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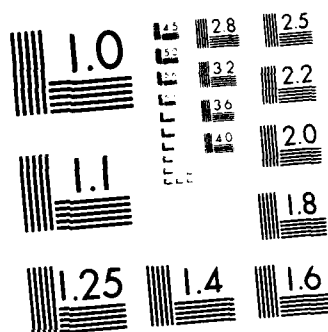
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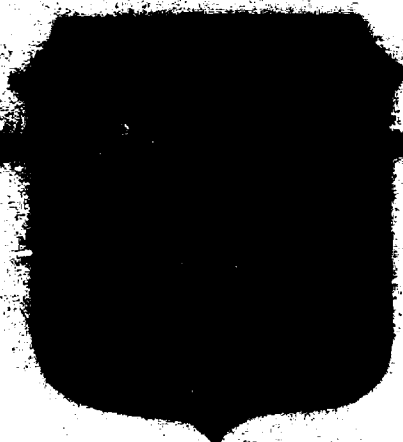
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A COMPARISON OF THE OPERATIONAL ART  
OF GEORGE GORDON MEADE  
AND ROBERT EDWARD LEE DURING THE PERIOD JUNE 1863,  
TO MARCH 1864

BY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL THOMAS A. GREEN

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During this period, Lee showed for the first time that he was not invincible and could be defeated.

This study project relates the historical events and compares the reactions, plans and thought processes of Generals Lee and Meade as we understand them from the literature. This project offers possible reasons for some of the unexplained decisions and concludes with a summary of lessons learned that might be applicable to soldiers of any age.

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A Comparison Of The Operational Art Of George Gordon Meade And Robert Edward Lee During The Period June 1863, To March 1864.

By

Ltc Thomas A. Green

Professor Jay Luvaas  
Project Advisor

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US Army War College  
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 17013  
29 March 1988

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## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: THOMAS A. GREEN, LTC, AV.

TITLE: A Comparison of the Operational Art of George Gordon Meade and Robert Edward Lee during the period July 1863 to March 1864.

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From June 1863 to March 1864 George G. Meade was in sole command of the Army of the Potomac against Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia. Meade took command early on a June morning and a few days later was a national hero, the victor of Gettysburg.

For the next nine months Meade and Lee maneuvered their Armies attempting to destroy their opponents force and to bring down the political system for which it fought. The operations were incredibly difficult due to miserable weather, poor communications and inept subordinate commanders.

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During this period, Lee showed for the first time that he was not invincible and could be defeated.

This study project relates the historical events and compares the reactions, plans and thought processes of Generals Lee and Meade as we understand them from the literature. This project offers possible reasons for some of the unexplained decisions and concludes with a summary of lessons learned that might be applicable to soldiers of any age.



## PERSONAL NOTE

It is my contention that Operational Art as defined in FM 100-5, p. 10, has been the same for all time. There may be minor changes, but the art remains the same.

In my explorations in preparation for writing this paper it occurred to me that the situations encountered by Meade and Lee and that their actions and reactions seemed to be guided by a great captain other than Napoleon. A student must always be cautious, for excerpts from history can be used to prove any theory. But in this case I suggest that there may be an overemphasis on Napoleon when considering the actions and reactions of the great Civil War leaders.

Throughout this comparison of the operational art of George Gordon Meade and Robert Edward Lee I have used the guidance of Frederick the Great as a comparative device and as a point of departure for my discussion.

We are all products of our environment. We will, as did Lee and Meade, fight the way we are trained.

A Comparison of the Operational Art of George Gordon Meade  
and Robert Edward Lee during the period June 1863 to March  
1864

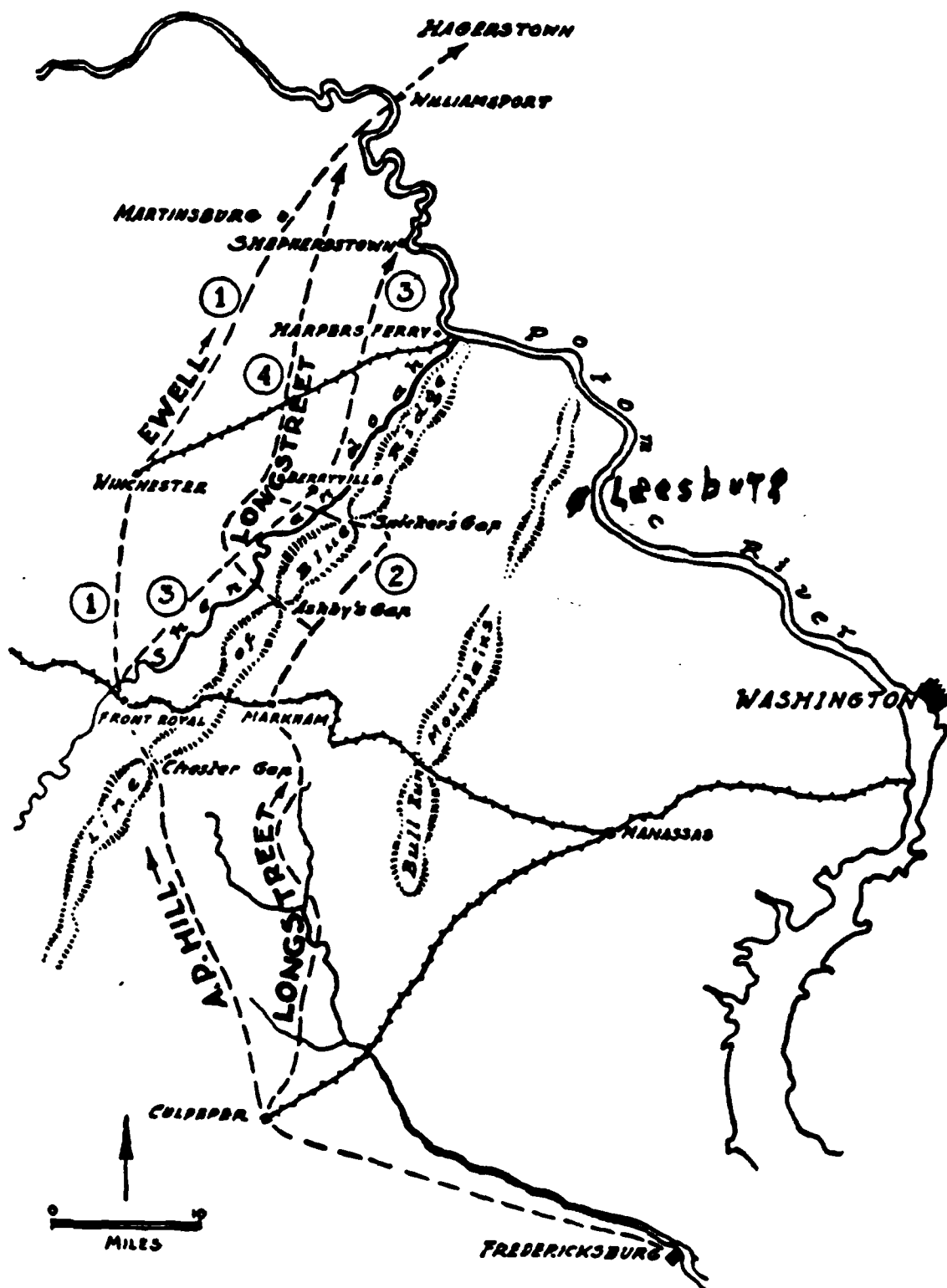
INTRODUCTION

For two years during the American Civil War George G. Meade commanded the Army of the Potomac against the great Robert E. Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia. But only during the period June 1863 to March 1864 was George G. Meade on his own. After March of 1864, although he remained in command of the army, General Ulysses S. Grant was present in the field with Meade and directed combat operations from his position as commander of the armies.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to compare the operational art of George G. Meade and Robert E. Lee. The period selected is the time in which George G. Meade was in complete command of the Army of the Potomac with no direct superior in the field to guide him. He was on his own against Lee.

## MANŒUVRING TO ENTER PENNSYLVANIA



Successive preliminary stages of the advance into Maryland and Pennsylvania by the Army of Northern Virginia - June, 1863.

## CHAPTER I

### SETTING THE STAGE

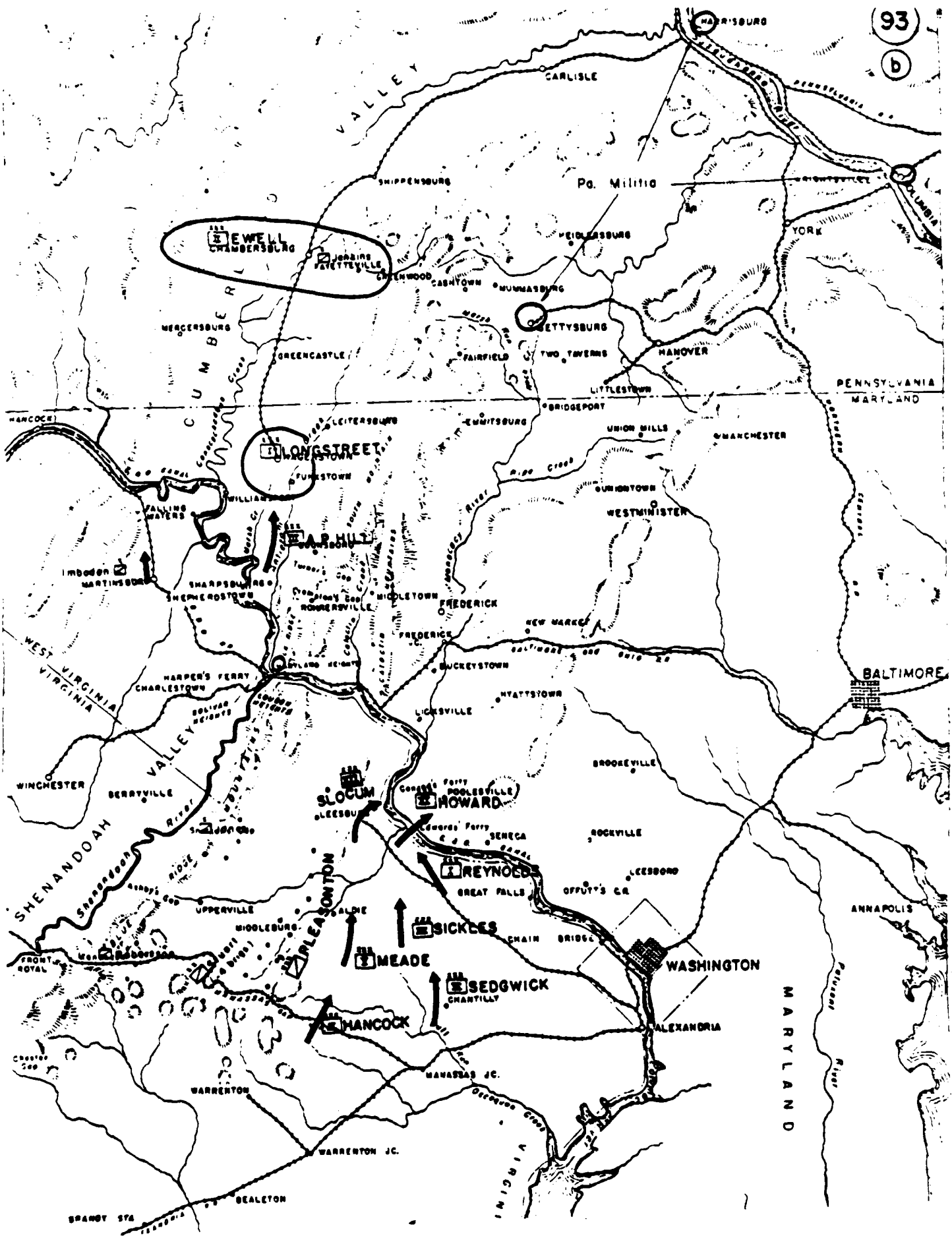
Robert E. Lee was coming off of a string of successes in June of 1863. Behind him were recent victories at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville. His worn, but experienced, Army of Northern Virginia appeared to be unbeatable. The land of his beloved northern Virginia, however, was nearly bare from two years of hard fighting, and with the Presidential election in the north only a short year away Lee decided to move the war to Union territory.

In June 1863 Lee marched north to invade the state of Pennsylvania and bring the north, if not to its knees, at least to the bargaining table. He was trying to show, as Frederick the Great had said:

"In my opinion, the secret of the art of war is to upset enemy dispositions by diversions that force him to abandon his plans. Especially if one can compel him to change his dispositions, the battle is half-won, for his strength depends upon his stationary position, and if I make him move his troops, the slightest movement breaks the integrity and destroys the strength of his battle line." (Luvaas, Frederick, p. 192)

Lee was facing the Union Army near Fredericksburg, Maryland, and his plan was to move west around the Union's right flank, up the Shenandoah River to the Potomac River, cross near the town of Sharpsburg, and continue north to the vicinity of Harrisburg, thus moving the Union forces out of their defensive positions and into the open (See Map #1). (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 32)

When Lee started his movement, the Army of the Potomac was commanded by General George Hooker. Hooker had performed poorly at Chancellorsville and President Lincoln decided to replace him with George G. Meade. Meade was an excellent subordinate commander. He was a superb gentleman, scholar, and officer. Intelligent and well-bred, he was the epitome of the proper military leader and large unit commander



(Schildt, p. 52). Here are the orders Meade received to assume command:

"You will receive with this the order of the President placing you in command of the Army of the Potomac. Considering the circumstances, no one ever received a more important command; and I cannot doubt that you will fully justify the confidence which the Government has reposed in you.

You will not be hampered by any minute instructions from these headquarters. Your army is free to act as you deem proper under the circumstances as they arise. You will, however, keep in view the important fact that the Army of the Potomac is the covering army of Washington, as well as the army of operation against the invading forces of the rebels. You will therefore maneuver and fight in such a manner as to cover the Capital and also Baltimore, as far as circumstances will admit. Should General Lee move upon either of these places, it is expected that you will either anticipate him or arrive with him, so as to give him battle.

All forces within the sphere of your operations will be held subject to your orders.

Harper's Ferry and its garrison are under your direct orders.

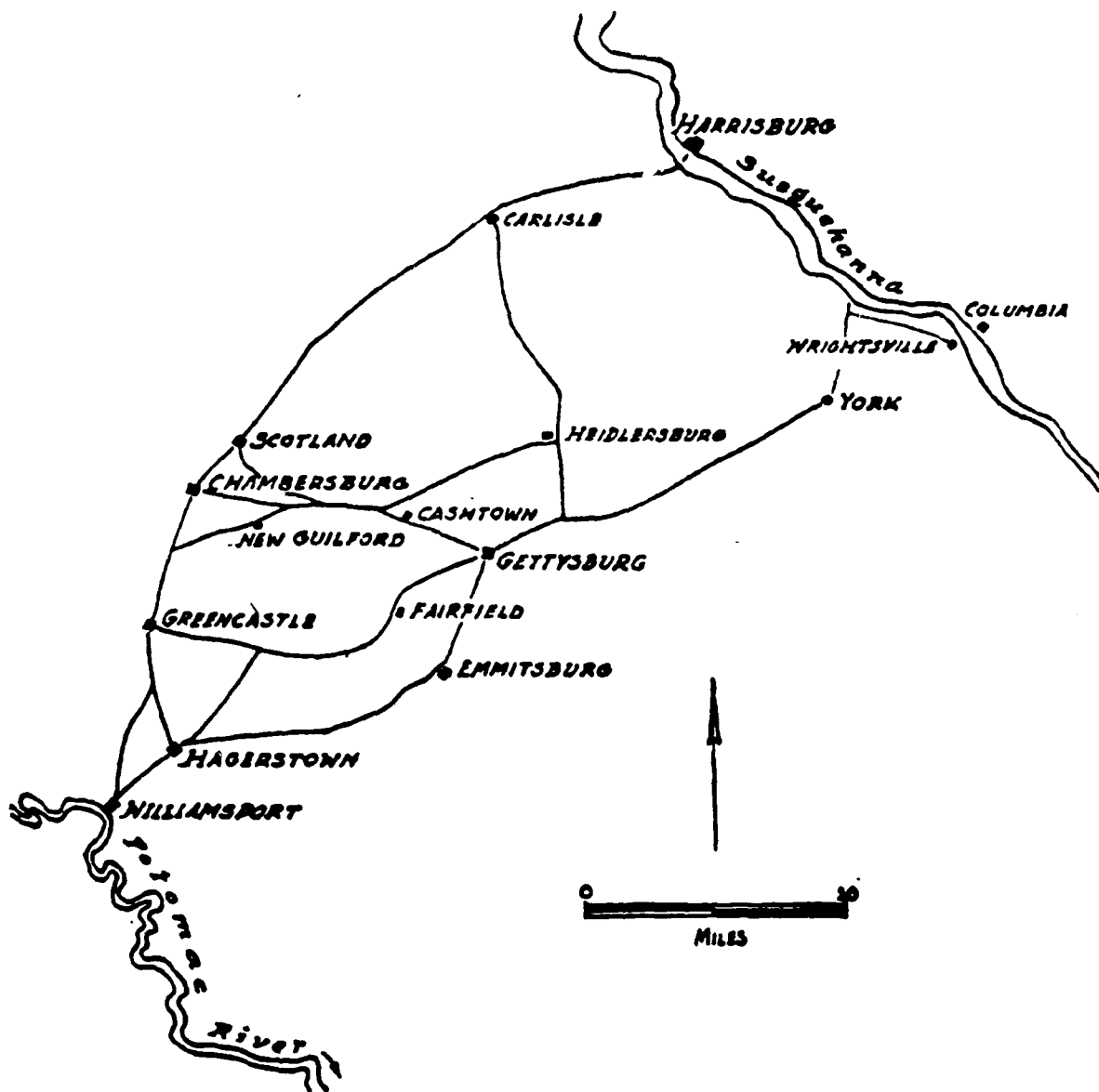
You are authorized to remove from command and send from your army any officer or other person you may deem proper; and to appoint to command as you may deem expedient.

In fine, General, you are intrusted with all the power and authority which the President, the Secretary of War, or the General-in-Chief can confer on you, and you may rely on our full support.

You will keep me fully informed of all your movements and the positions of your own troops and those of the enemy, so far as you know.

I shall always be ready to advise and assist you to the utmost of my ability." (OR, XXVII, pt. 1, p. 61)

These orders set the stage for what was to come. Follow-



Lines of Confederate advance from Williamsport into Maryland and Pennsylvania,  
June-July, 1863.

*Fremont, Lee, Vol. II, P. 37.*

ing his instructions, Meade first had to find Lee and to position his forces to defend Washington and his own line of communications and supply.

Meanwhile, Lee's movements were typical of his operational style. He showed care but boldness in almost all of his campaigning, and this move from Virginia to Pennsylvania is an excellent example of his system and thought process. His army traveled on multiple routes and remained in communication with Army headquarters by courier. Lee's overall objective was, however, not clearly defined. In short, he was out looking for a fight on enemy terrain. A student would write an operations order of his thought process that might look like this:

#### Situation

Enemy: Poorly trained and led. Often defeated and not a major problem. If we can bring them to battle, we can defeat them.

Friendly: The Army has high morale. Battle-trained and ready to fight. No better Army has been seen on this planet. Logistics are a problem. Clothing, shoes, etc. are in short supply. The enemy has plenty and his towns have not been damaged by the war. Let us go north and get the supplies we need while we are on the move.

Mission: Go north. Maneuver to get the enemy out of his strong defensive positions onto terrain that is favorable to us for battle and defeat his army on his home ground. Cause his population to be exceptionally fearful and willing to agree to a separate nation; the Confederate States of America. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 191)

This period was a particularly critical time in the life of George G. Meade. He picked up his command from a sound sleep at 0300 hours in the morning without a hitch and he kept the army moving along the lines already established by his relieved predecessor, General Joseph Hooker. He did not have time to change the command arrangements that he inherited. He deployed his force in between Washington and the enemy as instructed and got his cavalry corps commander, Pleasonton, out to find the enemy.

As Lee moved north he lost contact with his cavalry. This was unusual for Lee, but is a superior example of the "fog of battle" and how chance can effect any commander. This loss of contact with J.E.B. Stuart, his cavalry commander, is well known, but it became an opportunity for Meade. Because of his loss of contact with his cavalry Lee also lost contact with the northern army. Lee's expectation was that the northern army would be slow in moving but he was wrong. Lee was later surprised by the location of the Union



Army and had to concentrate his forces quickly on the roads available. The only logical location for that assembly was the town of Gettysburg and thus the place for that great battle was decided.

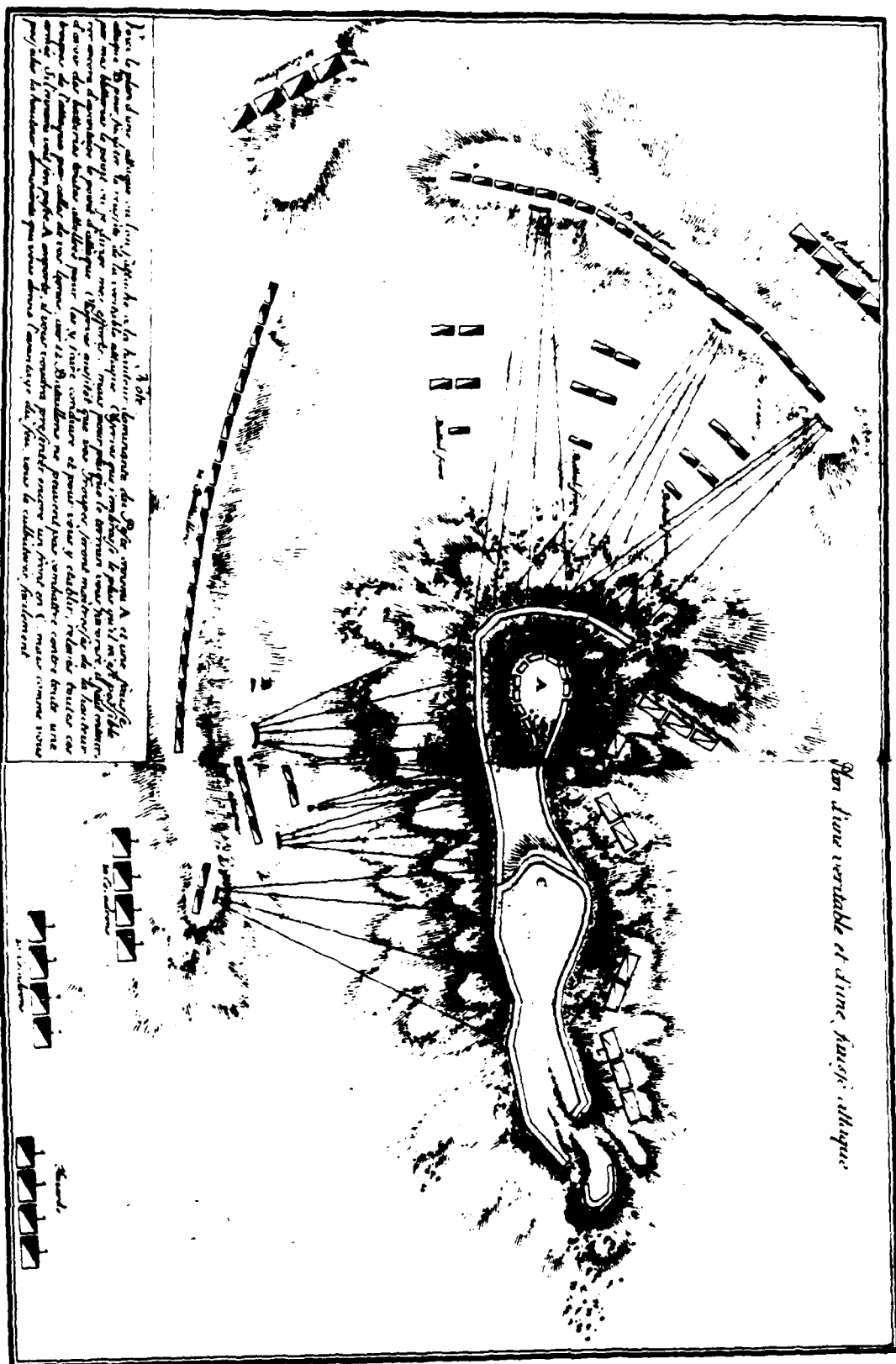
There were members of the Union Army that also thought Gettysburg was a critical location. One of them was the General of Cavalry, Pleasonton. He sent General Buford, commander of the army's largest cavalry division, to Gettysburg to hold the town and the road intersections and advised Meade that Gettysburg was the best terrain for a fight.

Lee converged his dispersed forces in a classic style. It is conjectured that he would have behaved differently if his cavalry eyes were available, but he moved blindly until contact was made and then made his plans in accordance with the locations and intentions of the Union Army. Lee wanted a fight but on terrain of his choosing, and when he finally arrived at Gettysburg the fight was well underway and he chose not to change the field of action. Although pressed to maneuver to more advantageous terrain by his senior corps commander, Longstreet, Lee decided to fight the Union Army where he found it, and he was beaten in detail.

Meade's part in the battle is in dispute. There has always been a great deal of controversy about how much George G. Meade had to do with the Battle of Gettysburg. The battlefield was not the one he had picked, for the battle took place where Buford and Reynolds had stopped the Confederate Army.

"The location Meade had selected originally was ten or fifteen miles back on Pipe Creek with his left flank in the vicinity of Middleburg and his right at Manchester. . . and it was not until information reached General Meade, on the afternoon of July 1, that the cavalry, under General Buford, had come in contact with a large force of the enemy near Gettysburg, and that General Reynolds, who had gone to his assistance with the 1st and 11th Corps, had been killed, that the attention of General Meade seems to have been seriously directed to the position at Gettysburg for meeting the enemy."  
(Schildt, LVI)

Even though the initial location was not selected by Meade, to his credit, he did order up the rest of the army as soon as he had a good picture of the situation and fought the battle well.



*Mon Dieu véritable et digne, j'ai sié, allégué*

GETTYSBURG?

PLATE 32. Attack upon the enemy post on high ground. After making a false attack at B and effecting a crossfire with his artillery upon A, Frederick attacks with twelve infantry battalions preceded by the expendable free battalions. Point A is the key to the entire position: once it has been taken the enemy must yield the post. (*Atlas to the Oeuvres de Frédéric le Grand*, Plan 23.)

The lesson in the operational art of war for General Lee at Gettysburg was as Frederick the Great had warned:

"The best infantry in the universe can be repulsed and put in disorder in places where it has to fight terrain, the enemy, and artillery. Our infantry, weakened and debased by its losses and even by its successes, must be led in difficult enterprises with caution. You must be guided by its intrinsic value, adjust your efforts to its abilities, and never expose it thoughtlessly to ordeals of courage that demand a patience and steady firmness in conspicuous perils." (Luvaas, Frederick, p. 273)

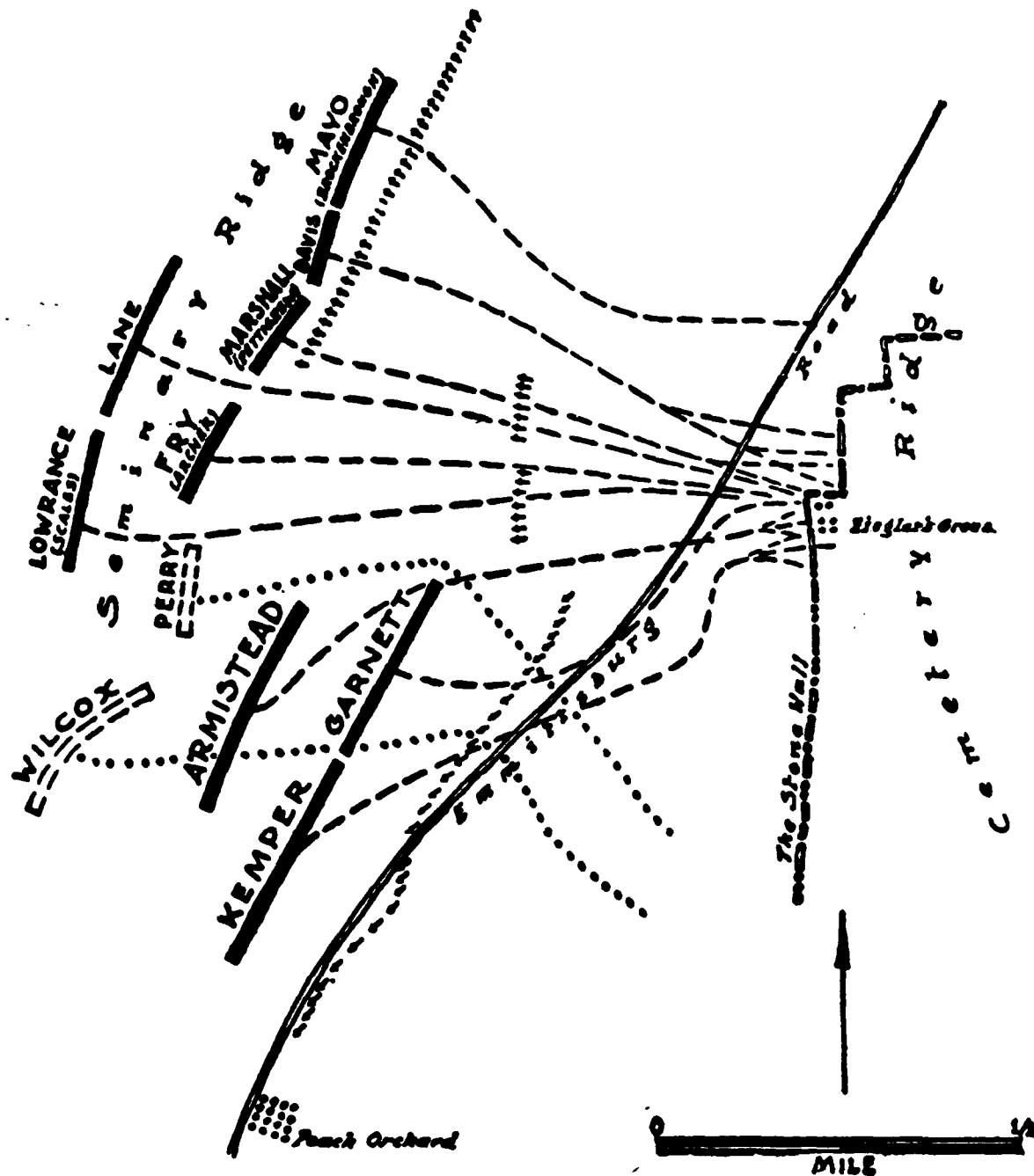
Lee employed what may have been the best light infantry in the world, at least at that time, against Meade and lost. His soldiers fought terrain, enemy, artillery, and a stronger Union force. This warning from Frederick seems almost prophetic.

Lee's advance into Pennsylvania in 1863 was not along the lines of the Napoleonic concept of destroying the enemy army. Instead he wanted to win a battle and effect the northern population and their elected officials. He had a limited objective.

In terms of the Operational Art of War, the situation at Gettysburg was not new to either Meade or Lee. Frederick the Great had outlined a similar situation in his guidance to his young officers. The resemblance between the map of Frederick the Great's instructions on how to attack an enemy on a height and the map of the battlefield at Gettysburg is truly striking (See Map). This situation may have been well known to both general officers from their studies at West Point or from writings by General Hallack, Commander and Chief of the Union Armies, and information passed along by the famous historian Jomini. (Weigley, p. 82)

Lee's attacks on the second and particularly the third day of the Gettysburg battle are close to the actions recommended by Frederick:

"Everything depends upon your judicious choice of the place where the enemy is weakest and where you anticipate less resistance than expected in those places where the enemy has taken better precautions. I believe that wisdom requires that you should take a fixed point of the enemy army, namely the right, the left, the flank, and so on, and that you should intend to make your most powerful effort at that point. Since it is probable that your troops will be repulsed, you should form several lines to sustain



Convergence of Confederate brigades on Ziegler's Grove ("the little clump of trees") in the advance of the right-centre, July 3, 1863.

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each other. I advise against general attacks because they are too hazardous and also, in engaging only a wing or a section of the army, you save the main force to cover your retreat in case of misfortune and you can never be totally defeated. Consider, also, that in attacking only a portion of the enemy army you can never lose as many men as in an assault all along the line, and that if you succeed, you can destroy your enemy just as effectively, provided he does not find a defile too near the battlefield where some corps from his army can cover his retreat."  
(Luvaas, Frederick, p. 269)

At Gettysburg, Lee attempted to attack the flanks and to divert attention away from his main and final attack. He attempted to blow a hole in the Northern defenses by concentrating his artillery, and he attacked with a force that would leave him with substantial forces to cover his withdrawal if defeated. The well-known final attack on July 3, 1863 has often been criticized for not being strong enough to carry out the mission, but the limited attack left Lee with enough of his forces intact to put up an adequate defense and to fight a rear guard. The battle plan at Gettysburg may have been directly related to Lee's study of the operational art, particularly of Jomini and Frederick the Great.

Meade's defense may have had the same genesis.

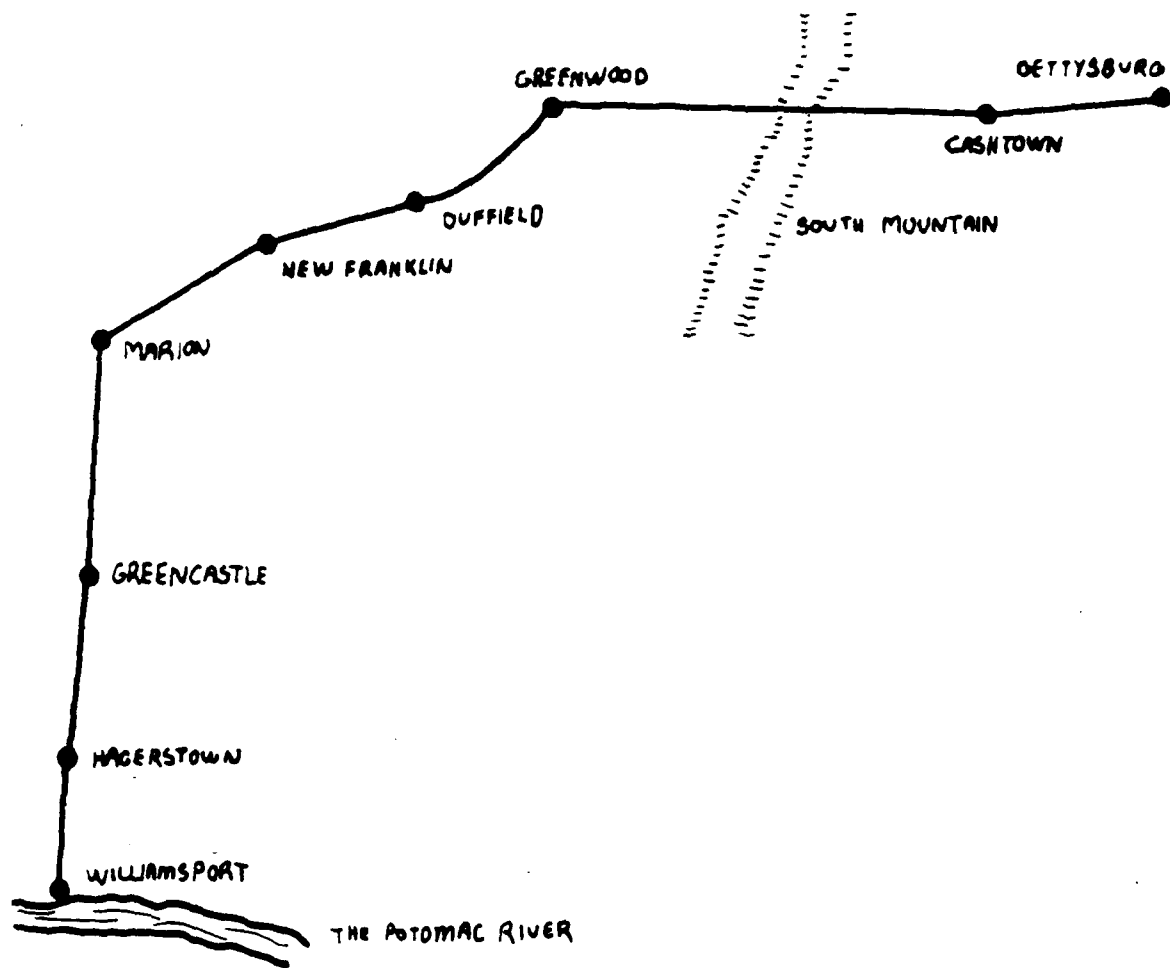
The most advantageous moment for your defense is when the enemy climbs to assault you. This is the triumph of small arms and cannons loaded with sharp metal, especially if your infantry is arranged so that its fire reaches the front of the glacis. If your post has angles, this trebles the defense, and if your cannon can rake the ground with oblique fire, you should be able to repel the enemy without difficulty."  
(Luvaas, Frederick, p. 281)

## CHAPTER II

### LEE'S RETREAT TO THE RAPPAHANNOCK

At the end of the third day of battle at Gettysburg, Lee's defeated army withdrew from the field to its original location on Seminary Ridge. Lee's forces were beaten and tired. Their ammunition was very low. Meade then had the opportunity to counterattack, but did not; in fact, he was never able to manage a general engagement before Lee's army crossed the Potomac nearly two weeks later. The question why was investigated by no less than a congressional inquiry and the evidence offered both reasons why a counterattack could have been successful, crushing the Army of Northern Virginia, and why the attack would have been folly, ruinous to the Army of the Potomac. Meade's positioning of troops, timing of reinforcements and decision not to counterattack was praised by some of his subordinate commanders. But other commanders such as "Generals Pleasonton, Warren, Birney, Doubleday, and Howe all concurred in the opinion that an attack upon the enemy before he recrossed the Potomac would have been most disastrous to him (Lee) and have resulted in the dispersion if not the capture of the greater part of his army." (Schildt. OR, LXXIII) Charles Wainright, of the Union artillery, on the other hand reported that:

"A number of our Generals I know think that we ought to have attacked. I for one am glad that he did not. Lee had doubtless lost very heavily, but we had suffered almost as much, and our men were quite as much exhausted as his. In every respect the two armies are so well balanced that the assaulting party is sure to fail if the other has time to post itself and do anything at entrenching." (Schildt, p. 57)



The Route of Imboden's Train

The evidence is not conclusive. Many of those present at Gettysburg thought Meade should have been able to destroy Lee's defeated army. Others believed that, even though beaten, Lee's army could be successful after it had pulled itself into defensive positions. But Frederick the Great offers another explanation from his experience:

"...the commander must not indulge in too lively a pursuit unless his losses in the initial attack have been slight or all participating units are joined together, or, especially, unless the brigade commander orders it expressly. If you have carried a height...you must remain content to chase the enemy from it and keep him under heavy fire as he descends the hill to escape. But this post must be protected. The infantry should not leave it to follow the fugitives, that is the business of the cavalry.

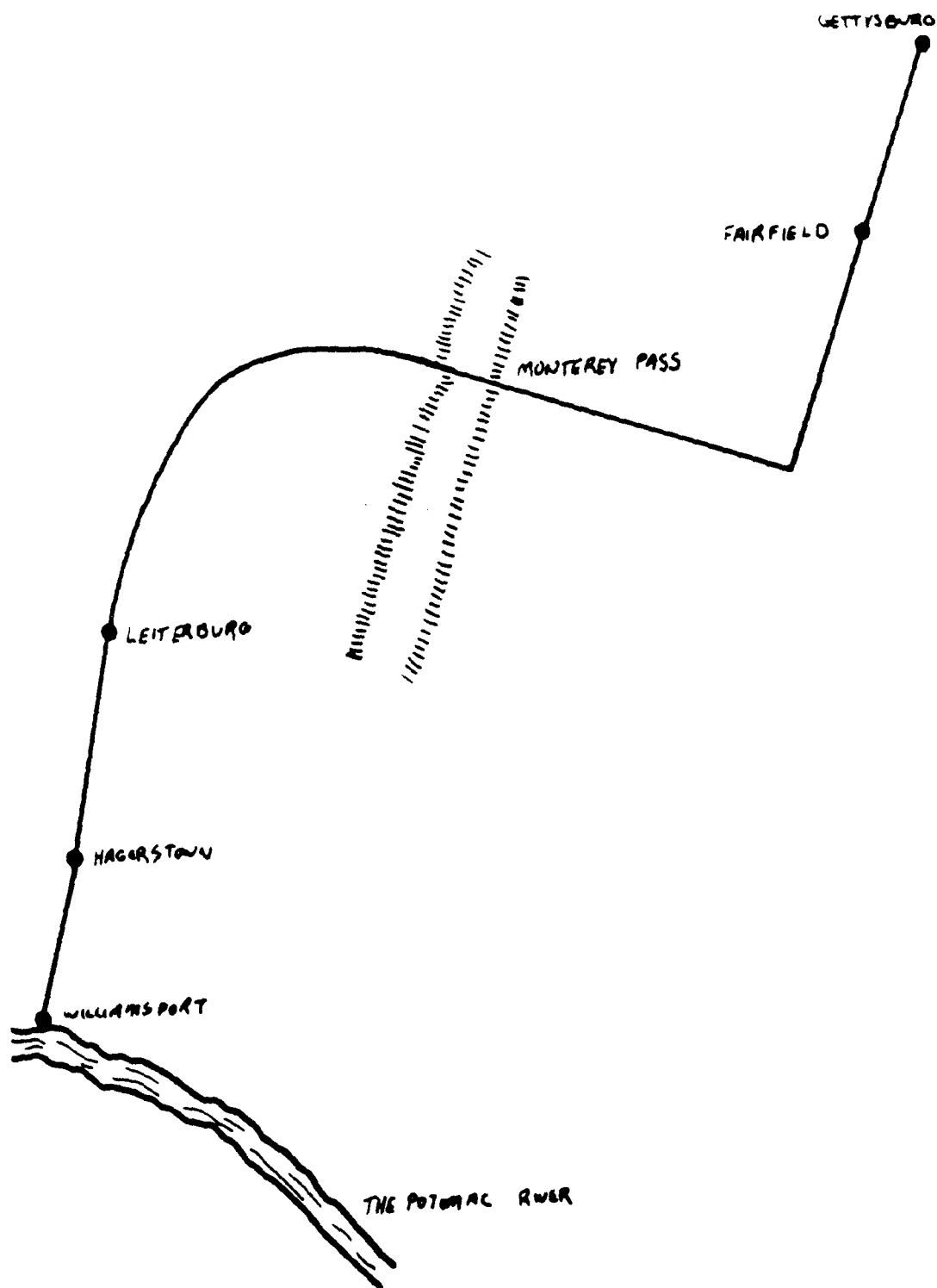
Lee ordered a preparation for withdrawal as soon as the wounded and the wagon trains could be moved out of the danger area. Thus began one of the most difficult and nearly perfect withdrawals in the history of the war. Robert E. Lee had the 1st Corps, under Longstreet, leading and Ewell followed with the 2nd Corps. General A. P. Hill and his corps brought up the rear. The cavalry was placed in the mountain passes to secure the line of march. Lee picked the shortest distance to buy time to move the slower wagons of wounded. While he waited for his wagons to clear, Lee watched the Union line for the expected Union counterattack. But that attack did not come.

"At no time in Lee's career was his strength of character better shown than in this period following the defeat at Gettysburg. He took all the blame for the battle...and conducted the retreat with the calmness and confidence that the soldiers had come to expect from him, not even showing his alarm when he found himself trapped between Meade and the Potomac." (Earle, p. 166)

It was possible that Lee was thinking of other good recommendations from Frederick the Great as he waited on Seminary Ridge for the Union counterattack.

"If an army is reduced to the defensive by some reverse or lost battle, the rule and experience require that you retreat as little as possible after a defeat. It is rare indeed if a general does not find some position within a mile or two from the field of battle,





From Gettysburg to Williamsport  
Route of the Army of Northern Virginia

and here he must stop for the following reasons. The farther you flee the more you augment your losses. The wounded who drag themselves along with difficulty for two miles cannot follow you three or four times that distance and, as a result, are captured by the enemy. The more you shorten the road of your retreat the less your soldiers will leave the ranks. Observe further that in yielding little terrain to the enemy you diminish his victory considerably, because war is waged only to win territory. Above all, add to these reflections that an army is never less disposed to fight than immediately after a victory, when everyone shouts for joy, each exaggerates his great feats of arms, the multitude is delighted to have passed successfully out of great dangers, and nobody has any desire to face these dangers on the field. No general will lead his victorious troops into fire again on the next day. You can remain in your camp in complete safety and give your troops time to collect themselves. The soldiers will again get accustomed to the sight of the enemy, and in a short while their minds will recover the natural disposition."  
(Luvaas, Frederick, p. 331)

And that is exactly what took place that third and fourth day of July at Gettysburg. Lee moved to defensive positions on Seminary Ridge and waited for the attack that did not come. Meade's army collected flags and buried their dead. In the interim, Lee was able to escape.

Lee's army withdrew from Gettysburg generally on a single route. He selected the shortest distance available and moved via Fairfield, through the mountains at Monterey Pass, Leilerburg, Hagerstown to Williamsport. The wagons moved via the Cashtown road, through Cashtown, Greenwood, Waynesboro, Greencastle to Hagerstown and Williamsport. (Schildt, see Map ) The train of wounded and supplies was nearly 14 miles long and was guarded by General Imboden and his cavalry. Because of Lee's strong rear guard and slow wagon train, Meade decided that he might outmaneuver the retreating rebels by moving on a longer but parallel line. The routes taken by Meade's forces show how he kept his army between Lee and Washington, D.C. and attempted to aggressively outmarch Lee's army.

By the 5th of July Lee and his army were on the move to the south and the ford at Williamsport on the Potomac River. Fate again stepped in almost as if to assist the Union Army and its General, George Meade. Terrible rains fell after the battle causing the Potomac River to become unfordable, and by

chance Union cavalry came upon Lee's pontoons for his escape bridge and the floats were destroyed or cut adrift. Lee was trapped on the north side of the river with his wagons loaded with wounded and with little ammunition and no resupply. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, Vol. III, p. 192)

Meade waited to see if the enemy would turn toward the Capital. Well in control of his army, Meade's orders for the pursuit are of interest:

"The 1st, 6th and 3rd Corps by Emmitsburg direct road to Mechanicsburg, Lewistown, Hamburg, to Middletown.

The 12th and 2nd Corps by the left-hand Taneytown road through Emmitsburg, Cregerstown, Utica, High Knob Pass to Middletown.

. . . Headquarters will be at Cregerstown tonight. . . for the movement, and until the concentration at Middletown, General Sedgwick will, without relinquishing command of his Corps, assume command and direct the movements of the Corps forming the right. . . . General Slocum will. . . assume command. . . of the left. . . . General Howard will. . . assume command. . . of the center."  
(Schildt, p. 53)

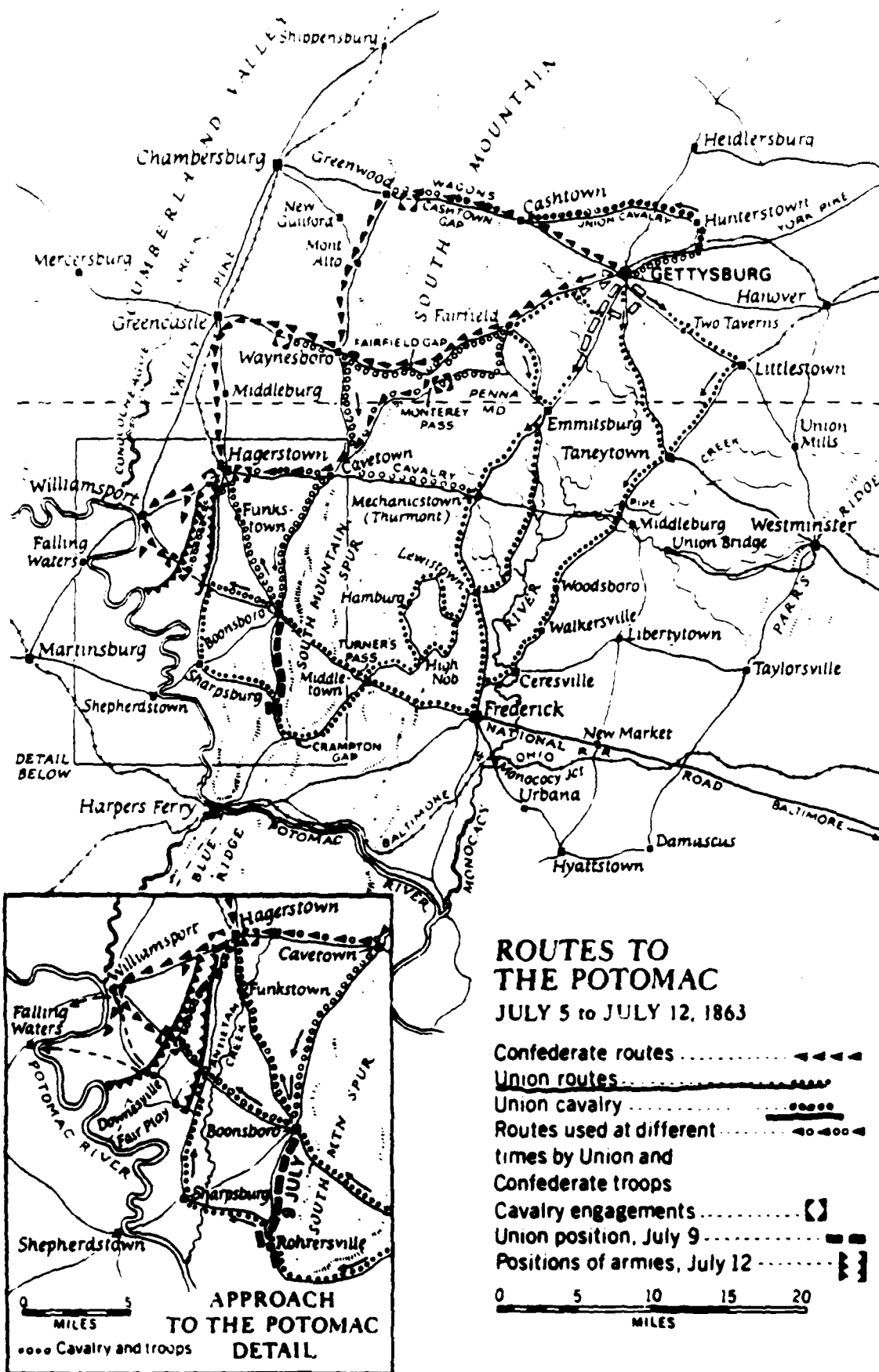
General French, a newly-assigned corps commander, was ordered to break Lee's retreating column by an attack through Fairfield Gap and might have cut off Lee's retreating column but he missed his chance. French hesitated and lost his opportunity by moving slowly and not massing his forces in the attack. French's failure made Meade look even worse to President Lincoln and to General Halleck, General-in-Chief. (Schildt, p. 52)

As Meade found out:

"A single false movement can lose everything. A general who misunderstands an order or who bungles it places your undertaking in the greatest jeopardy." (Frederick, p. 273)

Weather conditions made the march into a terrible ordeal for both sides. Here is an example of the conditions from the viewpoint of a member of the 37th Massachusetts, a regiment from the winning side at Gettysburg.

"And such a night's march! None who had part in it can never forget that terrible tramp. The men were hungry at the start, having received but a very limited supply of rations



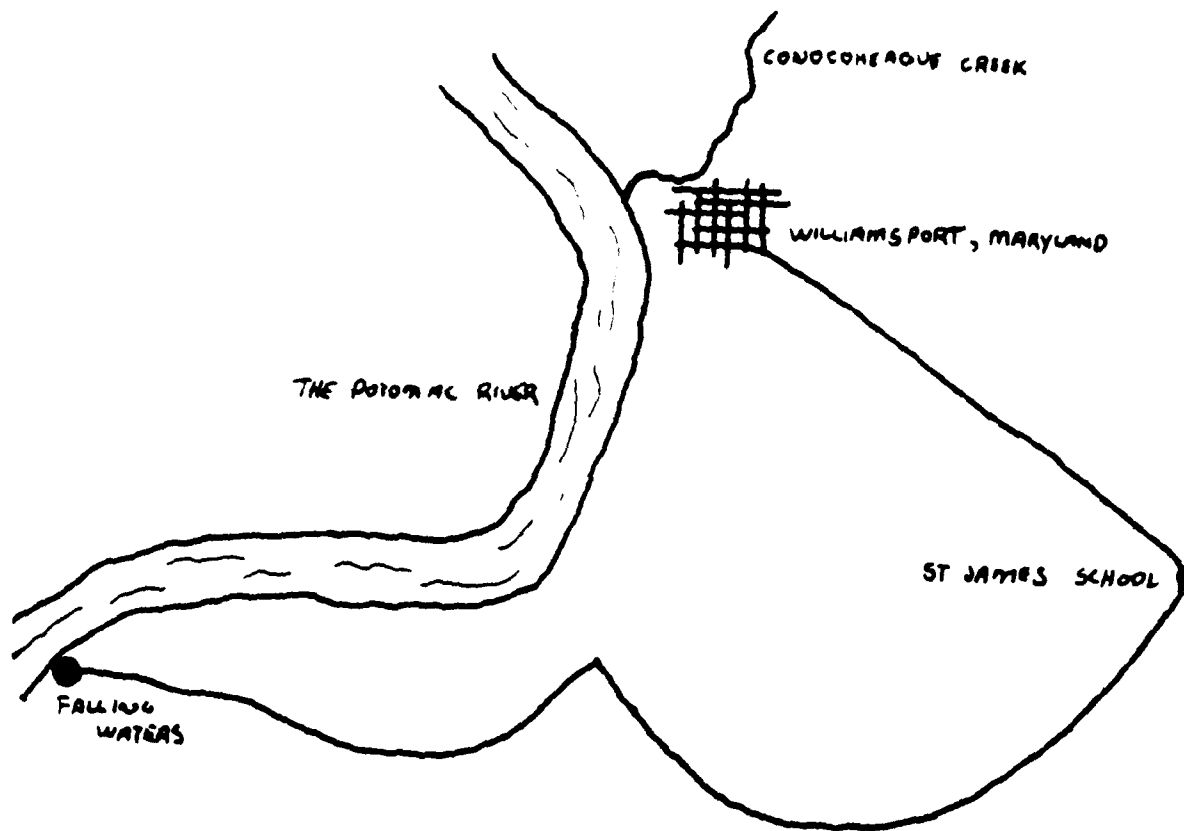
Meade advances in the valley of the Antietam

at Gettysburg. The road was narrow and rough, but evidently little traveled, and was literally a bed of mud resting on a foundation of small sharp stones. The soft mud soaked the men's shoes, all of which had seen much wear, and the flinty stones cut them to pieces till many a poor fellow was forced to plod along barefoot or with only his stockings to protect the blistered and bleeding flesh. Unhappy the naturally tender-footed! The long marches of the recent past had reduced all such to a condition of incessant suffering. Long after midnight the groaning column plodded on, passing through a dark piece of woods where the intense gloom seemed to add to the roughness and the muddiness, and where files and companies mingled in an inextricable mass. Officers sought in vain for their commands, or maintained bearings only by the familiar tones of some lighthearted private whose spirits no hardship could subdue. Finally, they staggered rather than walked through Emmitsburg and half a mile beyond, halting in an open field at 2 o'clock and sinking down wherever it might chance to sleep during the few hours that remained before the bugles would again sound the advance." (Schildt, p. 70)

"On the 5th of July the Union cavalry had had some success in attacking and destroying part of the enemy trains but were driven off by Confederate cavalry." By the 6th of July the Confederate forces were fighting to repel Union cavalry attacks against their wagon train at Williamsport. General Imboden, in charge of the wagon train, formed up the drivers to fight a defense, and General Stewart came in to save the day and the train. The Union leadership in Washington worried that Lee would be allowed to escape and messages were sent goading Meade to engage the enemy and destroy them. (Humphreys, p. 4)

Lee's army, in the meantime, received its first meager resupply by raft across the Potomac. The Confederate force now had some ammunition and shot and could make a better fight of it if attacked and Lee worked desperately to move the wounded and prisoners across the river. With the river to his back he moved into a well-planned area, constructing fortifications and trenches near Hagerstown. Lee's message to President Davis was concise: "Its all my fault," he said, "I thought my men were invincible." (OR, pt. 27, pt. 2, p. 298)

Lee began to move his wounded across the river on ferry boats and rafts. As Lee readied his positions in front of



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the river, it was almost as if he took another page from Frederick the Great.

. . . "The only way to defend a river is to keep it behind you. You must have good communications established with the other side of the river, you must have at least two bridges, each of which is protected by entrenched bridgeheads, and you must take up your position two or three miles in front, in a camp so well adapted that the enemy would assuredly be defeated if he attacked you there, even assuming that his army was three times the size of yours. . . . With such a camp you prevent the enemy from crossing the river, to abandon to you the provisions and magazines that he has behind him, which he certainly will not do."  
(Luvaas, Frederick, p. 329)

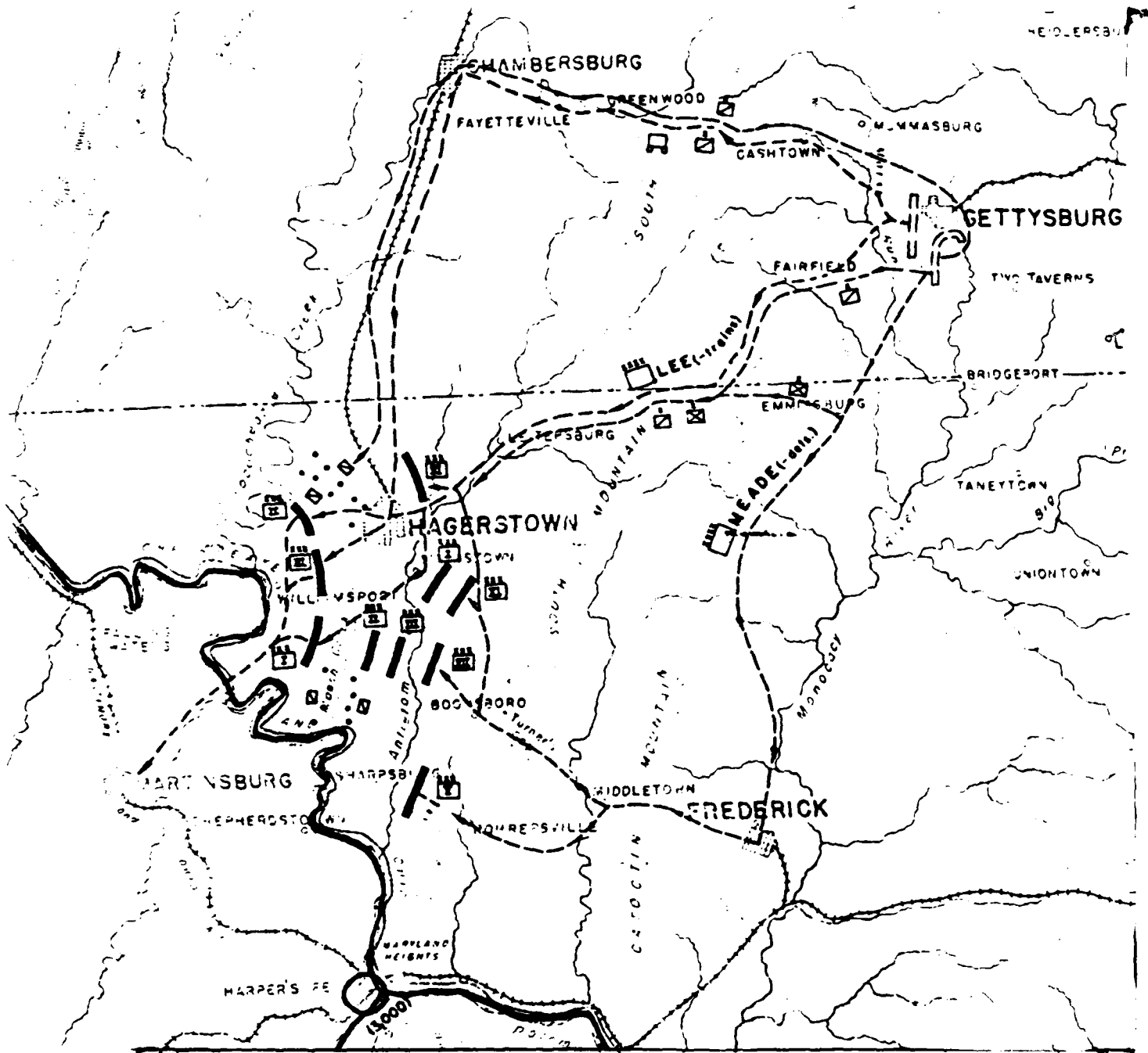
When Meade was sure of Lee's crossing site he pushed his units forward to make contact and to fight a significant battle. His scouts reported that Lee's defenses were strong and dug-in. Meade massed his forces and performed a reconnaissance. Meade was reputed to have held a council of war at Gettysburg and later, after that great battle, when deciding if to counterattack and by which method to pursue. Hallack warned him to attack and to hold no councils of war. Frederick the Great's ideas on councils of war were probably on Hallack's mind:

". . . You are strong enough to attack and defeat the enemy before he can effect a crossing. Act upon your own judgment and make your generals execute your orders. Call no council of war. It is proverbial that councils of war never fight. . . ."  
(OR, Chapter 39, p. 89)

Hallack wrote his message on the 13th of July. By the 14th, Lee's army had escaped.

Frederick had said:

"Prince Eugene had the habit of saying that a general having no desire to do anything had only to hold a council of war--an assertion that gains credence from the fact that voices ordinarily are in the negative. Even secrecy, so necessary in war, is not observed. A general to whom the sovereign has entrusted his troops must act by himself, and the confidence that the king has placed in this general capacity authorizes him to do





everything according to his own insight."  
(Luvaas, Frederick, p. 257)

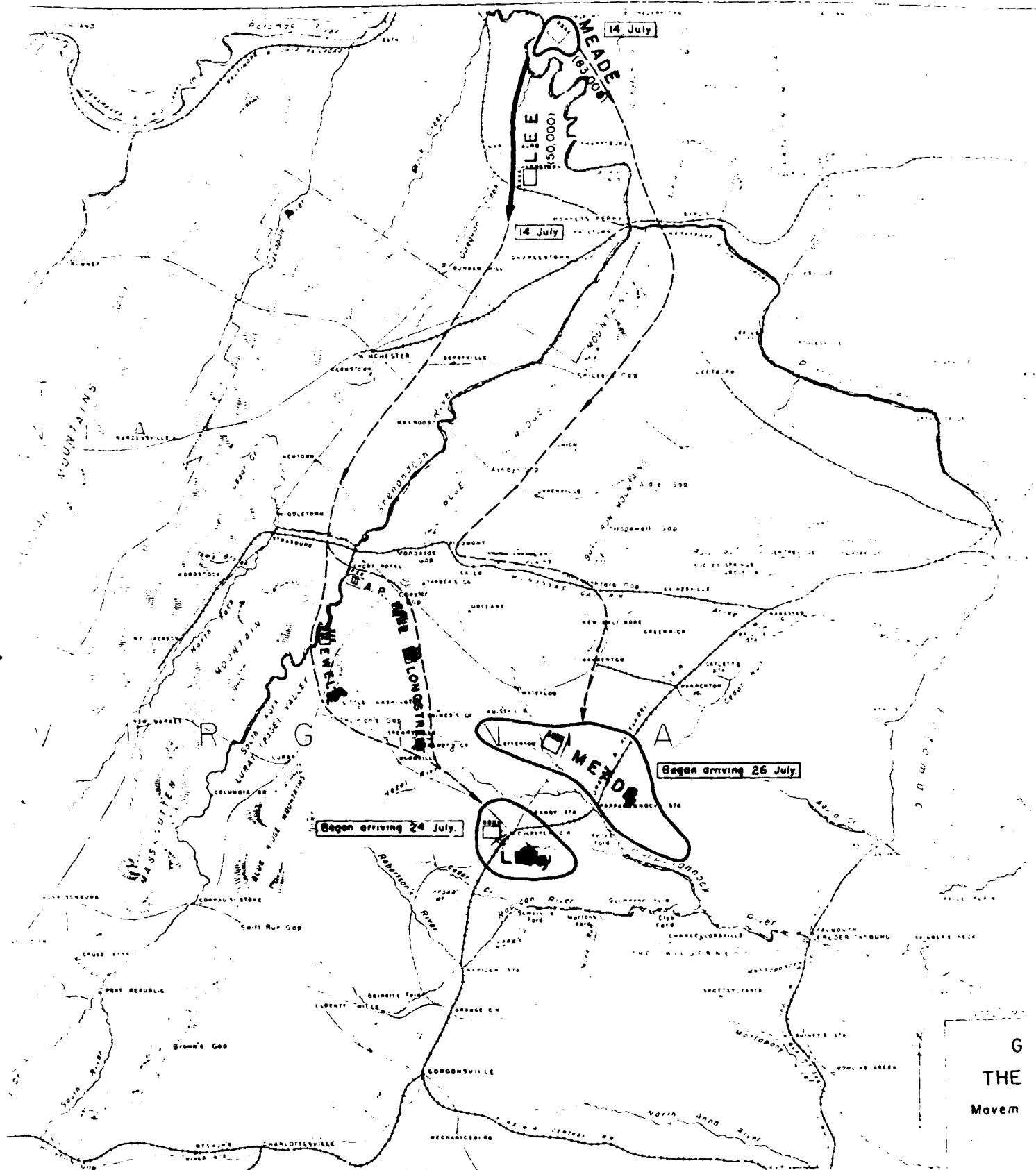
"Lee never appeared as deeply anxious as on July 10th and on the 12th the river rose again but his courage never waivered." (Freeman, and OR, 27, part 2, p. 323) The defensive positions were in place and Longstreet wanted to stay and fight. Lee overruled him and the Army of Northern Virginia crossed the Potomac on a juryrigged bridge and a ford on the 13th of July. The army came across in good order and Harry Heth, commander of the rear guard, was last out, losing only stragglers. Meade, from Lee's point of view, did not pursue vigorously. (OR, 27, pt. 2, p. 92-94 and Freeman.) The political attitude in Washington is best described in this anecdote:

"Later that summer the general (Meade) went to Washington to confer with President Lincoln and his cabinet. During the conversations, Lincoln turned to Meade and said, 'Do you know, General, what your attitude toward Lee for the week after Gettysburg reminded me of?' 'No, Mr President,' replied Meade, 'What was it?' Lincoln answered, 'I'll be hanged if I could think of anything else but an old woman trying to shoo her geese across the creek.'" (Schildt, p. 85)

After making his crossing Lee realized that he needed to rest and rebuild his tired army. He moved his force from Williamsport to the vicinity of Bunker Hill near the Opequon Creek. There he found that the high water which had kept him from crossing the Potomac was going to keep him from moving south and crossing the Shenandoah. Lee expected that the Union forces would not be quick to follow him across the Potomac so he turned his mind to his serious logistical problems.

Lee's problems had gotten more acute as his lines of communication and supply had grown longer. While he was campaigning in Pennsylvania he was able to find good forage for his animals and food was readily available. He could not, however, find much in the line of military material unless he took it away from Union troops and with his defeat at Gettysburg he had been kept away from the Union military supplies. He had instead lost much of his own equipment, shot up his ammunition, powder, and ball, and marched his army right out of their uniforms and shoes. Shoes and equipment were difficult to replace. (Freeman, Lee, Vol. III)

Lee began to have his army gather grain, grind it, and make bread. His soldiers began to hunt for horseshoes and to repair what equipment they could. They were well into the

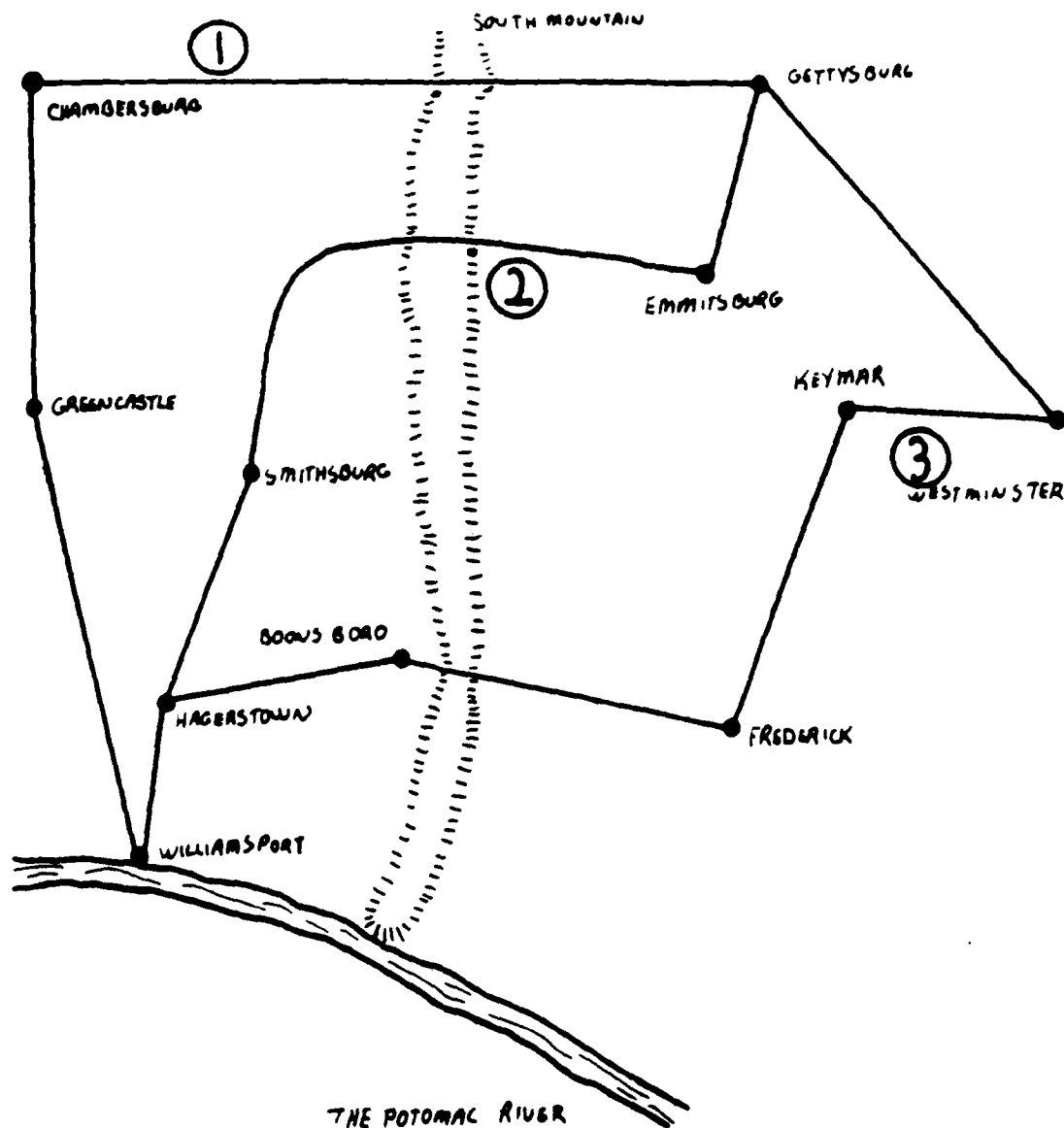


Lee began to have his army gather grain, grind it, and make bread. His soldiers began to hunt for horseshoes and to repair what equipment they could. They were well into the process of repair and refit when they were warned by the cavalry that Meade's forces had crossed the Potomac below Harper's Ferry and had started a movement south that could put Yankees between Lee and Richmond. As shown on the map adjoining, Meade's line of communications for information, personnel, and supply was now shifted to the Orange and Alexandria Railroad line. The line connected Washington, D. C. With Orange Courthouse, Virginia, and from there the Virginia Central Railroad connected with Richmond. Lee's maneuvering had kept his army within 60-80 miles from the northern capital and he was again in position to defend Richmond and to threaten the north.

Meade's crossing of the Potomac, however, caused Lee to give up foraging and refitting in the Shenandoah Valley. Lee quickly responded by putting cavalry out to block the passes at Manassas and Chester Gaps. His concern was that Meade might block him and his army on the west side of the Shenandoah River between him and Richmond. Lee's desire to place himself between the enemy and the Confederate capital parallels the orders that Lincoln and Hallack had originally given to General Meade.

Up to this point Lee had been setting the pace. Even though he had been soundly defeated, he had selected all of the movements of his forces. With the aggressive Union crossing of the Potomac, Lee was forced to dance to General Meade's music for the first time. He quickly built bridges and crossed the Shenandoah River, passed through Chester Gap and moved his army on to Culpepper, arriving there around the 24th of July. Lee's army, now reduced to about 45,000 men, was still a fighting machine. As he withdrew Lee left Ewell and the 1st Corps as a "stay behind ambush" (my quote), but Ewell was unable to surprise the advancing Federal force. (Freeman, R. E. Lee. E. Lee, Vol. III)

Federal Cavalry crossed the Rapahannock and as if in a deadly chess game the Confederate cavalymen countered their advance. Lee, now responding to Meade's boldness, decided to continue to withdraw south of the Rapidan. Lee moved his army on 4 August. Freeman, in his book Robert E. Lee, uses this date as the end of the Gettysburg Campaign. As incredible as it might seem, Freeman notes numerous sources that by the middle of August morale was restored in the Army of Northern Virginia. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 96.)



- ① GREGG'S COLUMN
- ② KILPATRICK'S COLUMN
- ③ BUFORD'S COLUMN

The Union Cavalry Pursuit

### CHAPTER III

#### MANEUVERS NEAR THE RAPIDAN

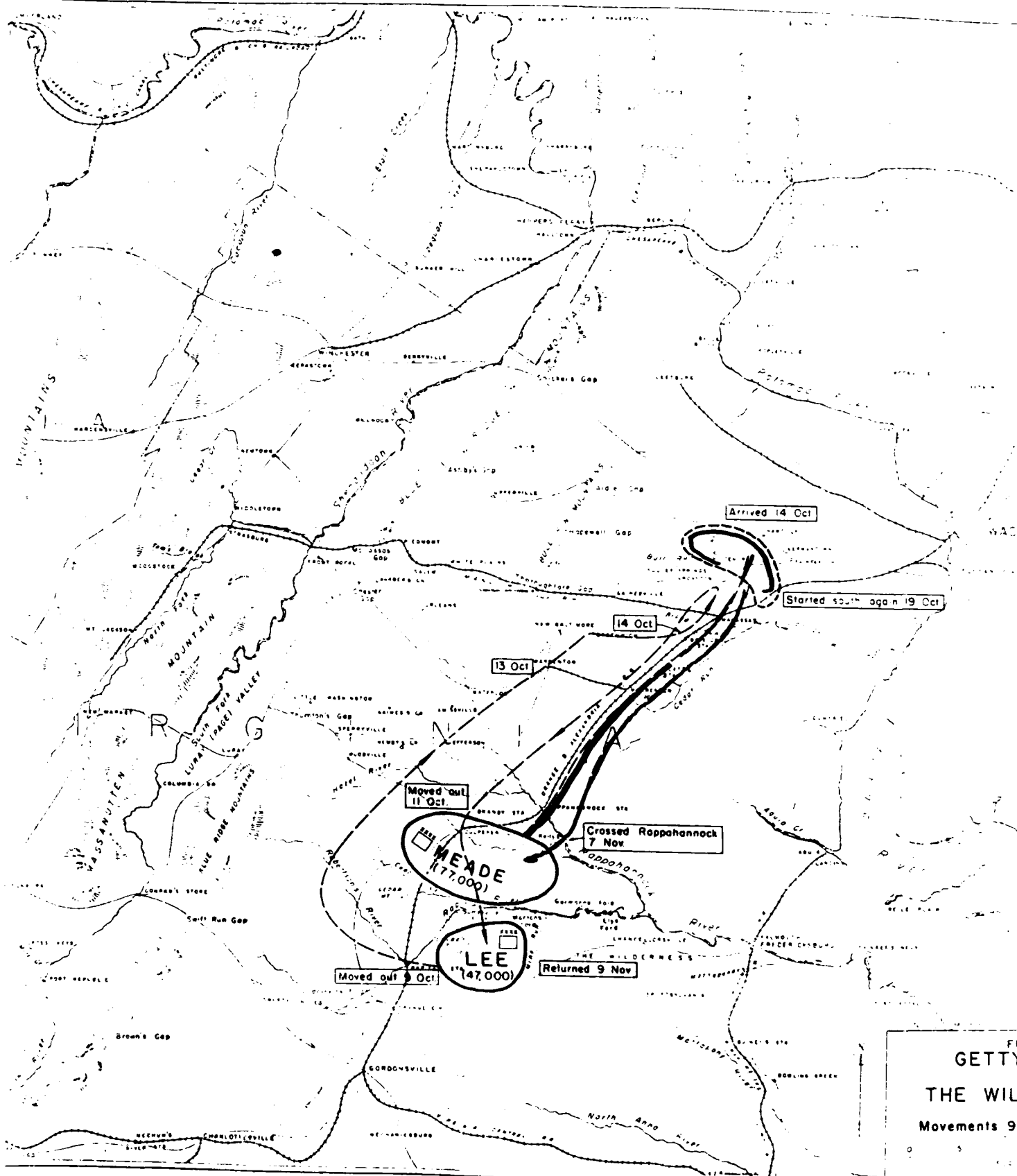
With his health deteriorating, feeling a deep sense of loss, and a conviction that his new nation might be very dissatisfied by the recent defeat from Gettysburg, Lee submitted his resignation to President Davis. "I have been prompted by these reflections more than once since my return from Pennsylvania to propose to Your Excellency the propriety of selecting another commander for this army. . . ." (Freeman, R. E. Lee, Vol. III, p. 156)

President Davis refused the resignation, saying that there was no one he knew who could replace Lee. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, Vol. III, p. 156)

At almost the same time, George Meade, chided by his superiors and hounded by some members of the press, submitted his resignation to the President: "Having performed my duty conscientiously and to the best of my ability, the censure of the President conveyed in your dispatch of 1:00 p.m. This day, is, in my judgment, so undeserved that I feel compelled most respectfully to ask to be immediately relieved from the command of this army."

Major General Hallack replied that the President had only wanted to goad Meade into striving harder, and Meade's resignation was not accepted either. (OR, 29, pt. 2, pp. 407, 410.)

By 10 August Lee had 58,000 men armed and ready for battle. Morale was continuing to rise and there was an expectation in the Army of Northern Virginia that they would soon be in action again. While the Army was refitting, President Davis called Lee to Richmond to discuss the



possible strategy for the rest of the war. They discussed a number of possible courses of action, but after a short time it was decided that Longstreet's corps would go to Tennessee to bolster the Confederate forces there. (OR, 29, pt. 2, pp. 632, 650, 709, & Freeman)

Lee returned to the Army from Richmond on 7 September and on the 9th he reviewed 2d Corps. These reviews were almost a trademark of Lee's and they indicated that action was on the way and his troops knew it. Lee made preparation for battle and sent his supplies back to the rear. He also learned that two of the Federal Corps facing him, the XI and XII, had been sent to reinforce the Union General, Rosencranz in the west. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, Vol. III, p. 169)

After Longstreet departed Lee started to consider going on the attack. He knew that winter was coming and he figured that he needed to take this opportunity to push the northern forces out of Virginia and gain some relief. He hoped to give himself ground for maneuver in the coming spring and possibly make the railroads safer from northern raiders. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 169) If Lee considered Frederick's advice in this operation it might have been this:

"The primary maxim," Frederick said, "for an offensive war is to formulate ambitious plans, so that if they succeed they will produce really significant results. Hit the enemy hard and do not be content merely to harass him on his frontiers. The only purpose of war is to force the enemy to consent to an advantageous peace as soon as possible, and you must never lose sight of this idea." (Luvaas, Frederick, p. 310)

On the 9th of October Lee ordered Ewell and Hill to cross the upper Rapidan in an attempted surprise move toward Culpepper. There was almost immediate contact with Federal Cavalry and surprise was lost. Lee discovered angrily that the Richmond papers had already reported his intent to cross the upper Rapidan and, to make matters worse, Lee's old illness flared up and he was forced to ride in a wagon.

As soon as Meade received word that Lee was attempting to maneuver around his flank again he retired from Culpepper and moved the Union forces north behind the Rappahannock. Lee's move caused some concern on the part of Meade and the Union forces quickly moved their stores to the rear. What they could not move they destroyed. (OR, 29, pt. 2, pp. 407, 410.)

General Meade had received recruits and some of his units which had been sent to Tennessee had returned. He had intercepted signals indicating an impending move by Lee's cavalry and his units were on maximum alert. By the 9th,





Meade knew something was brewing. When Meade realized that Lee was making a march to the northwest, and probably around his flank, he started the Union Army back to the north and the Rapahannock River, very concerned that Lee would take the railroad lines of communication to the Federal rear and cut the Northern Army off from Washington. Meade withdrew without an engagement. Lee again gained the all important initiative.

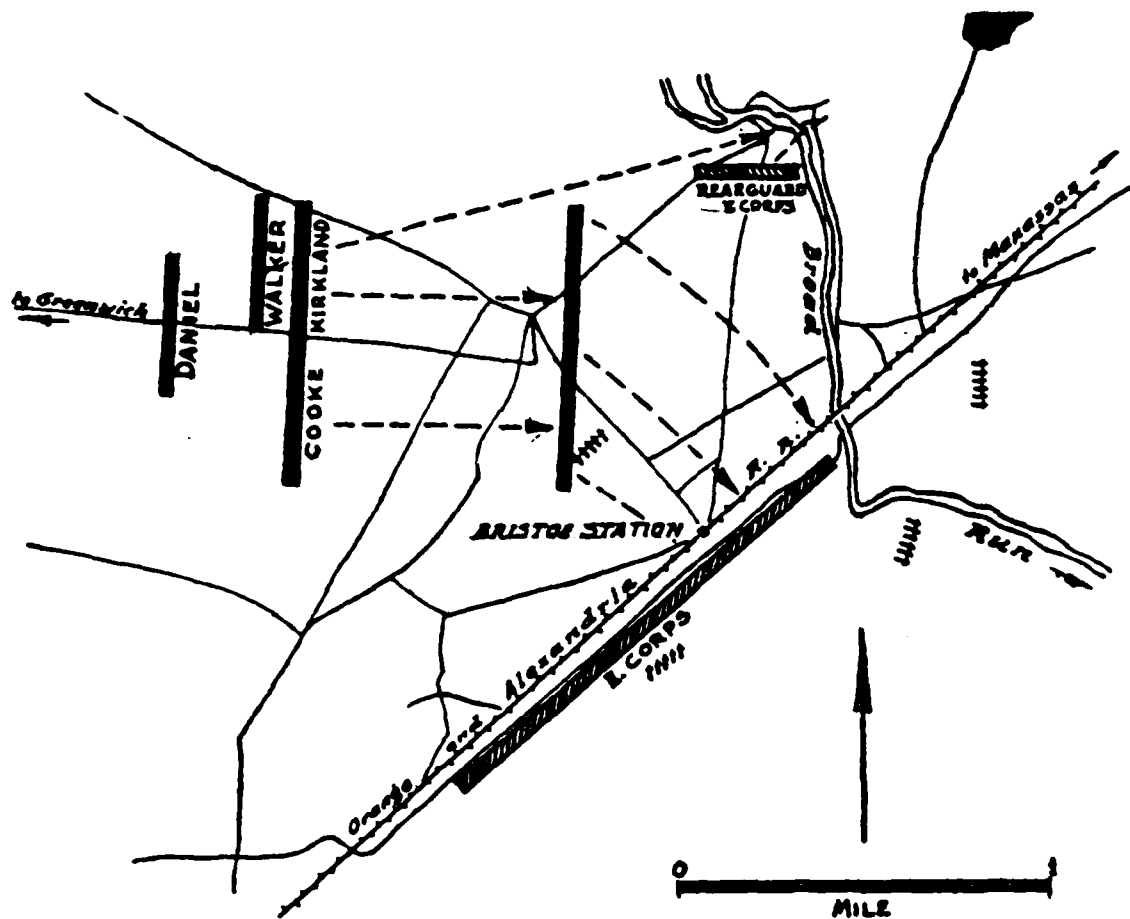
With the Cavalry out to the front and flanks the team of Fitz Lee and J.E.B. Stuart quickly pushed back a northern force in a spirited fight and moved on. On the 12th of October Lee's army passed through Culpepper and on to Warrenton, with Hill's corps on the left in a column of corps and cavalry to the front and right flank.

Lee then had to decide to limit his turning movement around Meade's position. Instead of the bold sweep he had done previously at Chancellorsville with the help of Stonewall Jackson, Lee decided that with his present commanders and with a worn and tired army he needed to use more caution. This caution limited his aims and the results.

According to Freeman, Lee wanted to move Meade out of his prepared positions so that he could engage him in the open and beat him using maneuver warfare rather than taking the chance against the hated breastworks. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, Vol. 3, p. 174) Lee moved out to encircle the Union line but Meade shifted to meet him, set up a rear guard action, and backed up the railroad line toward Washington, D.C.

Stuart moved straight up the road to Jeffersonton where he met a Union force, beat them and drove them out. (Map, Freeman, R. E. Lee, Vol. 3, p. 175) Attacking through Jeffersonton, Stuart cleared the Bridge at Sulphur Springs. The fight for the bridge was over quickly and the Confederate cavalymen replaced the bridge planking and the Southerners continued to move forward. The Confederate Army arrived at Warrenton on 13 October 1863. (OR, 29, pt. 1, pp. 406, 410, 417-418, 445)

Early in the morning on 14 October Lee received word that Stuart was cut off by Federal forces in the vicinity of the Catlet Station-Auburn-Warrenton Road. The Union forces did not know they were near the Confederate Cavalry. With help from Ewell, Stuart was able to break out with few losses and all of his guns. It is important to note that the forward movement of Lee's army during this period was spearheaded by the Confederate cavalry and light infantry. There were no major engagements during this part of the advance. The Union commander, Meade, had little knowledge of where Lee's main force was located. Lee, on the other hand, knew where Meade's forces were located at all times. (OR, 29, pt. 1, pp. 447-448.



Manœuvres of three brigades of Heth's division, Third Corps, Army of Northern Virginia,  
in action of Oct. 14, 1863, at Bristoe Station.

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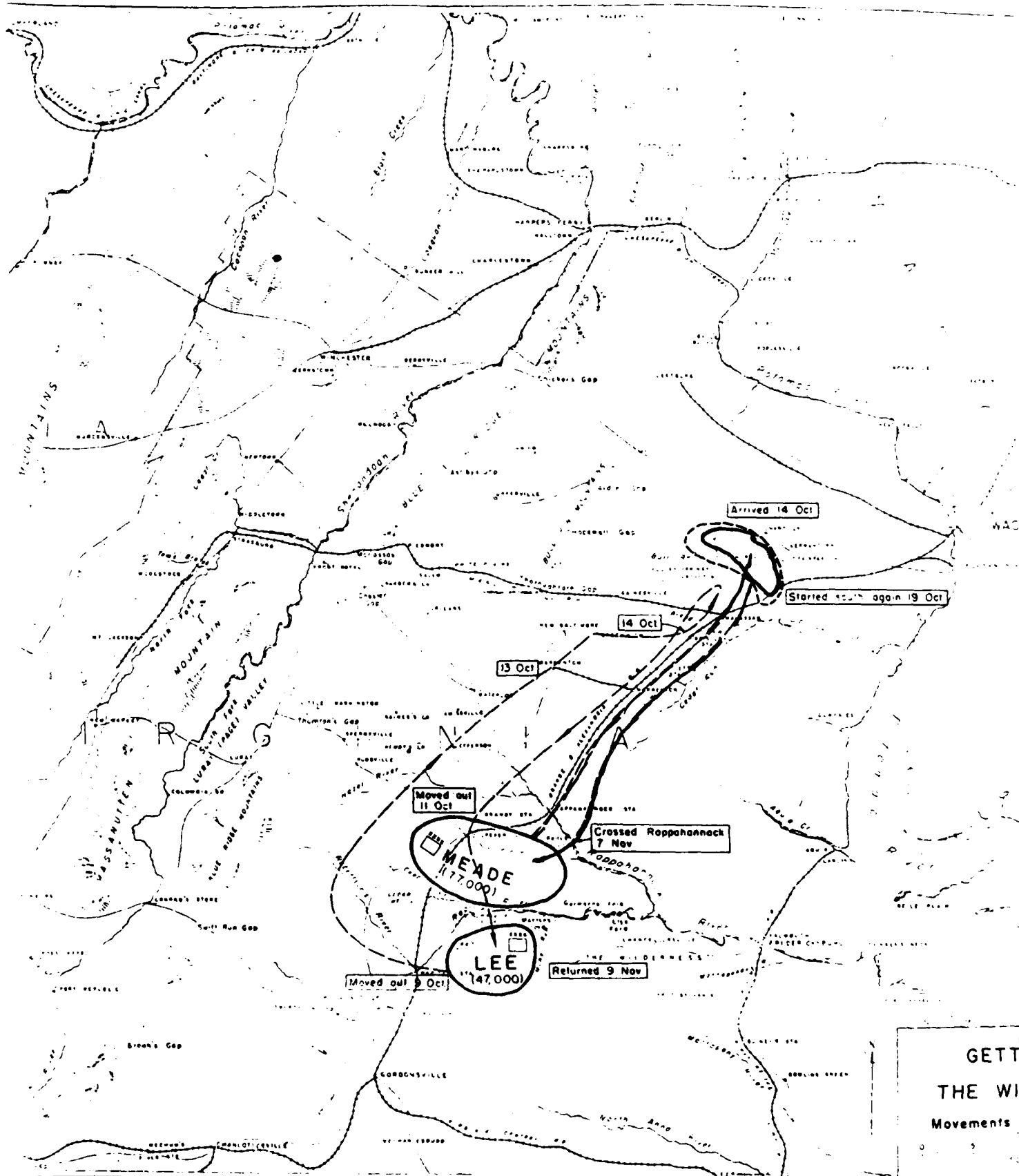
While the Union Army was withdrawing and the Confederate forces advancing, they made contact near a spot called Bristoe Station. This short fight is labeled: "as badly managed a battle as . . . had ever been fought by the flag of the Army of Northern Virginia." (Freeman, R. E. Lee, Vol. 3, p. 181)

As A. P. Hill's corps marched up to Bristoe Station, General Hill saw a sizable enemy force in front of him on both sides of Broad Run. He oriented on the enemy and brought one of his divisions under General Heth in to engage. Advancing to the northeast, the attacking Confederates did not see a large Union force in a railway cut, on their right flank. As the Confederates advanced they walked into a terrible trap. (Map, Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 182) In this deadly debacle, Cook's brigade, on the right flank of Heth's Division, continued to advance. Cooke was killed early in the engagement but his second in command continued the attack into the railway cut where nearly every man was either captured or killed. As the surprised and beaten Southerners withdrew they abandoned a battery of their own artillery that had been pulled in behind them to support their aborted attack. The Federal forces quickly advanced and pulled four of the guns off the field. Lee's army lost 1361 men in 40 minutes. A. P. Hill again was a problem for Lee. Lee in his great disappointment told Hill, "Well, well General, bury these poor men and let us say no more about it." (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 183)

In spite of all the action Meade still wasn't sure where Lee's army was on the 14th of October. He continued to move the Union Army north to the vicinity of Centerville, less than 20 miles from Washington, D.C. The Union Army passed north across the famous Bull Run, and Lee began to consider withdrawal. Meade's message to the army was:

The Major General Commanding announces to the Army that the rear guard, consisting of the Second Corps, was attacked yesterday while marching by the flanks. The enemy after a spirited contest was repulsed, losing a battery of five guns, two colors, and four hundred and fifty prisoners. The skill and promptitude of Major General Warren, and the gallantry and bearing of the officers and soldiers of the Second Corps, are entitled to high commendation. . . ."  
(Humphreys, p. 32)

By the 15th of October Lee had advanced to the vicinity of Warrenton/Centerville, and had to make some serious operational decisions. He felt that he might be able to drive Meade all the way back into the defenses of Washington, but as he looked around the rolling hills of northern Virginia he realized that he was in serious supply trouble



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again. This time the northern forces had left him nothing he could use. He had advanced but the area was barren and all supplies had been moved or destroyed. Even the slave shacks had been destroyed, farm tools melted and carried off, and nothing left behind that was of use to a foraging army. "Prince William County was one vast barren wilderness..." (Taylor, Oct 25, 1863) Lee's logistical tail was getting longer and Meade's forces had dropped the railway bridge over the Rappahannock so that rail resupply from the south would not be possible in the immediate future. With winter coming and the road sure to deteriorate, Lee was forced to either stick it out or withdraw. As he looked around at his brave soldiers in bare feet and ragged uniforms, Lee decided that the benefits of staying were not worth the risk.

Frederick's warning was: "Winter campaigns are the most condemnable of all expeditions. . . . The best army in the world can't stand up to them for long." (Luvaas, Frederick, p. 331)

Meade ordered his bridge train up to assist in the crossing at Bull Run and, realizing that Lee's forward motion had stopped and that the southern supply lines were nearly useless, he moved the Union Army southward once again.

Lee decided that he had to withdraw and immediately started to destroy the railway that the Union forces had left in place. Poor weather again became a factor. There was little or no movement possible because of poor roads and, to make it worse, Lee was again confined to his tent from illness.

On the 18th of October, with Bull Run between him and the Union forces unfordable because of rain, Lee started back for the Rappahannock River keeping Stuart as a rear guard, withdrawing slowly to New Baltimore while Fitz Lee waited off on the flank in Greenwich. (Humphreys, p. 35, Map 186, Freeman.) By the 19th, however, the Union cavalry had managed to press southward and were pushing hard to stay in contact with the withdrawing southern forces. This gave the intrepid cavalymen Fitz Lee and Stuart a chance to entrap the advancing Federal cavalry forces and nearly catch them red-handed. At the last moment the Union cavalry realized they were being led into a trap and withdrew to the north rapidly with the southern cavalry in close pursuit. The Confederate cavalry chased the Union cavalry nearly five miles into the Union lines, capturing a number of surprised Union sentries and escaping nearly unscathed. This amusing chase is known as "The Buckland Races" and the close pursuit of the Union cavalry by the famous Stuart is the stuff that legends are made of. It is also an excellent example of the use of the tactical initiative by thinking, subordinate commanders. (OR, 29, pt. 1, pp. 382, 387, 391-392, 451-52.)

Lee's army established itself once again on the banks of the Rappahannock River. The defensive plan that Lee established was to build a strong point north of the river in the vicinity of the Rappahannock Bridge and hold it as a bridgehead. A short distance away, at Kelly's Ford, Lee fortified a similar site but with fewer men. Lee thought he could hold the bridge and that Meade, if he attacked at all, would attempt to cross at Kelly's Ford.

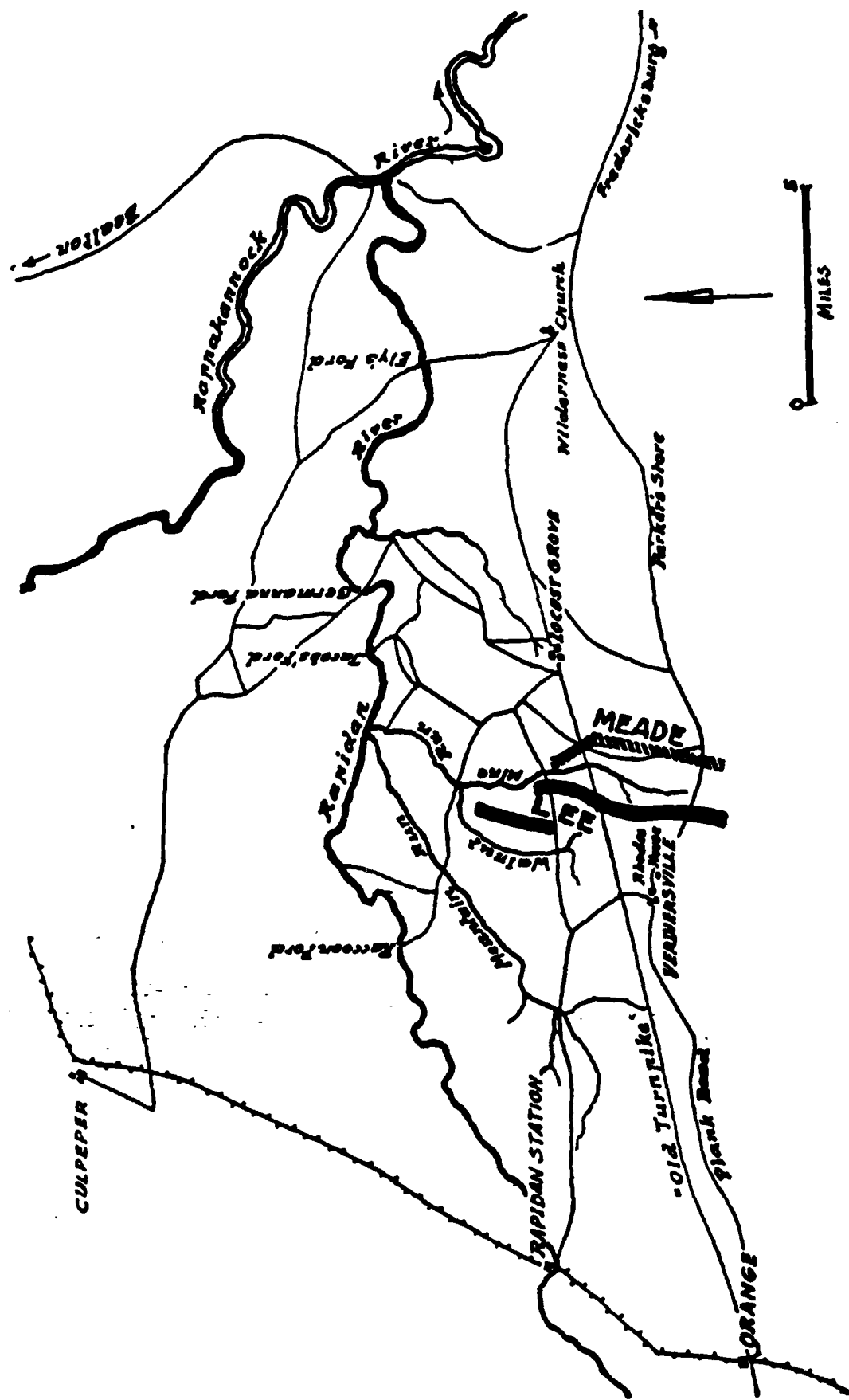
On the 7th of November Federal infantry came up to the defenses at Rappahannock Station and at Kelly's Ford. One southern division was defending at the site and Lee sent another division to reinforce it. Lee also ordered the Rappahannock Bridge reinforced but believed that the forces there could hold the bridgehead.

The Army of the Potomac moved south to cross the Rappahannock on the night of 7 November and, with a well-orchestrated evening attack, the Federal forces took the bridge. Lee, believing the fight was over at dusk, had left General Early in charge and gone to his camp. He learned later to his shame that Federal forces had captured nearly two regiments at Kelly's Ford, laid a pontoon bridge of their own, and reinforced their crossing with their own bridgehead. In addition, in storming the Rappahannock Bridge, the Army of the Potomac had captured the whole Confederate force north of the bridge. (OR, 29, pt. 1, p. 622)

Lee was forced by the Federal crossing to move back from the Rappahannock immediately and ordered his Army of Northern Virginia up and on the road in the darkness of early morning. Lee fully expected an attack on 9 November but none was forthcoming. The dawn of the 10th of November 1863 found Lee back almost in his original positions vacated a month before. There were many angry voices heard in the Army of Northern Virginia, but probably the most accurate comment was from a young soldier in the line: "I don't know much about it but it seems to me that our army was surprised." (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 193, Map 118)

President Davis visited Lee's camp from 21-24 November 1863. The Army was again short of clothing and equipment. The claims of the historians are that the Army of Northern Virginia was in fine shape and that morale was high. It is fact, however, that Lee was bothered by desertions and both the General and the President expected an attack by Union forces at any time. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 194)

Reports arrived on the 24th that the Union forces had received marching rations. Lee suspected that his enemy was about to move and warned the cavalry to be on the lookout. By the 26th, Lee had enough intelligence on the Union movements that he was sure that Meade intended to cross the Rappahannock at Germania Ford. Lee had, as usual, expected



Principal roads and streams on the south side of the Rapidan River between Orange Courthouse and Wilderness Church, showing the opposing positions along Mine Run, Nov. 29, 1863.

that move and launched a counteroffensive operation intended to destroy the advancing Federal forces. Lee positioned his forces along a small stream named Mine Run and, between the 27th and the 29th, both armies dug in and waited for an attack. This period is a precursor to the events of World War I. Trench warfare had arrived in spades. "The day witnessed the strange spectacle of two great armies exchanging occasional cannon shots and contenting themselves, for the rest, with seeing which of them could pile the higher parapets." (Taylor, p. 25)

On the evening of the 29th of November one of Lee's commanders found a way into the enemy rear. Lee was notified and escorted to the rear, left flank of the Union line. Here was another golden opportunity for General Lee. Lee pondered the situation. Could he attack with the commanders he had? Did he have the combat power and would he continue to destroy his forces with victories? In this case Lee decided not to attack and to wait on the hope that Meade would attack him instead and give the Confederate force the advantage of the piled up dirt and the tactical defensive.

After waiting until the 2nd of December Lee decided he could wait no longer and positioned his forces for an attack. He advanced Anderson and Wilcox's divisions and readied them to turn the enemy flank. When dawn rose, the watching troopers found that Meade had realized the weakness to his flank and withdrawn. Lee had missed his chance.

General Meade might have remembered:

"A wise man will make no movement without good reason, and a general of an army will never give battle if it does not serve some important purpose. When he is forced by his enemy into a battle it is surely because he will have committed mistakes which force him to dance to the tune of his enemy. . . . The best battles are those that you force upon the enemy, for it is an established rule that you must compel the enemy to do that which is contrary to his wishes and best interests." (Luvaas, Frederick, p. 140)

In this case Meade had seen the enemy in his rear and realized that he could be easily flanked so he moved to a better defensive location. In addition, Meade did what he had done best for so long. He made few costly mistakes.

The operations around Bristoe Station, Rappahannock Bridge, and Mine Run cost Lee 4,255 soldiers that he would have trouble replacing. During these operations Lee had discovered that A. P. Hill was ineffective and his other corps commander, Ewell, was weaker than ever from his



previous wounds. Lee was constantly ill with the oncoming heart problems that would finally end his life. In addition, Lee had been chased back to his original positions on the Rapidan and outmaneuvered by Meade. Meade had not won again. But he had not lost either. As the defeats began to mount for the south the attrition factor became more important. The north was replacing its losses and the South could not. In addition, the Army of Northern Virginia began to lose its greatest asset. . .its belief in itself. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 196)

Frederick had said it many years before after the Battle of Torgau:

"Although this victory was in no sense decisive it did succeed in eroding his opponent's will to win, and in a war of attrition the psychological factor becomes increasingly significant." (Luvaas, Frederick, p.

9)

In December Lee dispersed his army into sheltered camps. He was called to Richmond by Davis and had an opportunity to see his family and friends. Lee returned from Richmond, saddened by the illness of his wife and other personal tragedies. He set the example by being in camp by the 22nd of December, but it was a miserable Christmas.

Lee's farsighted warnings and long-range planning for President Davis were always helpful but never more than in December of 1863. He warned President Davis that with the military situation as it existed at that time Georgia was in jeopardy of being cut in two by Federal attack. Almost a year later that exact event took place and the south was incapable of stopping it. (Freeman, R. E. Lee, p. 198)

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

The long "campaign of maneuvers" ended when Ulysses S. Grant took command of the armies of the United States and moved his headquarters into the field near General Meade's headquarters. Throughout the nine months from June of 1863 to March of 1864 the Union and Confederate Armies had marched hundreds of miles and fought numerous battles in the attempt to force their individual wills on the other.

As always, "war is a national undertaking which must be coordinated from the highest levels of policy making to the basic levels of execution. . . . Successful strategy achieves national aims at the lowest possible cost in lives and treasure. Operational Art translates those aims into effective military operations and campaigns." (FM 100-5, p. 9) In this study both Army commanders responded to a higher authority. Of the two, Lee had the simplest arrangement. He communicated directly with the President of the Confederacy. It would not be an overstatement to say that Lee was the translator for the south of the political instrument of power into military action. He received his instructions from Jefferson Davis, but he was the designer of the plans for war. His position as Commander-in-Chief was unique for a democracy. He set policy and put it into action. President Davis was a trained soldier and made many decisions concerning the direction of the war. He did, however, lean heavily on Lee and normally followed Lee's advice.

In our long comparison Lee and Meade both attempted to fulfill their nation's strategy. In June of 1863, Lee, facing the strong, dug-in positions of General Hooker near Chancellorsville, decided to maneuver to bring the northern army out into the open field to fight a battle in which General Lee could select the time and place to fight. In this move Lee had a strategic objective. He hoped to affect the northern will to fight, and possibly change the outcome of an election. His initial military campaign went awry because of a tactical failure of his cavalry (Intelligence) to keep him informed of the enemy tactical movements.

General Meade, as we saw, had experience as a corps commander but no political or strategic planning experience. His unexpected assumption of command and his brilliant command and control of the Army of the Potomac just before and during the Battle of Gettysburg shows Meade's sound understanding of the tactics of fighting a large army and of his knowledge of the operational art of his day.

An interesting initial comparison between the operational art of Meade and Lee seems to indicate that Lee was smoothly integrating the national strategic policies through his operational plans down to tactical implementation while Meade was forced to struggle with tactical implementation of the operational plan to attempt to fit what, to him, was an unclear operational objective.

Field Manual 100-5 lists four dynamics of combat power: Maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership. The maneuver capabilities of both armies in our comparison remained about the same on or near the battlefield. The firepower factor of the equation was changing and fires were becoming so effective that the unprotected troops were decimated. So an almost natural shift to fighting from protected positions came about during this period. Both armies tried to maneuver their opponents out of their protected positions and then to quickly establish a defense upon which the enemy would crash and be destroyed. We have seen that after Gettysburg Lee fell in on a defensive position north of the Potomac and Meade refused an attack, fearing high losses. Later at the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers both armies met and waited for the other to attack. Lee's maneuvers to flank Meade were met by the northern army's realignment of trenches and withdrawal to protect and husband their force and to tempt Lee to waste his forces on an open field which he did not do. The final "face off" at Mine Run is a classic example of a situation where both commanders were so concerned with protecting their force that both were nearly immobilized. When Lee finally dared to attack, Meade had withdrawn.

It is difficult for any mere student to study the campaigns of Robert E. Lee and to remain objective for long. Every single source is filled to the brim with anecdotes and vignettes, some accurate and some impossible, regarding the consummate General of American History. Lee was aware of both the hard, killing quality or potential of his army and he was equally aware of the army's softer, weaker points. He knew how much he could demand and what would hurt the Army the most. He carefully monitored rumor and innuendo in his headquarters and set the moral tone for his forces. His personality reached to the individual soldier and that strength was reflected back to its leader. As Napoleon stated: "It was not the Roman Army that crossed the Rubicon, it was Caesar." In this case it was not the Army of Northern Virginia that performed in such a superb fashion, it was Lee. Meade, fine gentleman and soldier that he was, did not have a similar personal effect on his force.

Leadership as it applies to the operational art comparison is the most essential element of combat power. Lee's leadership is legend, and rightfully so, but during this period Meade showed his great understanding of the

operational art and true tactical genius. Meade took the initiative from Lee after the Confederate retreat across the Potomac, and by skillful maneuvering forced Lee back to the Rapidan without a major battle.

Operational planning must orient on decisive objectives. Those decisive objectives are normally referred to as enemy centers of gravity. (FM 100-5, p. 15) In this study I submit that Lee considered the Union center of gravity to be "public opinion." He attacked that center with his invasion of Pennsylvania, support of the war in the Valley of the Tennessee and by his constant maneuvers near Washington, D.C. He connected the political objectives with the operational and tactical plans.

Meade, on the other hand, assumed that Lincoln and Halleck had picked the southern army as the Confederate center of gravity. It seemed that Lincoln and Hallack assumed that if the southern army was beaten, the southern States would be brought back into the Union. I submit that both Meade and Lee were attacking the correct center of gravity but that the southern center of gravity was more easily reached and destroyed.

Throughout the period of this research, Lee normally maintained the initiative even when beaten or placed on the defensive. His offensive spirit permeated the Army of Northern Virginia and he took risks that others would call imprudent. Sometimes, as at Chancellorsville, he was victorious. At other times, such as Gettysburg, his big risk caused a big loss. But his maneuvers often surprised Meade and almost always kept Meade thinking defensively rather than offensively.

Supporting Lee's control of the initiative was his strategic, operational, and tactical agility. Lee's army was famous for its ability to turn, mass and move with minimum delay. In the campaigns of 1863 and 1864 The Army of Northern Virginia went on a long campaign into Pennsylvania, amassed and attacked the Army of the Potomac and was soundly defeated. Within a day the Army was fighting a rear guard action in the worst of conditions, and after a forty mile forced march, dug in and performed a hasty defense. Then they performed a hasty river crossing and delay with minimal losses and with a fierce enough appearance that their victorious enemy was hesitant to attack them.

That type of agility reflects directly upon the mental agility and spirit of Lee, even when times were the most difficult. Agility, is above all, mental.

In a similar manner, Meade learned his new job quickly. Although not often able to cause Lee to react to his movements, Meade quickly took advantage of Lee's first

hesitation after crossing to the south of the Potomac. Meade's flanking maneuver and river crossing in July of 1863 were an example of both operational and psychological initiative. The northern army, possibly for the first time, realized that they had won an important victory and that Lee's army could be beaten.

The northern army's advance to the Rapidan is an excellent example of the tenet of "depth", the extension of operations in space, time and resources. (FM 100-5, p. 16) The Army of the Potomac gained momentum as it headed south of the river, nearly cutting off the Confederate lines of communication and supply. Lee's ability, surpassed that of Meade, in this case, and Lee was able to establish dug-in defensive positions on Meade's line of march. Other factors that related to the tenet of depth in our comparison were the length of supply lines and difficulty of command and control over long distances. Both of these factors effected Lee and Meade as they advanced into their opponents territory.

The most difficult aspects of an operation is the synchronization of the varied parts of the campaign. Both Lee and Meade were trying to arrive at the decisive point with superior combat strength to crush their enemy. I submit that the ability to synchronize forces on the operational field of battle is the outcome of successful campaign planning. The basis for my statement is this study. In every stage of this "campaign of maneuvers" both Meade and Lee were attempting to concentrate superior strength at a decisive time and place against their enemy's vulnerability. This is a difficult objective to achieve against a stout opponent and during the period June of 1863 to March of 1864 neither leader was able to achieve it.

In March 1864, General Grant became commander of all the Union armies and joined Meade in the field. At that time the objectives of the Army of the Potomac changed and General Meade lead his army forward to the final defeat of Lee and the south. The best example of the change in command mentality that took place during that period is the following quote:

"After he crossed the Rapidan in early May someone reported to him that the pontoons had been lost. Grant was not worried. If I beat General Lee I sha'nt want any pontoon; and if General Lee beats me I can take all the men I intend to take back across the river on a log." (Earle, p. 174)

This has been a long and difficult study and a long learning experience. The comparison of the operational art of these two great captains is worthy of notice and continued study. The final objective of this study, however, was suggested by Frederick the Great:

"An officer can spare himself many mistakes by improving himself. We even venture to say that he must do it, because the mistakes that he commits through ignorance cover him with shame, and even in praising his courage one cannot refrain from blaming his stupidity."  
(Luvaas, Frederick, p. 54)

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