began to cook for us, bringing out as we passed, cake, pie and bread." A New Yorker related that "the place was alive with girls going around the streets in squads waving flags, singing songs & inviting the soldiers in for hot suppers."

As the Southern army crossed the Potomac into Virginia on the night of September 18, John H. Lewis of the 9th Virginia Infantry noted a changed attitude toward Maryland: "When going over the river the boys were singing 'Maryland, my Maryland.' But all was quiet on that point when we came back. Occasionally some fellow would strike that tune, and you would then hear the echo, 'Damn My Maryland.' All seemed to be disgusted with that part of Maryland."

Lee experienced a final failure relating to the Northern elections that fall. He had hoped to strengthen the peace interests, but the Army of Northern Virginia's two-week stay north of the Potomac supplied poor aid to those who opposed the Republican administration. If Union half-victories at Antietam and Perryville spawned little if any rejoicing in the North, they at least avoided the sort of dramatic defeat that might have sent Republican fortunes spinning downward. Ironically, the Emancipation Proclamation—made possible by Lee's retreat—did provoke angry reaction that helped the Democrats. Results of the canvass of 1862 showed only modest Democratic gains for an off-year election—thirty-four seats in the House of Representatives, gubernatorial victories in New York and New Jersey, and control of the Illinois and Indiana legislatures. The

Republicans managed to gain five seats in the Senate and retain control of the House (their net loss in the House was the smallest in the last ten elections for the majority party). The war would continue under Republican direction.

The Maryland campaign holds a unique position in the galaxy of Civil War military operations. Its centerpiece was the surging maelstrom of Antietam, which stood out as the bloodiest single day of a conflict marked by great slaughter. The principal commanders offered a striking contrast in personality and style—Lee pressing his worn army to the edge of ruin in pursuit of beckoning opportunity; McClellan repeatedly shrinking from commitment of his proud host in circumstances favorable beyond the imaginings of most generals. Etched in grays rather than black and white, the military resolution invited debate. Lee went north and fought, avoided a series of lurking disasters, and found refuge in the end along the southern bank of the Potomac River. But the military events of mid-September 1862 bore bitter political and diplomatic fruit for the Confederacy. The nature of the conflict changed because of Lee's Maryland campaign. The South might have won the old war—seemed in the giddy season of late summer and fall 1862 to be doing so. But the new war would admit of no easy reconciliation because the stakes had been raised to encompass the entire social fabric of the South. The war after Antietam would demand a decisive resolution on the battlefield, and that the Confederacy could not achieve.

Bibliographic Note

There is a large and diverse literature on the 1862 Maryland campaign. Any military analysis must begin with the U.S. War Department's *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (127 vols., index, and atlas; Washington, D.C., 1880–1901). Reports, orders, and correspondence relating to Antietam fill the two large books of series I, volume 19, parts 1 and 2, of the *Official Records* (or the *OR*, as the set is popularly known), and more than any other single source this material helps to define the scope and progress of the campaign. A number of participants contributed useful, though frequently self-serving, articles to the Century Company's four-volume *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (ed. Clarence Clough Buel and Robert Underwood Johnson; New York, 1887). Pieces on the Maryland campaign by George B. McClellan, D. H. Hill, Jacob D. Cox, William B. Franklin, James Longstreet, and other Northern and Southern commanders appear in volume 2.

Diaries, reminiscences, collections of letters, and other works by officers and men in the ranks run into the hundreds and vary widely in quality. *The Wartime Papers of R. E. Lee* (ed. Clifford Dowdey and Louis H. Manarin; Boston, 1961) and *The Civil War Papers of George B. McClellan: Selected Correspondence 1860–1865* (ed. Stephen W. Sears; New York, 1989) reveal the thinking of the two principal commanders. Although often untrustworthy, *McClellan's Own Story* (New York, 1887), the general's posthumous memoir, is a must on the campaign. E. P. Alexander's *Military Memoirs of a Confederate* (New York, 1907) and *Fighting for the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1989), attest to their author's remarkable ability to get at the essence of an operation. A careful treatment by Stonewall Jackson's chief of ordnance is William Allan's *The Army of Northern Virginia in 1862* (Boston, 1892). James Longstreet's *From Manassas to Appomattox* (Philadelphia, 1896) makes available material on the Confederate side to be found nowhere else. Four unusually good Federal accounts are Alpheus S. Williams's often gripping *From the Cannon's Mouth* (ed. Milo M. Quaife; Detroit, 1959), Francis W. Palfrey's general examination of the war in the East during the fall and winter of 1862 titled *The Antietam and Fredericksburg* (New York, 1882), Robert Goldthwaite Carter's remarkable family chronicle *Four Brothers in Blue* (reprint of the scarce original edition; Austin, Tex., 1978), and Charles S. Wainwright's superlative wartime letters published as