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MILITARY HERITAGE

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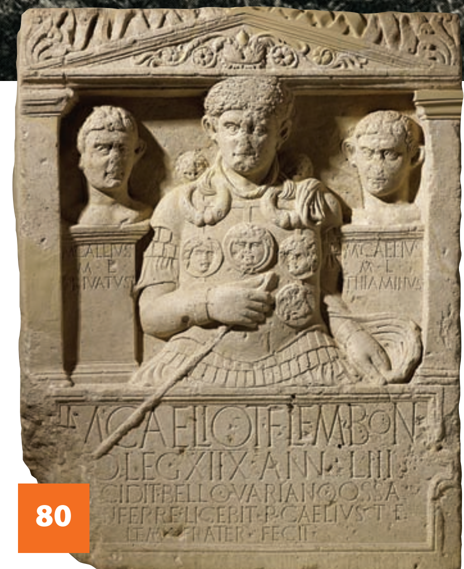

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Cover: A G.I. uses his walkie-talkie to "get the message through" near the Siegfried Line. See story page 54. Photo: National Archives.

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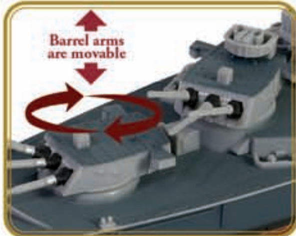

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EDITORIAL

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Tyler Perry's new film, *The Six Triple Eight*, is based on a *World War II History* magazine article

After years of obscurity, the untold story of the 6888th Postal Directory Battalion will captivate audiences worldwide with the release of the feature film *The Six Triple Eight*. The current issue of *World War II History*—on sale now—has special coverage of the film, which was released to select theaters on December 6 and began streaming on Netflix December 20.

The Six Triple Eight chronicles the unique trials and triumphs of the U.S. Army's first all-female, all-Black unit of the Women's Army Corps to serve overseas during World War II. This extraordinary battalion was deployed to an active theater of operations outside the continental United States, making their story a standout in the annals of military service. Their assignment was the redirection of nearly 18 million pieces of backlogged mail to the more than seven million U.S. personnel in the European Theater of Operations—including Army, Navy, Marine Corps, civilians, and Red Cross workers.

Bob Mahoney/Perry Well Films 2/Courtesy of Netflix

TOP: Major Charity Adams inspects the soldiers of the 6888th after their arrival in Birmingham, England, on February 15, 1945. ABOVE: Kerry Washington stars as Maj. Charity Adams in Tyler Perry's new movie, *The Six Triple Eight*, the story of the only all-Black, Women's Army Corps unit to serve overseas in World War II.

The film's journey to the screen began with actor and filmmaker Tyler Perry, who was deeply moved by the story of the 6888th. Perry discovered the tale through the writings of Kevin Hymel, a U.S. Army historian, author, and research director for Sovereign Media's *World War II History* magazine. Hymel's compelling and meticulously researched account published in the magazine brought the 6888th into the spotlight, inspiring Perry to bring their story to life.

Hymel first learned about the 6888th from his co-worker Jean Davis during their involvement in the Army's Freedom Team Salute project in 2008. This lead eventually formed the foundation for Perry's film. The project gained momentum when *Military Heritage* Editorial Director Carl Gnam connected with Hollywood film producer Carlota Espinosa. Espinosa's enthusiasm for the 6888th's story grew, and she enlisted the support of fellow producers Peter Gruber and Keri Selig. When Espinosa introduced the project to Perry, he eagerly joined as producer, writer, and director.

The film boasts an impressive cast, including Kerry Washington, star of ABC's television series *Scandal*, who will also serve as executive producer. Adding to the star-studded lineup are Hollywood luminaries such as Oprah Winfrey, Susan Sarandon and Sam Waterston.

The Six Triple Eight is more than just a film; it is a tribute to the courage, dedication, and resilience of the women who served in the 6888th Postal Directory Battalion. Their story, once hidden, is now poised to inspire and educate audiences around the globe. ■

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SOLDIERS

Talented administrator and dedicated diarist Samuel Pepys is considered the father of Britain's modern Royal Navy.

By Kelly Bell

The wind was from the southwest early on the morning of June 13, 1665, as the Dutch and British fleets deployed just off southeastern coast of England, 40 miles east of the town of Lowestoft in Suffolk. The coming clash was part of the Second Anglo-Dutch war, ignited by simmering commercial tensions between the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and it would birth a maritime superpower.

The Dutch flotilla was co-commanded by Lt.-Adm. Jacob van Wassenaer and Lord Obdam. The resolutely approaching Britons were led by James, Duke of York. The United Province squadrons were southeast of the English fleet, and just before dawn, Obdam veered his ships westward in order to regain the weather gage (be upwind of) by passing south of the Brits. Sir Christopher Myngs, commander of the British van, instantly interpreted this maneuver, slewed his vessels southeast, regained the weather gage and compelled the Dutch to veer northwest to avoid being outflanked.

Just after 7 a.m. Flag Captain Willian Penn reacted to this move by moving his battlewagon *Royal Charles* and most of his Red Squadron to the west and forming a battle line to prevent Obdam from gaining the weather gage. The Dutch, however, made no attempt to make this anticipated maneuver in the contrary wind. At this point the Blue Squadron commanded by Earl of Sandwich Edward Montagu, and additional British ships under Prince Rupert of the Rhine and Sir John Lawson commenced bearing down on Obdam.

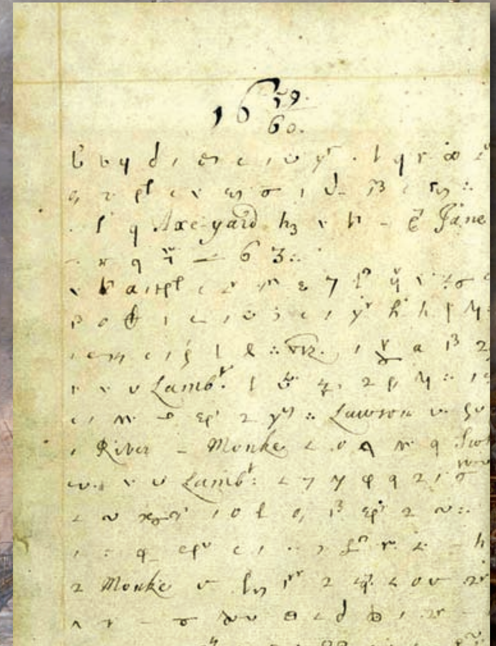
The fighting escalated into sharp, close-quarters gunnery as Dutch vessels attempted to break through the English battle line. Although three temporarily succeeded they were soon forced back by trailing British warships. Both fleets were now facing each other in the manner of medieval jousters. At this point Penn and James, Duke of York took elements from the main fleet in hopes of tacking from the rear.

This required precise coordination and timing, but the Englishmen achieved it so that by 8 a.m. Lawson's division was in the lead, followed by Sandwich, with Rupert bringing up the rear. By noon this phase of the battle had evolved from long-range exchange of artillery into the antagonists being in close enough proximity for the huge Dutch ship *Oranje* to draw alongside Sandwich's *Montague* and send a boarding party to try and capture the British ship as the first move in an attempt to split the English fleet.

Seeing the threat, Penn sent the 68-gun *Old James* against the *Oranje* while the *Royal Charles* targeted the *Eendracht*, which was moving against Sandwich's flagship, *Port Royal*. The almost point-blank hammering from these two Britons forced the Dutch boarders to abandon *Montague*, and the fighting became confused and bloody as the more aggressive and resolute British, fighting to protect their homeland,

National Portrait Gallery, London

Pepys Library, Magdelane College, Cambridge



"Burning of the English Fleet at Chatham," by Flemish artist Peter van de Velde. In June 1667, a Dutch fleet sailed into the Thames Estuary and up the River Medway to the royal dockyards at Chatham where, in one of the greatest humiliations in the history of England and the Royal Navy, they destroyed more than a dozen ships and captured the capital ship HMS *Unity* and the HMS *Royal Charles*, flagship of the English fleet. TOP: An oil portrait of Samuel Pepys holding sheet music done in 1666 by John Hayls. ABOVE: Writing in a 17th century shorthand, possibly to prevent others from reading it, Pepys kept a diary from 1660 to 1669. An abridged version of the frank and personal diary was first translated and published in 1825.

Rijksmuseum Amsterdam

National Maritime Museum, London

pressed relentlessly into the wavering, dwindling Dutchmen, who by 6 p.m. were in full retreat, and Mother England was poised to become the true empress of the seas.

The British fleet had gone into the battle with 109 warships bristling with 4,542 guns and manned by 22,055 expert maritime warriors. All this was the creation of an unassuming little man who almost single-handedly created the storied Royal Navy.

Samuel Pepys (pronounced "peeps") was born in London, England on February 23, 1633. He made the city his lifelong home, which was fitting considering he would be the main architect of the establishment and proliferation of a fleet that would be the main force holding together the extensive empire Britain was amassing. In 1653 he took his B.A. from Cambridge University's Magdalene College, and in 1660 earned his M.A. He then commenced his career as a navy-builder despite starting out wholly ignorant of how to do so. This was not his only hurdle.

On March 26, 1658, he had undergone a risky but unavoidable surgical procedure to remove a kidney stone from his urinary tract. The operation removed the stone, but he never fully recovered. Though he would suffer severe abdominal pain and bloody urine the rest of his life, he did not let it impede his work on behalf of the navy.

He started out in the summer of 1660 by sailing with the fleet that brought His Majesty Charles II back from exile. Being a cousin of Admiral Edward Montagu helped him secure an appointment as Clerk of the Acts of the Navy. Learning quickly on the job he displayed a penchant for administration, becoming in turn a justice of the peace, commissioner and treasurer of the colony of Tangiers, and a surveyor of naval victualling. He became known as an official who never left a job undone.

In the summer of 1662 he repeatedly found time to study multiplication tables with a private tutor. He also taught himself the nuances of shipbuilding and price charts for various naval stores such as tar and whale oil. Using several large ledgers he commenced making meticulous records of all memoranda and contracts, ensuring there could be no question concerning the legitimacy of all government spending for naval purposes. His value soon became evident.

From 1665 to 1667, during the Second Dutch War, he found himself virtually the sole administrator in the naval office as most of his colleagues were re-assigned, and those remaining proved incompetent. Considering the far-flung nature of this conflict it was fortunate for Britain that Pepys had implemented a centralized approach to supplying the fleet. Without the steady flow of war material he provided, the infant Royal Navy might have been destroyed. His dedication to his calling was so absolute that he did not follow the example of most of London and evacuate the capital to escape the 1665 plague outbreak, but remained at his post in the almost-empty naval ministry. The following year he saved this administration center during the great fire of London by having all surrounding buildings pulled down so flames could not reach the complex. His activities kept advancing the cause of the navy.

In 1673, during the Third Dutch War, Pepys was appointed secretary to the new Commission of Admiralty, making him the administrative head of the Royal Navy. For the next six years he concentrated on rooting out and dismissing the plethora of corrupt officials whose greed and incompetence had so impeded supporting the fleet during the Dutch wars. With the French and Dutch engaged in major naval expansion he convinced Parliament to finance a building program

Musee du Louvre, Paris

ABOVE: "Battle of Texel," by Francois Auguste Biard depicts the boarding of an Anglo-Dutch ship during the Battle of Texel, August 1673, during the Third Dutch War. The battle included ships from France, England's ally, but the Dutch commander was able to separate the French ships from the English, allowing the engagement to become a slugfest between British and Dutch ships. OPPOSITE: "The Battle of Lowestoft," artist unknown. In June 1665, the first fleet action of the Second Anglo-Dutch War took place with more than 200 ships involved. The Dutch lost as many as 30 ships, fleeing the battle after more than 14 hours of combat.

that constructed 30 new ships of the line that established a balance of power with the United Kingdom's two main maritime rivals.

There was no question as to his honesty, competence and dedication to his calling, but his assertions of his own virtue and refusal to accede to the wills of influential men when they were in the wrong made him numerous political enemies. Foremost was the powerful Lord Shaftesbury.

In 1678, Shaftesbury attempted to frame him for the never-solved murder of London magistrate Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey. Pepys was exonerated because he had an airtight alibi for the time of the killing, but the matter was not yet settled.

Shaftesbury next tried to bring Pepys down by indirectly implicating him for Godfrey's death by accusing Pepys' confidential clerk, Samuel Allen, for the killing, but Allen, too, had an unassailable alibi. In a final attempt, Shaftesbury produced a shady character named John Scott. A native of New York City, Scott was a career criminal specializing in blackmail. He accused Pepys of treason, and almost simultaneously Pepys' former butler accused him of Jacobitism. Pepys had found his maid in bed with this butler, and fired him on the spot. Nursing a grudge against his ex-employer, he eagerly added his trumped-up charge to Shaftesbury's. Pepys was locked in the Tower of London, but before formal governmental proceedings could commence, His Majesty Charles II dissolved Parliament, eliminating the judging body that would have tried Pepys. By the time Parliament was re-established, Pepys had amassed so much incriminating evidence against Shaftesbury for nefarious dealings of all kinds throughout Europe that he collected the butler and Scott and faded into prudent obscurity. His involuntary, politically wrought sabbatical resolved, it was time for Pepys to return to serving the Royal Navy.

After accompanying the Earl of Dartmouth to evacuate the English garrison from Tangier late in 1683, Charles II re-assigned him to the post of First Lord and Secretary of the Navy, making him in effect the sole administrator of the naval service and one of the most powerful men in Britain. He continued to work to reverse the adverse effects of the corrupt officials who preceded him. This included, in 1686, the creation of a special "Commission for the Recovery of the Navy." This Pepys-directed organ soon permanently established the U.K. as the world's premier maritime power.

Prior to this time occasional naval heroes like Sir Francis Drake and Robert Blake had given the British momentary naval ascendancy, but there had been no lengthy periods when England ruled the waves. Now, thanks to the unheralded Pepys, the island nation was forever established as a major nautical power. His task completed, and in delicate health, he retired in 1691. He left a written chronicle of his career and working life.

Beginning New Year's Day 1660 he kept a diary in which he made daily entries for almost

Continued on page 97

During the American Civil War, the telegraph could be a godsend, a nuisance, and a liability.

By Jim Haviland

Early in the American Civil War, during the first months of 1862, Union General Henry Halleck, commanding from his headquarters in St. Louis, was increasingly concerned, then downright agitated. His subordinate, General Ulysses S. Grant, wasn't responding to his orders. Halleck, who had graduated from West Point in 1839, the year of Grant's arrival, finally became so annoyed he recommended that Grant—a Northern hero owing to his recent victories at Forts Henry and Donelson—be removed from command. Halleck launched an investigation to find out why the brigadier general, then directing an advancing Union army farther into Tennessee, was ignoring the orders telegraphed to him.

The upset Halleck wired Grant to place Brig. Gen. C.F. Smith in command of the Union advance and then ordered Grant to quarters at Fort Henry. He added: "Why do you not obey my orders and report the strength and positions of your command?"

Grant was completely mystified. He knew nothing about the orders Halleck reportedly had telegraphed from St. Louis. But Halleck believed he already knew the answer; he alluded to it in a telegram informing General George McClellan of his action. "A rumor has just reached me that since the taking of Fort Donelson, General Grant has resumed his former bad habits," he wrote. "If so, it will account for his neglect of my often-repeated orders." McClellan would have known to what Halleck was referring, that Grant was off on a bender.

"I do not deem it advisable to arrest him [Grant] at present," Halleck wrote McClellan in his message, "but have placed General Smith in command of the Tennessee expedition. I think Smith will restore order and discipline."

Grant hadn't done any of the things Halleck accused him of, and said so in a telegram to his superior after complying with instructions to turn over his command to Smith.

"I am not aware of ever having disobeyed any

Both: Library of Congress

ABOVE: Members of the Military Telegraph Construction Corps, including two balancing atop freshly cut tree trunks, hanging telegraph wire near Brandy Station, Virginia. INSET: A signal telegraph operator in Fredericksburg, Virginia, dials a message using an older model Beardslee telegraph.

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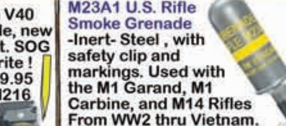

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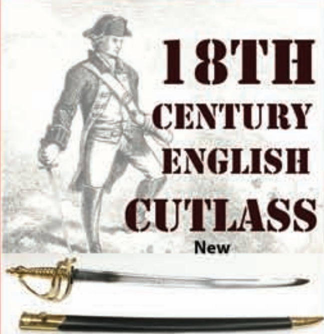

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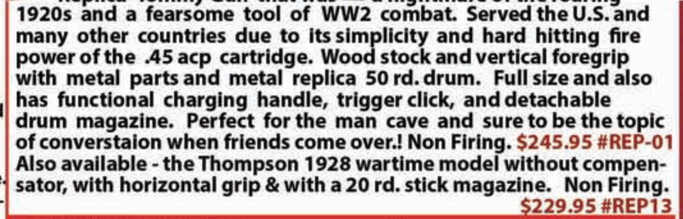

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"Grant telegraphing the news of the crossing of the river Rapidan—May 1864," by war artist Alfred R. Waud. Grant had an issue with the wires in 1862, when he was temporarily relieved of duty by Union Commander Gen. Henry Halleck for not obeying orders. It was soon discovered that Halleck's messages to Grant were being sent through a telegraph operator in Cairo, Illinois, who was a Confederate spy who pocketed the messages rather than forward them to Grant. INSET: A Civil War telegraph at Fort James Jackson, near Savannah, Georgia.

order from headquarters," Grant insisted. "Certainly never intended such a thing."

Halleck's messages to Grant were being sent to a telegraph operator in Cairo, Ill., at the end of an advancing telegraph line. Halleck's investigation of the unanswered orders soon bore fruit when it was discovered that the Cairo operator was a Confederate spy. Rather than forwarding the orders on to Grant, he pocketed them. Then he skedaddled back to the South with all of Halleck's orders.

The young Confederate's real name was never discovered, but he effectively disrupted the Union command in the West and caused an uproar at headquarters in St. Louis. Nor was that the end of the trouble. Seething over Halleck's attempt to find fault with him, Grant asked to be relieved of further duty until a higher authority completely cleared him.

Finally aware that Grant was innocent, Halleck sweetened his response, claiming there was no good reason to relieve Grant of command. Halleck, in fact, had heard that Confederate General Pierre T.G. Beauregard had been reinforced by 20,000 troops and reportedly was entrenching them around Corinth in northern Mississippi. That meant difficult battling and Halleck wanted Grant, his hardest-fighting general, in command. So he convinced Grant to board a steamboat at Fort Henry and head out on the Tennessee River to rejoin his army. This Grant did. Then he, his determination, and fate took him to ultimate Union victory and presidency of the United States.

But this episode was far from the end of telegraph shenanigans in the struggle between North and South. For the first time in a major conflict, both sides were using the new telegraph system extensively. It was such a new military tool that Union forces had to post sentries along the telegraph routes—not only to protect the lines from sabotage, but also to guard against Union soldiers who kept cutting the wire to send pieces home as war souvenirs.

The telegraph was invented by painter Samuel F.B. Morse, who filed his patent in 1837, only 14 years before the outbreak of the war. He sent messages over the electromagnetic device in a code comprising short and long bursts of electricity bearing Morse's name. Suddenly people could communicate in an instant over long distances. No other instrument quite shrank the world so dramatically. For this, and some other new technologies, the American Civil War has been called the first modern war.

With respect to the telegraph, the North had a head start. At the beginning of the war, it had an extensive telegraph network in place, providing a rapid means of moving intelligence and orders. The South understood the value of the telegraph as well as the North, but did not enjoy an extensive network at the war's opening, nor could it develop one, owing mainly to a lack of wire.

The telegraph, of course, had its negative aspect. It could be cut or tapped. Or, as in the case of the Cairo operator, its messages could be stolen and never delivered.

Both the North and South tapped into enemy telegraph lines with varying success. While the Union could and did read Confederate cipher messages, the Rebels never succeeded in deciphering any coded Federal messages after tapping into the important line running from Grant to President Lincoln after the general had been transferred to Virginia and placed in overall command.

With an inventive mind, Lincoln encouraged his troops to use balloons for needed battlefield observation of Southern positions. Balloonist Thaddeus Lowe then set to work linking the balloons and the telegraph, setting up the first air-to-ground telegraphic communication on June 18, 1861, in Virginia. But with hot air balloons providing too good a target for Confederate soldiers to down with their new rifled muskets, balloon and telegraph use was abandoned by Federal forces early in 1863.

Some spies quickly learned how to effectively use the new telegraph system to transmit purloined information back to an appropriate military command. And both Union and Confederate

ABOVE: Balloonist Thaddeus Lowe telegraphed his observations of enemy troop movements during the Battle of Fair Oaks to Gen. George McClellan's headquarters in the Peninsula Campaign. BELOW: A Union telegraph field wagon carrying the battery used to power the system sits outside of Petersburg, Virginia—one small piece of a communications string stretching for miles along the works of the Federal army.

Both: Library of Congress

espionage agents listened in on enemy telegraph communications. Confederate General Stonewall Jackson ordered his troops to cut Union telegraph lines to disrupt Federal communications during his May 1862 campaign in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. And he used the Rebel telegraph line to secure General Robert E. Lee's permission before finally moving to capture Front Royal.

In 1863, two Union sympathizers, F.S. Valkenburgh and Patrick Mullarkey, successfully tapped into a Confederate line along the Chattanooga Railroad near Knoxville, Tennessee. This allowed them to supply vital information to Union General William Rosecrans about Confederate General Braxton Bragg's Rebel troop movements to reinforce Vicksburg on the Mississippi River.

But serving as a telegraph spy was dangerous, as William Forster, a Union operative, found out. He successfully tapped into the Confederate line for two days along the Charleston-Savannah Railroad. Rebels caught him and threw him in prison, where he died.

An early Northern telegraphy spy was J.O. Kerbey. Like many telegraphers (including Andrew Carnegie), he was trained for the railroads in their days of expansion before the Civil War. Kerbey volunteered to serve as a Union spy and sneaked behind Confederate lines before the Battle of First Manassas in July 1861. While checking out the Shenandoah Valley on foot, Kerbey spied Confederate General Joseph Johnston beginning to move his troops forward in support of General Beauregard, who was awaiting a Union advance against his position at Bull Run.

Slinking away to find Union forces, he immediately told a ranking Federal officer about his observations of the Confederate troop movements. But the Yankee didn't believe Kerbey, and Johnston's advance went largely unchecked—the Union subsequently was defeated at First Manassas.

Although failing in his first spying attempt, a determined Kerbey returned behind enemy lines until unexpectedly being picked up by Confederate troops. The frightened spy thought quickly and informed the Rebels of his telegraphy skills. The Southerners assigned him duty as an operator in a Virginia railroad station not too far from Richmond, trained operators being scarce in the South. From that station, Kerbey listened to telegraphic communications in and out of Richmond. Piquing his interest one day was a message reporting that a quarter of the Southern troops in the Manassas area had dysentery. Considering this an opportune time for a Union assault, he hid the information in his hatband and tried to slither off toward Union lines. But Confederate troops turned him away.

Because of this difficulty in trying to move on foot to Northern positions, Kerbey decided he needed a better way of relaying his information to Federal authorities. After a transfer to Richmond proper, he learned Elizabeth Van Lew was a key Union spy in the Rebel capital. Shortly thereafter he began to send his intelligence through Van Lew's couriers and using Van Lew's cipher system.

One valuable piece of information he picked up as a telegraph operator and sent north through Van Lew's couriers enabled Union forces to break up a group of Confederate sympathizers operating out of a Georgetown University dormitory. The collegians were raising and lowering shades at night in their room, and thus sending signal mes-

sages across the Potomac River to Rebel spotters on the other side.

When Southern manpower shortage became critical, Kerbey was recruited away from his telegraph key and into the Confederate Army. Immediately he was forced to sign a Loyalty Oath. When his Southern unit moved north, Kerbey waited for an opportunity to slip away and return to the Union side and again become a telegraph operator.

He did manage to desert the Confederates for the Union Army. All was fine until he was asked to sign a Union Loyalty Oath specifying that he had never carried arms against Federal troops or signed a Loyalty Oath to forces opposing the Union. Being honest, Kerbey said he couldn't sign the oath, explaining the reason. He was confident that Secretary of War Edwin Stanton would be aware of his Union spying activities and thus solve his problem.

But Stanton didn't help. Instead, the Union official ordered Kerbey arrested and thrown into Old Capitol Prison in Washington. This was a setback indeed, but in prison Kerbey met fellow inmate Belle Boyd, a famous Confederate spy. Boyd had heard about Kerbey's arrest on Stanton's orders. Deciding to help Kerbey because she deemed him valuable to the Confederacy, Boyd began assisting the anxious telegrapher in an escape plan. She even told him about "safe houses" along a special route back to the Confederacy once he had fled the prison. Although worried what might happen, Kerbey decided to play along with her plans because he knew her information about the "safe houses" would be valuable to the Union Secret Service.

The day his escape was scheduled, Kerbey unexpectedly was removed from his cell and freed—Stanton had finally realized his mistake. Boyd never knew what happened to the telegraph operator nor did she understand that passing along information about the "safe houses" was a dire mistake.

Because of the danger of Kerbey being recognized as a Union spy if he continued his service in that capacity, it was decided he should leave espionage and become a lieutenant in the regular Union Army—his commission was personally signed by President Lincoln. But his service for the Union as a regular soldier did not bring Kerbey the notoriety he had achieved as a spy, and he soon faded from prominence. Nevertheless, he had gained a unique place in U.S. history as the first signals intelligence operator on record.

Confederate cavalry commander and swaggering personality John Hunt Morgan was also a strong believer in the value of the telegraph, and frequently used it to improve his chances for success during his raids. He was aided in this regard by skilled telegraph operator George "Lightning" Ellsworth.

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(He earned his sobriquet for fearlessly climbing a telegraph pole during a storm, only to be knocked to the ground when lightning struck.)

Ellsworth climbed poles during Morgan's raids and tapped Yankee lines. Thus Morgan often discovered enemy plans and troop movements. As important, he was able to discover what Union troops knew of his own movements. The dashing Rebel cavalry commander also successfully used Ellsworth to send misinformation in bogus messages to Federal authorities about dispositions.

During one raid through Kentucky, Morgan had Ellsworth send gloating telegraph messages from him to selected officials and persons of influence. One reached a surprised George Prentice, the pro-Union editor of the *Louisville Journal*, who had belittled Morgan in print. With Ellsworth's help, the Confederate commander harangued Prentice on July 22, 1862, from Somerset, Ky. "Good morning, George D.," his message began. "I am quietly watching the complete destruction of all of Uncle Sam's property in this little burg. I expect in a short time to pay you a visit and wish to know if you will be at home. All well in Dixie."

Another telegraph message from Morgan reached Brig. Gen. Jeremiah T. Boyle, Kentucky's military governor, in Louisville. "Good morning, Jerry," it read. "This telegraph is a great institution. You should destroy it as it keeps me posted too well. My friend Ellsworth has all your dispatches since July 10 on file. Do you wish copies?"

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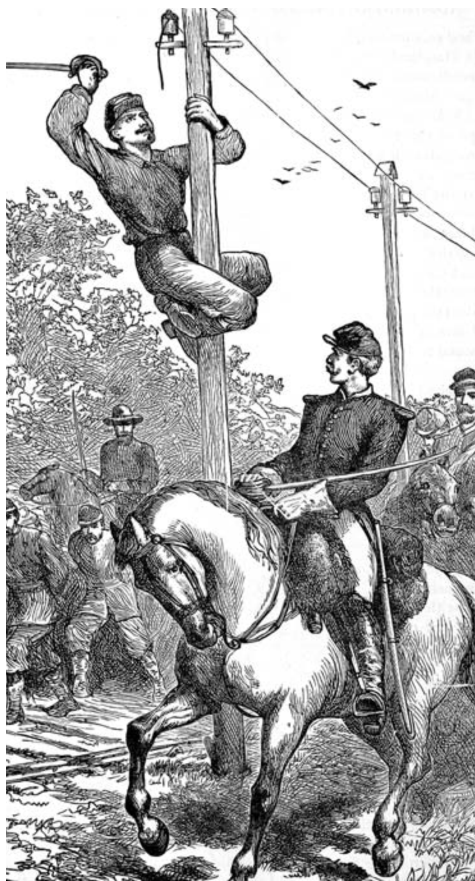

An illustration by an unknown artist of JEB Stuart's cavalry cutting telegraph wires as Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee moves through the Shenandoah Valley on his way to invade Pennsylvania.

In July 1863, Morgan's column entered Bardstown Junction along the Louisville & Nashville Railroad—about 25 miles south of Louisville. There Ellsworth entered the Bardstown Junction telegraph office and found operator James Forker wearing a uniform recently issued to Union telegraphers. It included a dark blue blouse, blue trousers with a silver cord on the seam, a natty buff vest, and a forage cap with no ornaments or marks of rank. Putting his pistol to Forker's head, Ellsworth said: "Move one inch except as I tell you and you'll be buried in that fancy rig you're wearing."

Listening to incoming messages, Ellsworth learned that Morgan was expected to attack Louisville. He also learned about a Union passenger train due to come through Bardstown Junction from Nashville. When the railroad superintendent in Louisville asked the Union telegraph

Continued on page 95

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UNIFORM

British Soldier, 33rd Regiment of Foot, 1780, American Revolution, Southern Campaign

Artwork: Don Troiani

NECK STOCK (CRAVAT): Non-regimental length of black fabric worn around his neck, exposing the collar of his blue check shirt.

HEADGEAR: Cocked Hat, with white worsted binding, black horsehair cockade, white cord with tassels. This soldier has turned the hat around, and let down the rear "flap," to shade his face.

COAT: Standard red wool, with matching red collar, lapels, and cuffs. White worsted tape with a red strip, surround pewter buttons with the number of the regiment.

KNAPSACK: Heavy linen canvas, with outer flap painted red, and buff leather straps.

ACCOUTERMENTS: The bayonet, its socket visible under the brown linen haversack, is carried by a buff leather strap. A tin canteen is slung with a hemp cord.

CARTRIDGE BOX: Standard issue 29-hole cartridge box, with buff leather strap, resting behind his right hip.

TROUSERS: Snug fitting brown linen canvas "gaitered trousers" were adopted for field service by many British units. These were fitted at the ankle to cover the shoes, like modern "spats."

MUSKET: Second Model "Brown Bess" smooth-bore musket with buff leather sling.

The 33rd Regiment was originally raised in 1702, and gained a reputation for professionalism and military capability, thought by some observers to be unequaled in the British Army. Due to its exemplary service, the unit was nicknamed "the Pattern," suggesting it should serve as the standard for all British infantry regiments.

The 33rd Regiment arrived in America in 1776 with its colonel, Charles, Lord Cornwallis. When Cornwallis was promoted to Major General, the unit fought under the command of Lt. Col. James Webster. The 33rd saw service in the north, fighting at the Battles of Long Island, Brandywine, Germantown and Monmouth.

In 1780 the regiment followed Cornwallis as British strategy moved to the South, fighting at the Siege of Charleston, Camden, and Wetzell's Mill.

In 1781 the unit saw service at the Battle of Guilford, where the fighting devolved into brutal hand-to-hand combat with Continental Army troops under the command of Nathanael Greene. Some accounts suggest that Cornwallis had his gunners fire grapeshot into this melee to regain control of his troops. After 90 minutes of fighting, Greene withdrew his troops as the British pushed forward. Cornwallis had won the field, but at a cost of nearly one quarter of his army. Included among the casualties was James Webster, who was mortally wounded.

The 33rd marched into Virginia with Cornwallis, fought at the Battle of Greensprings, near Williamsburg, and surrendered with the rest of Cornwallis' army at Yorktown in October 1781.

The 33rd returned to England and by 1796 was commanded by Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington.

Painting © 2025, Don Troiani / Historical Image Bank

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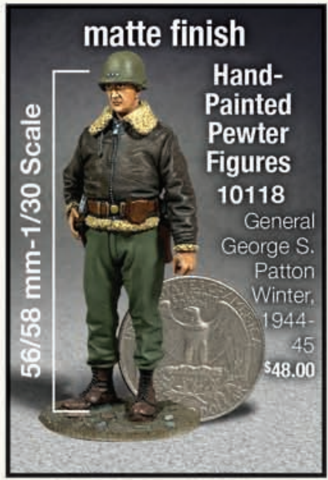
Joan of Arc



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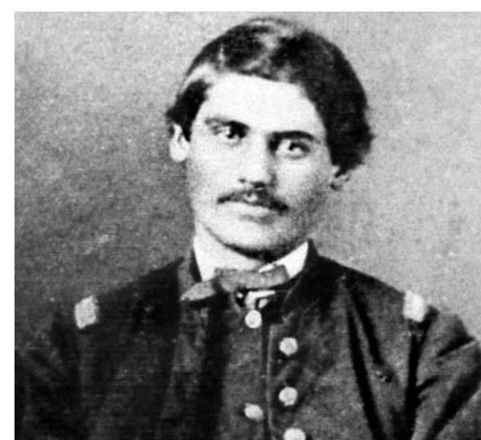

Both: Library of Congress

Just before the stolen locomotive ran out of steam, James J. Andrews and his men burned a rail car atop a wooden bridge in a last desperate attempt to sever the rail line, but recent rains left the wood too wet to catch. INSET: Private Jacob Parrott, 19, became the first-ever recipient of the Medal of Honor. He's shown here in his second lieutenant's uniform in 1863.

Members of 'Andrews Raiders,' who stole a Confederate locomotive in 1862, were the first—and the most recent—to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor.

By Kevin Seabrooke

A little more than 162 years after they were executed as spies in Georgia, privates Philip G. Shadrach and George D, Wilson of the 2nd Ohio Infantry were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor by President Biden in a ceremony at the White House on July 4, 2024.

The privates were part of a group of seven men from Ohio who were hanged in downtown Atlanta on June 18, 1862. They had all taken part in the "Andrews Raid," a covert military operation 200 miles behind Confederate lines more often known in the folklore of the Civil War as "The Great Locomotive Chase." Twenty one other U.S. soldiers who took part in the raid were later recognized with the MOH—including Private Jacob Parrott, the first—but for reasons unknown, Shadrach and Wilson were overlooked. They were permitted to receive the medal as part of the fiscal 2008 National Defense Authorization Act. Another member of the raid who was hanged on June 18 was William H. Campbell, who, as a civilian, was not eligible for the medal. James J. Andrews, the Union spy who conceived and led the raid, was also a civilian. He was hanged in Atlanta on June 7, 1862.

Andrews' idea made some sense, at least on paper. A small band of volunteers would penetrate far behind enemy lines to the outskirts of Atlanta, steal a locomotive, then head for Chattanooga, Tennessee—cutting telegraph lines, tearing up track, and burning railroad bridges along the way. This would sever communication and supply lines, allowing Brig. Gen. Ormsby Mitchel to take the strategic city without fear of reinforcements arriving from the south.

Completed in 1857, the Memphis and Charleston Railroad was the first to link the Atlantic Ocean with the Mississippi River. During the Civil War, this line was considered by the Southern high command as the "vertebrae of the Confederacy." Near the center of this line was the rail hub of Chattanooga, with the Western & Atlantic heading south to Atlanta and the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad north to Virginia. If the Union could capture Chattanooga, they would threaten Confederate forces for hundreds of miles to the east and west. But to do that, the

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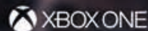

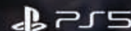

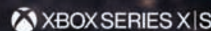

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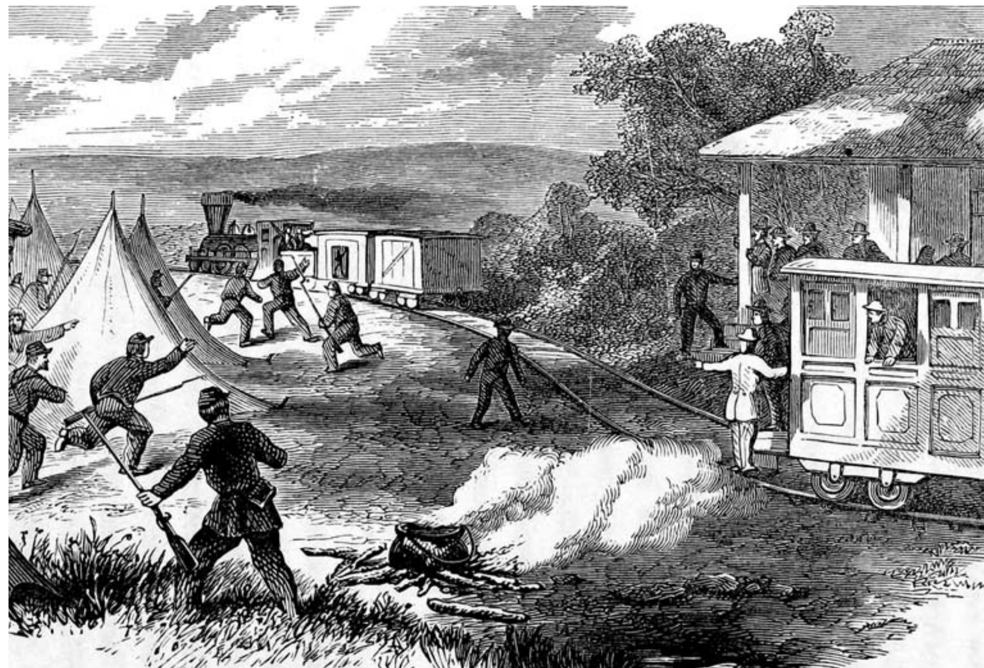

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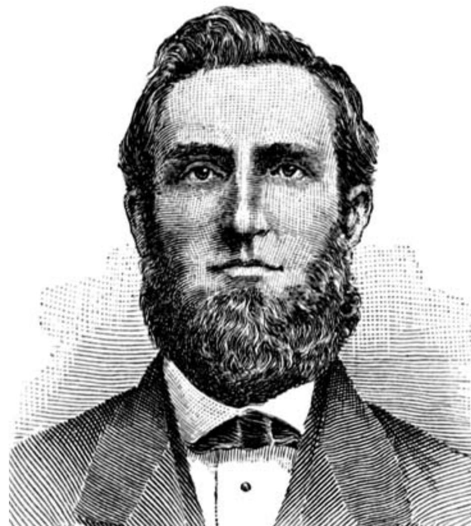

ABOVE: The "engine thieves" stole the *General* and three box cars at Big Shanty, Georgia, April 12, 1862, though this illustration from William Pittenger's book, *Daring and Suffering: a History of the Great Railroad Adventure* published in 1864, shows only two. TOP RIGHT: Privates Philip G. Shadrach (left) and George D. Wilson, hanged in 1862 for their part in the raid, received Medals of Honor in 2024. BOTTOM RIGHT: Engraving of James J. Andrews, from a photograph in the possession of Elvira Layton, his fiancée.

line to Atlanta had to be disabled.

Always a significant factor in the Civil War, the struggle over rail lines ran especially hot in the spring of 1862. The bloody clash of Shiloh (April 6-7) that so shocked the nation with 23,000 killed was over the vital crossroad of Corinth, Mississippi, where the Memphis and Charleston intersected the Mobile and Ohio Railroad. The Union succeeded in capturing Corinth by the end of May helped, in part, by Mitchel's capture of Huntsville, Alabama, severing the Memphis and Charleston line.

The raid was intended to happen in coordination with Mitchel's attack on Huntsville, planned for April 11. In fact, such a raid had already been attempted just the month before, with a party of eight men, who were meant to meet a Confederate railroad engineer who would drive the locomotive for them. The man never showed up and after several days Andrews returned north. He later heard that the engineer had been pressed into service taking every available man to Corinth for the coming battle. Corporal William Pittenger, a raider who would later write several books about his experience, including, *Daring and Suffering: A History of the Great Railroad Adventure*, believed that with Confederate Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard's attention focused on Mississippi, Andrews' first mission might have succeeded. Andrews had first proposed the idea to Gen. Don Carlos Buell who, for unknown reasons, declined.

Only four of Andrews raiders, as they came to be called, knew anything about trains. None of them had any experience in espionage or sabotage—or even combat, really. Andrews himself had been smuggling quinine south to sell on the black market and bringing information back to the north. The men with him were a nearly random collection of soldiers from Mitchel's 3rd Division of the Army of Ohio. Meeting on a farm near Shelbyville, Tennessee, the men were given Confederate money and told they needed to catch the last Western & Atlantic train out of Chattanooga at 5 p.m., heading south over the line they planned to destroy.

"No start to a long journey could have been less promising than ours," recalled Pittenger. "The night was pitchy dark, the rain poured down, and the Tennessee mud was now almost unfathomable." Even worse, Confederate troops were told to be on the lookout for Federal soldiers disguised as civilians. In fact, two of the Andrews men Priv. Ovid W. Smith and Corp. Samuel Llewellyn, never made it out of Chattanooga and were forced to join Confederate army to avoid detection. Smith would receive a MOH in July 1864. Llewellyn is now the only soldier in the original party to never received one.

Given the weather conditions, Andrews figured Mitchel wouldn't be able to take Huntsville by the appointed time and delayed the mission by a day—a decision with dire consequences. For Mitchel had marched in the rain and taken Huntsville on time. Still in Chattanooga as they heard the shocking news, Andrews and his men would now have to travel with extra trains and mobs of people fleeing southward.

"The city was taken completely by surprise, no one having considered the march practicable in the time," Mitchel reported. " We have captured about 200 prisoners, 15 locomotives, a large amount of passenger, box, and platform cars, the telegraphic apparatus and offices, and two Southern mails. We have at length succeeded in cutting the great artery of railway intercommunication between the Southern States."

One of the men with railroad experience, Private John Alfred Wilson, now saw little hope of success. "But it was too late now to change the program," he recalled. "We must make the effort, come what might."

Heading south on a train crammed with refugees and Confederates, the raiders saw many trains on sidetracks, all potential obstacles for them on the following day. They were in for another shock as they passed through Big Shanty (now Kennesaw, Georgia) where the train would stop for 20 minutes on the trip north the following morning to allow the crew to have breakfast. The place where they planned to steal the train was now home to a large military training camp.

They arrived in Marietta around midnight and took a couple of rooms at the Fletcher House to

catch a few hours' sleep before their early start in the morning. Corporal Martin Hawkins, the most knowledgeable train man, and Private John Porter had arrived earlier and were asleep at the Marietta Hotel across the town square.

In his second book on the raid, *Capturing a Locomotive: A History of Secret Service in the Late War*, Pittenger recalls the thoughts of Wilson of that night: "Our doom might be fixed before the setting of another sun. We might be hanging to the limbs of some of the trees along the railroad, with an enraged populace jeering and shouting vengeance because we had no more lives to give up; or we might leave a trail of fire and destruction behind us, and come triumphantly rolling into Chattanooga and Huntsville, within the Federal lines, to receive the welcome plaudits of comrades left behind, and the thanks of our general, and the praises of a grateful people. Such thoughts as these passed in swift review, and were not calculated to make one sleep soundly."

When the morning came another pair of raiders was lost as the hotel clerk failed to wake Porter and Hawkins on time and they missed the train. The party was now down to 20 men.

The raiders stole the locomotive *General*, along with three box cars and headed north as planned. They had chosen Big Shanty because it had no telegraph to warn forces up the line. However, they hadn't counted on the determination of engineer William Fuller and two of his crew, Jeff Cain, and Anthony Murphy. They ran after the *General*, then followed with a rail pushcart, before commandeering three successive locomotives—*Yonah*, *William R. Smith*, the *Texas*. Andrews and his men cut some telegraph wires, though in Dalton, they were a minute late and a warning went up the line—though they didn't know it, they would have been captured in Chattanooga. They tried to destroy the tracks, but only managed to pull

Continued on page 96

Illustration by Wilbur Kurtz

Though Andrews Raiders tore up tracks, cut telegraph wire, and dumped ties on the tracks to slow down Confederate pursuit, long delays for southbound trains proved their undoing.

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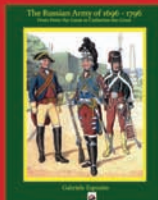

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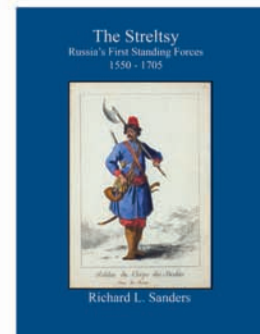

"Shenandoah Valley, September 1864," first-hand drawing by Alfred R. Waud, a war correspondent for *Harper's Weekly*. On September 19, 1864, Union General Phillip Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah defeated General Jubal Early at the Third Battle of Winchester.

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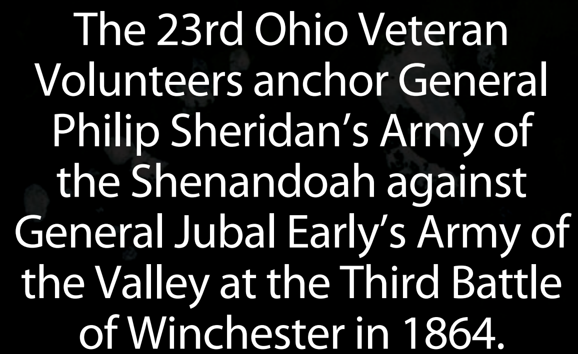


The 23rd Ohio Veteran Volunteers anchor General Philip Sheridan's Army of the Shenandoah against General Jubal Early's Army of the Valley at the Third Battle of Winchester in 1864.

BY KEVIN O'BEIRNE

Crook's DEVILS

In the fourth summer of the Civil War, things were not going well for the Union. After more than three years of bloody conflict the Confederacy, although on the defensive and having lost significant territory, was still defiant and dangerous, while the war-weary North wondered if victory was truly attainable. In the spring of 1864, President Abraham Lincoln had appointed Gen. Ulysses Grant as general-in-chief of all Federal armies and, for the first time in the war, the ponderous blue forces were employed in some concert with each other.

There were high hopes in the North when the spring campaign of 1864 had started off in early May. Gen. William T. Sherman led an army of more than 100,000 men out of Chattanooga toward Atlanta; George Meade led the 120,000-man Army of the Potomac overland toward the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia; Benjamin Butler's Army of the James made an amphibious landing between Richmond and the vital rail center of Petersburg, Virginia, and Franz Sigel led a small army up (that is, in a southwesterly direction) Virginia's Shenandoah Valley.

But within weeks, many of Grant's plans lay stalled or in ruins in bloody earthworks in Georgia and Virginia. Meade's Army of the Potomac, with which Grant traveled, had fought an astoundingly bloody series of non-stop engagements between the Rapidan and James rivers. Grant and Meade pushed toward Richmond while their opponent, Gen. Robert E. Lee and his

gray-clad Army of Northern Virginia, exacted an ever-higher toll from the Federals.

The Shenandoah Valley is a 160-mile long avenue in Virginia, varying in width from four to 25 miles, between the Blue Ridge on the east and the Allegheny Mountains on the west. It runs more or less northeast along the course of the Shenandoah River from Lexington in the south to its confluence with the Potomac River at Harper's Ferry. It was the breadbasket of Virginia and furnished many of the foodstuffs that sustained Lee's army and the populace of Richmond. In addition to its value to the Confederacy as an agricultural center, the valley also served as a convenient route to invade the north; Rebel armies had repeatedly crossed the Potomac behind the protective barrier of the Blue Ridge.

Union armies had repeatedly been bested by their Confederate counterparts in engagements in the valley, as was again the case in early 1864. Barely a week and a half into the spring campaign, Sigel's small army was put to flight at New Market by a numerically inferior force under Confederate Maj. Gen., and former United States Vice President, John C. Breckinridge.

Sigel was immediately replaced by David Hunter, a general with a troubling streak of independence. Hunter swiftly reorganized Sigel's beaten army, issued orders for a Federal force in nearby West Virginia to join him and, two weeks after the defeat at New Market, set out up the valley. This time few Confederates were available to stop the Union force which, on Hunter's orders, engaged in a campaign of random destruction of civilian property, culminating in the burning of the Virginia Military Institute in mid-June. Hunter soon had the entire valley under his control, and marched further south toward the important Confederate rail center and supply depot of Lynchburg, Va.

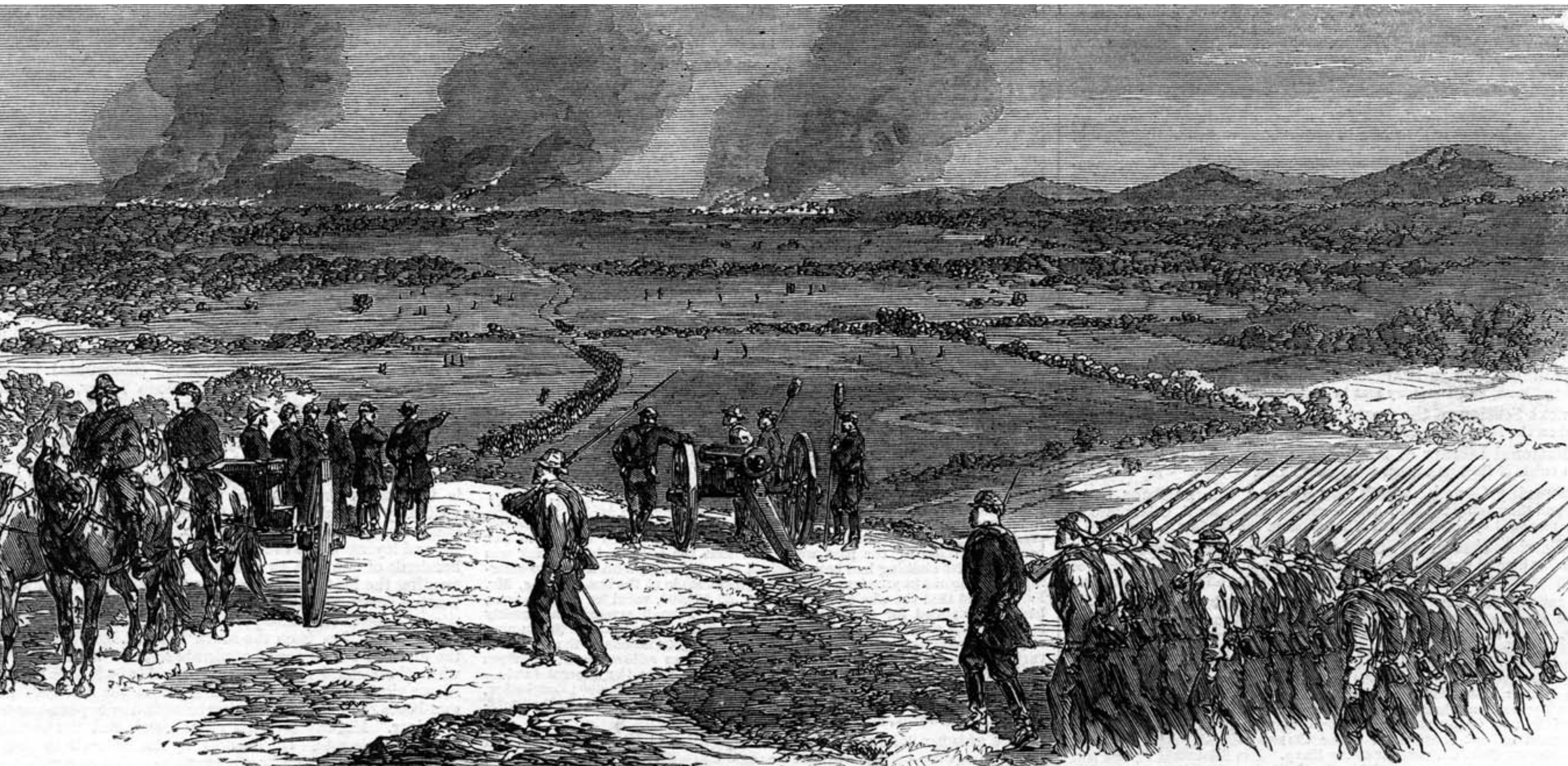
In early June, Robert E. Lee ordered his II Corps, under Lt. Gen. Jubal Early, from Cold Harbor to Lynchburg. Early was charged with driving back Hunter and, if possible, making a demonstration north of the Potomac River toward Washington, DC. The caustic but competent Early did all this and more, and his appearance in the Shenandoah Valley touched off a vicious, four-month-long series of battles that would decide the fate of "the breadbasket of Virginia."

Arriving at Lynchburg in mid-June, Early's army of 12,000 men put Hunter's force of 18,000 to flight, driving the Yankees without a major battle all the way into the mountains of West Virginia. With Hunter's force out of the way, Early marched north down the valley, crossed the Potomac into Maryland and, less than a month after leaving the Rebel earthworks at Cold Harbor, was threatening Washington, DC. For a time Early posed a real threat to the seat of the Federal government.

To counter Early, Grant hurried the VI Corps of the Army of the Potomac north from Petersburg to Washington where it joined up with elements of the XIX Corps, a Federal unit recently arrived in Virginia after several campaigns in Louisiana. After a small battle only a few miles from the White House, the veteran Federals pushed Early back from the capital on July 12-13, 1864. The VI Corps chased Early across northern Virginia, while Hunter's army, now under the direct field command of George Crook, came out of the mountains of West Virginia in an effort to squeeze the Rebels in a vise. "Old Jube" slipped the trap and escaped into the Shenandoah Valley.

The VI Corps started back toward Washington while Crook followed Early south up the valley. On July 24, however, Early's 12,000 Confederates turned on Crook and roughly handled his force of 9,500 men at the second battle of Kernstown, two miles southwest of Winchester. Crook's army retreated. The final straw occurred on July 30 when Early sent a Confederate cavalry brigade to burn the entire city of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, in retaliation for Hunter's depredations in the valley in early June.

The war was taking on an ugly new look and, with Federal forces stalled on battlefields from Virginia to Georgia and beyond, a Rebel army moving seemingly at will near the Federal capital was unacceptable to Lincoln, especially since 1864 was a presidential election year. Thus, the fate of the nation rested partly on developments in the Shenandoah.



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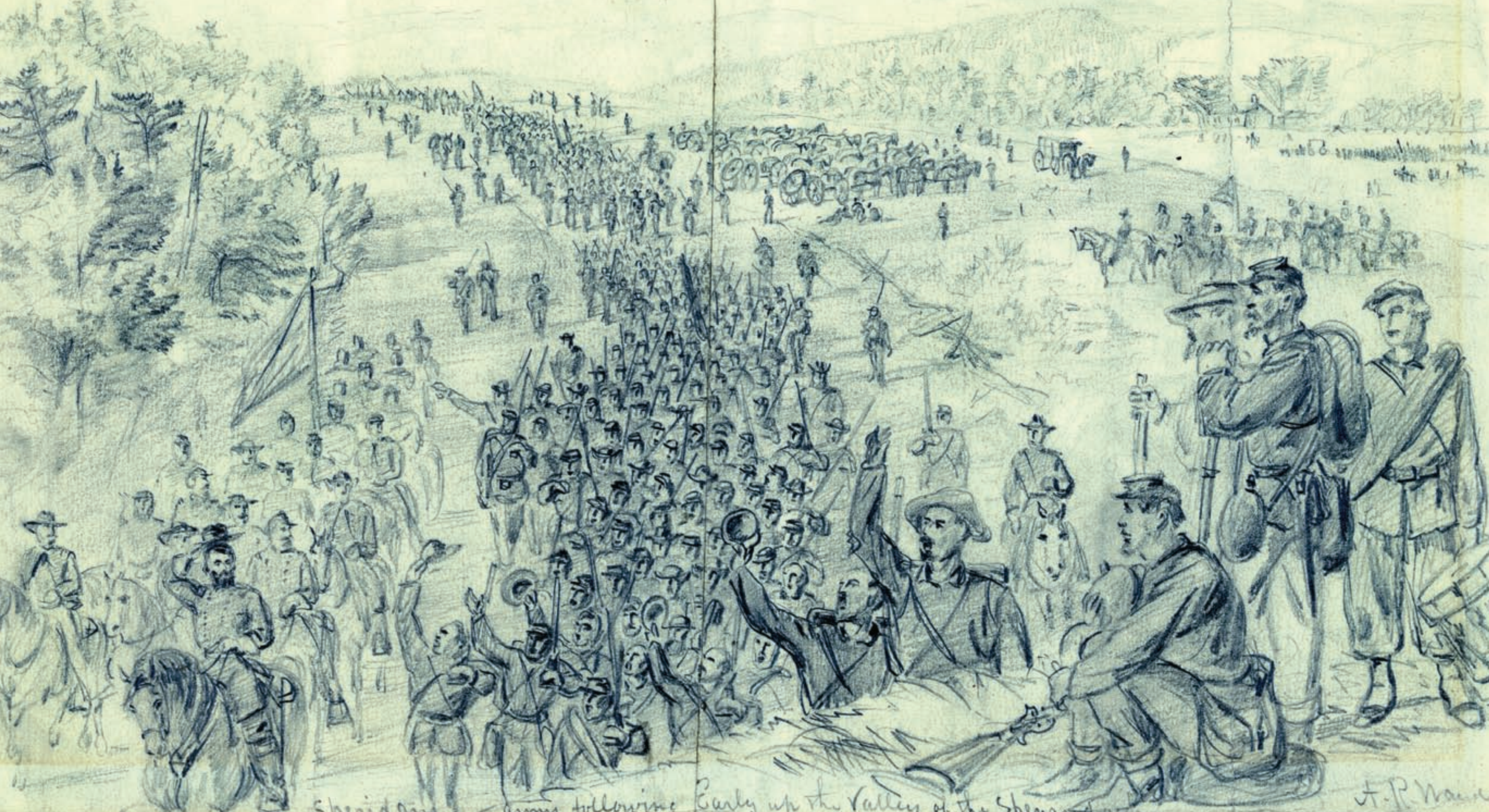

ABOVE: "Sheridan's army following Early up the Valley of the Shenandoah," drawing by Alfred R. Waud. Major General Philip Sheridan, at bottom left, tips his hat to his cheering men in the fall of 1864. During the second Shenandoah Valley campaign, known as "The Burning," Sheridan was under orders to "Leave nothing for the subsistence of an army on any ground you abandon to the enemy." OPPOSITE: Federal Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan, raising his hat in the lower right, leads his Army of the Shenandoah in pursuit of Confederate General Jubal Early in September 1864.

Grant finally settled on Maj. Gen. Philip Sheridan, who took command of Union forces in the Shenandoah on August 7. Grant had offered Hunter the chance to remain in command on paper while Sheridan was in the field, but he declined and was relieved of his post.

Sheridan's appointment was at first ridiculed for reasons ranging from his youth and inexperience to his ungainly appearance, but Sheridan, the son of Irish immigrants, proved to be just the man for the job. Grant's orders were for Sheridan "to put himself south of the enemy and follow [Early] to the death." With a somewhat biblical tone, Grant added, "Wherever the enemy goes let our troops go also." Sheridan received for his field command, which he dubbed "the Army of the Shenandoah," several disparate units, and it would take all of his charisma to weld them into an effective fighting force.

From the Army of the Potomac came the VI Corps, 12,000 veterans under the command of Maj. Gen. Horatio Wright, together with two cavalry divisions. He secured from Louisiana two divisions of the XIX Corps under the command of Brevet Maj. Gen. William Emory. He also received Hunter's old command, designated as both the "Army of West Virginia" and as the VIII Corps, which included two infantry divisions and a cavalry division. Sheridan organized the cavalry units into a new corps under the command of Brig. Gen. Alfred Torbert. In total, the Army of the Shenandoah mustered for action about 32,000 infantry and artillerymen and 8,000 cavalry.

With Hunter's departure, the small VIII Corps was commanded by Brevet Maj. Gen. George Crook. The corps, affectionately dubbed "The Mountain Buzzards" by Crook, was divided into two small infantry divisions, each numbering less than 3,500 men. The men held Crook in such high esteem that they usually referred to themselves as simply "Crook's Corps." These mountain troops, especially the 2nd Division, were hardened veterans but rustic in appearance. Crook was a competent 35-year-old Ohioan who had roomed with Sheridan at West Point, and was one of his commander's most trusted friends and advisers.

One of the toughest regiments in the 2nd Division of Crook's Corps was the 23rd Ohio Veteran Volunteers. Organized at Camp Chase in Columbus, Ohio, in the spring of 1861, the 23rd had seen hard fighting in three years of service and accredited itself well at Clark's Hollow, South Mountain, Antietam, and dozens of minor actions in West Virginia's rugged Kanawha Valley. The regiment featured a dazzling array of notables that was practically a who's-who of important Ohioans, including two future U.S. presidents (Rutherford B. Hayes and William McKinley), future Congressmen, a future governor, future foreign ambassadors and, before the regiment was mustered out in 1865, five generals.

One of those future generals was Hayes, 41, a Cincinnati lawyer and aspiring politician who was the 23rd's colonel in the summer of 1864. An original member of the regiment, Hayes had enlisted as major of the 23rd Ohio in June 1861, and, in January 1863, had succeeded to command of the regiment's brigade (the 1st Brigade, 2nd Division, VIII Corps) as a brevet brigadier general. He had no prior military experience, but in four years of war Hayes had gained a reputation as a competent officer with a good deal of personal gallantry. He was accomplished at leading large bodies of men, but retained a strong affinity for his own regiment.

On August 6, the 23rd began a march to Halltown, four miles west of Harper's Ferry, where Sheridan was concentrating the Army of the

Shenandoah. At dawn on August 10, the Army of the Shenandoah moved from its camps at Halltown marching for Berryville, 14 miles due south. Early's 12,000-man Army of the Valley was drawn up near Bunker Hill, West Virginia, 12 miles west of the Federals and 12 miles north of Winchester. At Berryville, the Federals would threaten Early's lines of supply and communications, which ran through nearby Winchester.

As expected, Early pulled back from Bunker Hill and headed south up the valley. Led by the VIII Corps with the 23rd Ohio, Sheridan followed to the banks of Cedar Creek, 15 miles south of Winchester. After a few days of skirmishing along Cedar Creek, in which the 23rd Ohio lost six men, Sheridan was informed, incorrectly, that Early had been heavily reinforced. Believing himself outnumbered, Sheridan commenced a withdrawal northward through rain and stopped only when he reached his old lines at Halltown.

Early's gray-clad soldiers followed. After stabbing at Sheridan's rear guard at Charlestown in a brisk action on August 21, the Rebels encamped just outside the Federals' Halltown lines. "Old Jubilee" made the grave mistake of interpreting the withdrawal of Sheridan's numerically superior army as a sign of possible timidity on the part of its commander—a notion that would cost him dearly before it was dispelled.

At about 6 p.m. on August 22, the 23rd Ohio and two other regiments from Hayes' brigade, accompanied by the commander of the 2nd Division, Col. Isaac Duval, were sent on a reconnaissance to locate the right end of Early's newly arrived line. Hayes reported that his three regiments charged the Confederate picket line "with great vigor" and "drove them perhaps half a mile." Satisfied of the location of the Rebel line, Duval ordered Hayes to withdraw. The 23rd suffered two casualties; the Confederates lost 20 killed or wounded, and 20 captured. Hayes wrote to his wife of the successful reconnaissance, "It is called a brilliant skirmish and we enjoyed it very much."

At Halltown, the opposing lines were very close and often "quarrelsome." Staff officer Hastings recalled visiting the picket line one day and finding all the sentinels "well under cover," except for one lad who "could not restrain himself from occasionally getting [up] and crowing like a rooster. He did it one too many times and finally received a shot in the leg."

After the incident, Hastings noticed a white flag flying from the Rebel line and he heard a Southern voice calling, "Hello Yank." Hastings replied, "Yes Johnny, what do you want?" Between the opposing lines was "a promising cornfield full of luscious corn just fit for eating." The apparently hungry Confederate replied, "Let's stop firing for dinner and get some roasting ears." After some parlaying, a truce was agreed to and, as Hastings recalled, "into the field went both lines mingling quite freely." When dinner was over, a Yankee called, "Hello Johnny Reb. All through with dinner?" The Confederates called back, "Say when you are ready." The men of both sides quickly took cover. Hastings wrote, "At the word, 'Ready' bang went the rifles all along the line."

On August 25-26, Early withdrew most of his army from the Halltown lines and started toward the Potomac, hoping to scare Sheridan with the threat of a repetition of his Washington raid in July. Except for dispatching cavalry to contest the Confederate thrust, the Union commander did not take the bait. The following day, Sheridan ordered Crook to see what Confederates, if any, were to the Federals' front.

On August 27, Hayes wrote, "We had quite a little battle last night … my brigade, in connection with the Second Brigade, again attacked the rebel picket-line with decided success." The Federal battle line charged across the same cornfield where Union and Confederate soldiers had bartered and picked ears for dinner only a few days before. The charge across the mature cornfield was harrowing, "as the bullets seem magnified in number as they cut from leaf to leaf."

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ABOVE: Captain Carlos Augustus Sperry, Company B, 23rd Ohio Volunteer Infantry poses with two enlisted men of the 23rd. OPPOSITE: "Ricketts' Division attacking into West Woods," drawing by Alfred R. Waud. Union General James B. Ricketts' Third Division attacks the Rodes' Division under the command of Gen. Robert E. Rodes, who was killed when a Union shell fragment hit him in the back of the head.

Library of Congress

Hayes' brigade overran a South Carolina regiment and captured it, field officers and all. The Yankees pushed on, butted up against another line, traded a few shots, and retired. During the retreat, Rebel artillery opened on the Federals and Hastings claimed he actually saw a shell coming at him; he ducked and "felt the [shell's] rush of air and it burst with a bang a few feet [to the] rear … I am thankful Hayes didn't see me do it [dodge]."

Hayes wrote, "My loss was 3 killed and 21 wounded. This attack was similar in character to the former [August 22 reconnaissance], but was made in greater force and with results proportionably [sic] greater. The loss of the enemy was 104 officers and men captured and about 150 killed and wounded." His opinion of the 23rd Ohio was sky-high: "My old regiment keeps up not withstanding the losses. We have filled up [recruited] so as to have in the field almost six hundred men—more than any other old regiment."

On August 27 Early withdrew back to his old position at Bunker Hill, about 12 miles north of Winchester. Sheridan moved from Halltown five miles to Charlestown on August 28. The army stopped for the night just south of Charlestown and threw up earthworks.

One of the sharper skirmishes in the northern Shenandoah Valley occurred on September 3. That day, Crook's VIII Corps, with the 23rd Ohio, marched south 10 miles toward Berryville, hoping to cut off the Winchester-Berryville Pike, which ran east from the Rebel supply center at Winchester to Front Royal in the Blue Ridge. At the same time, Kershaw's Confederate division, having been recalled to Petersburg by Robert E. Lee, was marching toward Front Royal along the very road that Crook was hoping to block.

By 3 p.m. Crook's Corps was near Berryville and astride the turnpike. After a hard march the men of the 23rd were ordered on picket soon after dropping their knapsacks. The regiment marched out to the picket line, sentinels were posted, and the outposts had just kindled fires to cook supper when firing was heard. Thinking that the musketry was from nervous recruits in another brigade, the veterans of the 23rd ignored the noise. The racket continued and, as reported by a member of the regiment, "an hour before sunset the enemy was reported to be advancing."

An officer recalled, "The bugle sounded the alarm and every man sprung to the ranks. It was a laughable sight to see the line formed with nearly every man holding a tin cup of coffee in hand, chewing and munching crackers and bacon."

Kershaw's Division, under the overall command of Lt. Gen. Richard Anderson, marched up the turnpike right into Crook's men. Thinking the Yankees were few in number, the Rebels charged and drove back a few regiments on the flank of the 1st Division of the VIII Corps. The 23rd Ohio's division was brought up in support with Hayes' brigade in the lead. Taking up a position behind a stone wall, Hayes' Ohioans and West Virginians were immediately overrun by stampeding Federals from another brigade fleeing through their ranks. Hayes' soldiers jeered the routed men as Hastings recalled, "Our attention was quickly diverted from this fleeing mob by the onrush of the Confederate line."

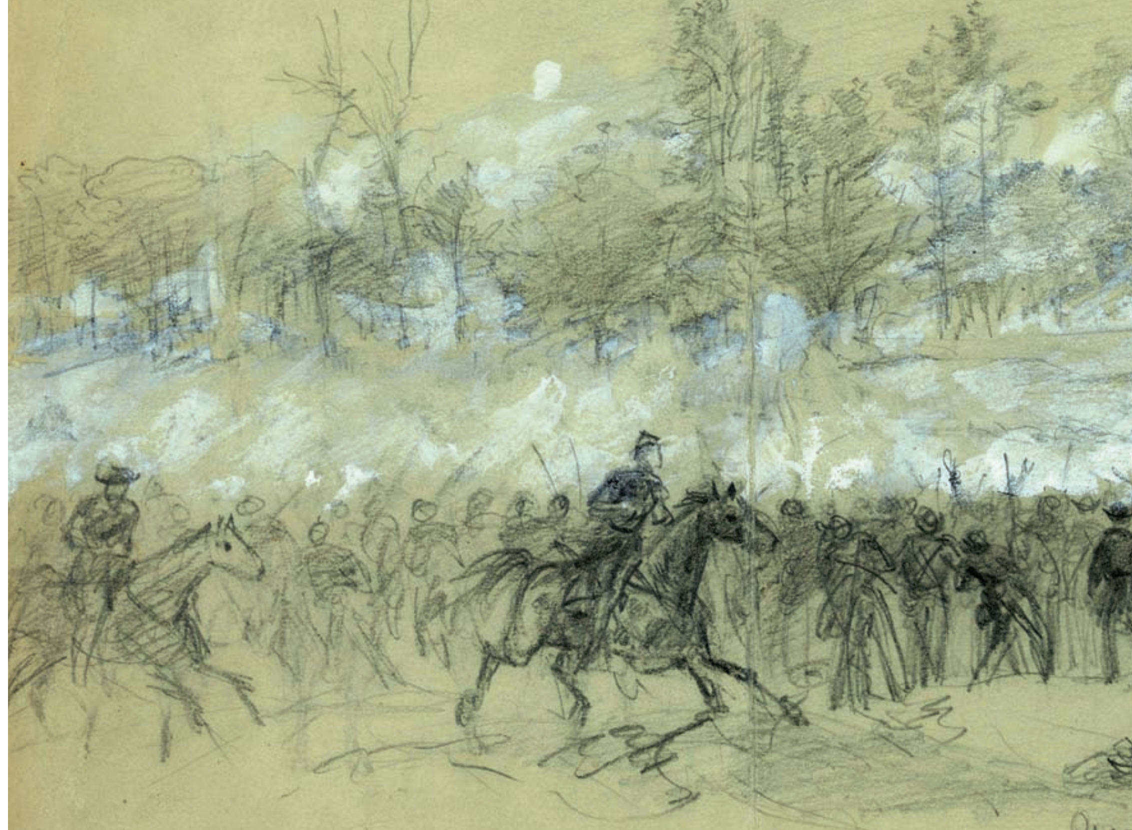
Following the routed Yankees, "The Rebels were sure of victory and ran at us with the wildest yells, but our men turned the tide in an instant," remembered an officer in the 23rd.

Years later Hayes recalled, "We stood behind a terrace wall, the ground [on the Rebel side] being level with the top of the wall."

Hastings wrote, "On they came like devils. When the Confederate line was not more than one hundred feet away, our boys gave them a murderous volley." Calling for a charge, Hayes jumped his horse over the terrace wall, closely followed by his cheering brigade. Hastings remembered that the Rebels "turned and ran."

After retreating a few hundred yards, the Confederates rallied and took up a position behind a stone wall and checked the Federal charge. The two sides slugged it out in the gathering darkness, standing their ground and pouring volleys into each other.

Lt. Col. James Comly, the 23rd's commander, wrote that "it was a magnificent fight—the only one I ever was in where I felt sure of being killed." Comly's premonition very nearly came true. After dark, as the battle continued, he was speaking to his adjutant about the performance of the draftees in the 23rd's ranks when a shell passed between his body and his horse's neck. Hastings rode over to the 23rd and Comly informed him that the regiment was losing many men and said, "If it was



Union General Cuvier Grover's 8,000-man 4th division had been recently transferred to Virginia in 1864, following several campaigns in Louisiana. Under cannon fire opposite from the main Confederate position at Winchester, they charged across a field, slamming into the flank of James B. Gordon's North Carolina Cavalry Brigade. But the disordered assault opened a gap that was exploited by Rodes' Division in a counterattack. "1st Louisiana, Grovers div. 19th Corps in action at the Battle in the Opequon," drawing by war c orrespondent Alfred R. Waud.

not dark, I should ask the privilege of charging the enemy in my front and have it over one way or the other, this is hellish work and hard to bear."

The firing continued unabated until 10 p.m. Hayes recalled, "We wished we were out of this—we would quit if their side would quit. Crook sent us word, let the fire die down if you can, but don't leave as long as there is any firing; fire as low as they do. So we would give orders to our men to let the fire drop, and our men would fire more and more rarely, until a shot here and there; then suddenly two or three would fire at once, and the whole army on both sides would fire again, until it finally died out."

The 23rd and the rest of Hayes' brigade were on the line until midnight, when by unspoken agreement the bloodshed ceased. Hayes wrote that Berryville was "one of the fiercest fights I was ever in" and speculated, "I suppose I was never in so much danger before." But he also said, "I enjoyed the excitement more than ever before," and added, "Prisoners say it is the first time [Kershaw's] division was ever flogged in a fair fight."

Hayes reported that his command captured 75 Confederates and killed or wounded 200 more, while the 23rd Ohio lost 11 men in the action including Hayes' personal color bearer, Pvt. George Brigden, who was shot through the kidneys. Overall Federal losses amounted to 166 men.

The following morning, Early arrived with the rest of his army intent on destroying Crook's Corps, but when he saw the Federal position entrenched in a continuous line for several miles from Berryville northward, the Confederates fell back to the west side of Opequon Creek, just east of Winchester. The Army of the Shenandoah remained on the Berryville-Summit Point line for nearly two weeks. Expecting that Anderson's troops (Kershaw's Division and an artillery battalion) would be called back to Petersburg, Sheridan was attempting to secure positive information on their whereabouts; when Early's army was reduced, he intended to attack and destroy it.

On September 8, the 23rd marched from Sheridan's left to the Federal right, at Summit Point, where things were fairly quiet. Hastings estimated that, since Sheridan had assumed command, the 23rd Ohio had marched 151 miles, engaged in four reconnaissances and one battle, and had been on the skirmish line for many days.

On September 16, the 23rd Ohio was ordered to Harper's Ferry to serve as guards for a wagon train, as the Confederate partisan Mosby had lately been operating along Sheridan's supply lines. Comly reported, "Waited with the regiment at Charlestown while [the] train loaded at Harper's Ferry. General Grant here today to visit with Sheridan. Passed through our camp. [Grant] had only one orderly—nobody else—with him. Not much like McClellan, that!" The 23rd's return march from Charlestown commenced at 2 a.m. on the 18th and the regiment arrived back in their camp near Summit Point later the same day.

On September 17, the bored Hastings wrote, "We conclude that this is a quiet before the storm and to wait in patience."

Hastings was absolutely correct. They were on the verge of the largest, hardest fought, and bloodiest Shenandoah Valley battle of the entire war. Even as the men of the 23rd Ohio escorted their wagon train from Charlestown to Summit Point, events were being set in motion that would result in a collision of the two armies just west of Opequon Creek.

Opequon Creek was a watercourse that arose southeast of Winchester and flowed north, on the east side of the town, and eventually discharged to the Potomac River. The terrain around Opequon Creek was fairly flat and consisted of open fields interspersed with small stands of woods.

For two weeks Sheridan had bided his time, waiting for Lee to recall Kershaw's Division to Petersburg. Lacking firm intelligence on the composition of Early's force, Sheridan had to rely on the word of a Union-sympathizing widow in Winchester. This informer smuggled a message to the Yankee commander wrapped in a tinfoil wad carried in the mouth of a slave who sold vegetables in Winchester each day. Through this source, on September 16, Sheridan received word that, two days before, Kershaw's Division and its artillery battalion had departed from the valley. This was the news Sheridan was waiting for and he immediately set about planning the destruction of Early's army.

The following day, Sunday, September 18, Sheridan learned that Early had divided his force the previous afternoon in the face of his "timid" Union opponent and marched with two infantry divisions to destroy Baltimore & Ohio tracks in Martinsburg, 20 miles north of Winchester. The Confederates reached Martinsburg early that Sunday morning. There, in a captured telegraph station, Early read a dispatch that mentioned Grant's meeting with Sheridan the day before. The General-in-Chief's presence in the Valley could mean only one thing—action by the Army of the Shenandoah, and soon. A shaken Early immediately ordered his two divisions back to Winchester. The gray soldiers marched rapidly southward, hoping to avoid the piecemeal destruction of their army.

Sheridan's original plan called for a march around the southwest side of Winchester to sever Early's supply and communications line by gaining the important Valley Turnpike, where he would take up position and wait for attack by the

numerically inferior Confederates. However, when news reached him that Early was apparently trying to hand him a victory by dividing his forces, Sheridan changed tack. He now intended to demonstrate in front of the Confederate units in position due east of Winchester with the VI and XIX Corps, while Crook's "Mountain Buzzards" flanked the Rebel line from the south, and Torbert's cavalry corps hit them from the north.

Orders for the march reached Hayes' headquarters at 8 p.m. on Sunday. The men of the 23rd Ohio were informed of the order to march before dawn, but were not told their destination. One wrote, "As the men stood in ranks for an hour the subject of direction [of the march] was discussed somewhat, not much though, as we were veterans who took little interest in what the orders were to be, only executing the order when it came."

The Army of the Shenandoah was roused from its camps about Berryville and Summit Point before 1 a.m. the following morning (September 19). An hour later the column was on the road, with Crook's Corps bringing up the rear. At 4:30 a.m., the Federal cavalry division of James Wilson, riding west on the Winchester-Berryville Pike, splashed across Opequon Creek, about six miles east of Winchester. The horse soldiers thundered through Berryville Canyon, a narrow, two-mile defile through which ran the Pike, and scattered Confederate pickets of a North Carolina regiment from Ramseur's Division. Emerging from the defile, Wilson's troopers drove off a brigade of infantry and took up position on a hill to cover the advancing infantry.

It was at this point that Sheridan's plans began

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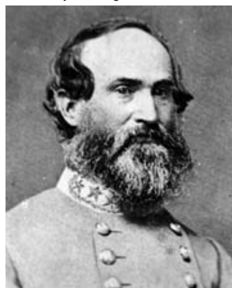

LEFT: Army of the Valley commander General Jubal Early. RIGHT: Union General George Crook.

LEFT: Confederate General John B. Gordon. RIGHT: Union Brigadier General Rutherford B. Hayes.

to unravel. His strategy called for a swift strike on the Rebels just beyond the defile but, to accomplish this, he intended to funnel over 23,000 troops of the VI and XIX Corps down the single roadway through the narrow canyon. The result was a gigantic traffic snarl that made Sheridan's Irish temper rise to fever pitch. The VI and XIX Corps were not out of Berryville Canyon and ready for deployment until after 10 a.m. By this time, Early's hard-marching "foot cavalry" had enabled the Virginian to concentrate his army. Sheridan's chance to destroy Early piecemeal was gone. From south to north, Early positioned the divisions of Ramseur, Rodes, and Gordon; around Stephenson's Depot to the north, under the overall command of the capable John Breckinridge, was Wharton's Division of infantry and the small cavalry divisions of Lomax and Fitzhugh Lee.

At 11:40 a.m., an impatient Sheridan launched a massive assault with four divisions comprising almost 20,000 men. The VI Corps went in on the south end of the line, astride the Winchester-Berryville Pike, while Emory's XIX Corps advanced through woods and fields north of the VI Corps and just south of an east-west running creek called Redbud Run. Crook's men were held in reserve almost three miles away at the other end of Berryville Canyon.

The assault was a Federal disaster, as Early's veterans once again demonstrated their fighting prowess. In particular, Emory's men were badly mauled, losing more than 2,000 men in the attack. The VI Corps suffered fewer casualties but, like the XIX, achieved nothing. When a gap opened between the VI and XIX Corps, the veteran Confederate division of Robert Rodes drove right through it, creating panic in the Federal ranks. Grimly surveying a fleeing throng of thousands, Sheridan ordered Crook to bring up the VIII Corps. Meanwhile, the Federals' only reserve division on the scene, David Russell's (VI Corps), advanced and broke the momentum of Rodes' attack. Both Rodes and Russell were killed in the fighting, after which a temporary quiet settled over the lines. "Old Jube" exulted that he had

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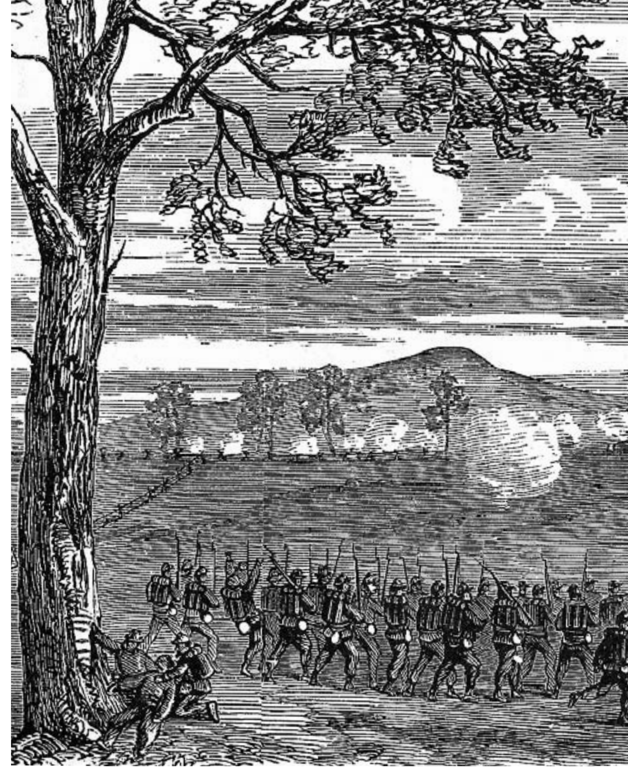


ABOVE: After crossing Redbud Run, seen here, Col. Rutherford Hayes and his men had to cross a muddy quagmire that stopped them momentarily. With his horse trapped in the mud, Hayes dismounted and led his men against James B. Gordon's Confederates. OPPOSITE: Gen. George Crook's charge across Redbud Run on the Federal right was a key part of the Union's victory over the Confederates at the Third Battle of Winchester. An important transportation hub in the Shenandoah Valley that was the scene of six battles, the city changed hands between the Union and Confederacy 72 times during the Civil War.

defeated Sheridan, and Confederate morale soared, but Sheridan was not through yet. He had plans for Crook's men.

In the predawn hours, the 350 or so men of the 23rd Ohio, marching near the head of the VIII Corps' column, had tramped south cross-country eight miles to the bridge where the Winchester-Berryville Pike crossed Opequon Creek. The Buckeye soldiers were in good spirits that morning "with the delight of being on the march once more," one man maintained, and arrived at the head of Berryville Canyon between 10 and 11 a.m. The men stacked arms "in a beautiful clover field" and fell out to boil coffee and await orders. The sound of cannon firing three miles to the west was a reminder of the battle being waged, convincing the men that "there was serious work to be done before night." For the time being, the men of the 23rd Ohio and the VIII Corps were content to let the VI and XIX Corps tangle with Early's veterans.

Hayes and his staff lay in the clover field "on that bright sunny midday," chatting, cracking jokes, and listening to the battle. Sheridan's signal station was in plain view of Hayes' reclining officers and, when Rodes' Division crashed through the hole in the blue line, the men of the brigade noticed that the flags began to move "in a quick nervous way." Hastings noted, "An impression began to prevail that the battle was not going as it ought … and that we should soon be ordered into the thick of it."

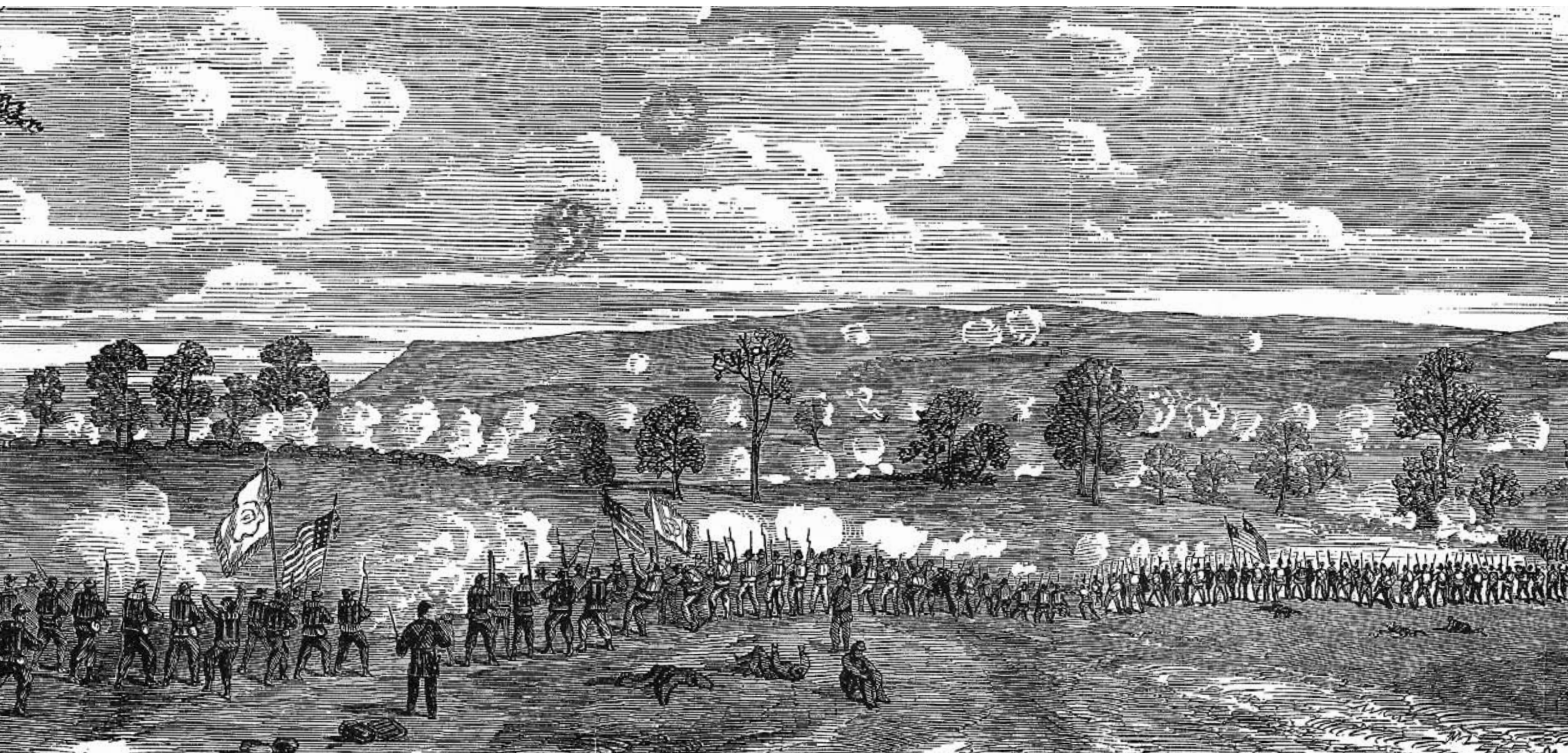
Soon, a staff officer was seen galloping out of the canyon. An officer beside Hastings muttered, "I wonder if that damned fool isn't coming over here to tell us to go in." Without orders, the 1,450 men of Hayes' brigade scrambled to their feet, adjusted their accouterments, and fell in near the stacks. The staff officer presented Sheridan's compliments and informed the officers that the VIII Corps was ordered to the front and that he would act as a guide.

A cynical Hastings thought the officer's delivery "a very polite way of ordering a fellow into the jaws of death."

At noon, the men fell in and were soon marching in a column of fours up the pike toward the canyon. Ominously, as the 23rd Ohio tramped across the bridge over Opequon Creek, they passed a field where surgeons were already performing amputations on the morning's casualties. The 23rd entered the defile, where they were greeted by a confusing mass of ambulances headed for the field hospital, parked wagons, stragglers, and walking wounded who implored the "Mountain Buzzards" to march fast, lest the Federal line give way. To make headway, the column split and marched along both sides of the road. One officer grimly noted, "It certainly was not a pleasant afternoon walk." In his memoirs, Crook averred, "There seemed to be as many fugitives as there were men in my command." It took Hayes' brigade more than 90 minutes to make the two-mile trek through the congested canyon.

Sheridan wrestled with what to do with Crook's men. His original plan called for them to march south, flank the Rebels, and cut off their line of retreat. Now, worried about the shaky XIX Corps, he ordered Crook north to support them, pending development of an opportunity. Sheridan told Crook to "look out for our right." Exhibiting his usual aggressive style, he also ordered the Ohioan to send one division to locate the Confederates' left (north) flank and to "there strike and carry it at all hazards." Sheridan warned Crook that Torbert's Federal cavalry was to the north and to be on the lookout for friendly units.

Emerging from the west end of the canyon, the



6,000 men of the VIII Corps turned north and marched through woods along the rear of the XIX Corps. After marching nearly six miles from the bridge at the Opequon, the column was finally halted in a stand of woods. Hastings remembered, "[Artillery] shells were exploding all around, limbs being cut from trees and falling on the troops below." Crook posted his 1st Division, under Col. Joseph Thoburn, immediately behind the XIX Corps' right (north) flank. Upon General Emory's request, Thoburn soon relieved a division of the battered XIX Corps and took up a front-line position with his right flank resting on Redbud Run.

Meanwhile, in obedience to Sheridan's orders, Crook accompanied his 2nd Division, commanded by Col. Isaac Duval, with Hayes' brigade in the lead, even farther to the right. Marching down a farm lane, the small division crossed to the north bank of the swampy Redbud Run on a rickety bridge. The men knew they were on a flanking march and, as related by Hastings, looked for the chance to even the score for their humiliating defeat by Early at Kernstown on July 24. The march passed through "deep valleys, over wooded hills, across open fields, and through dense thickets; on we went for a mile or more." The division moved as fast as possible through the rough country as "every man of the command knew a crisis had arrived … and felt in a manner that the results of the battle rested on him." The column turned westward toward Winchester and continued for another half-mile. Duval's men were now beyond the Confederate flank.

Crook sent one of his staff officers, Captain William McKinley of the 23rd Ohio, back across Redbud Run with orders for Thoburn to attack when he heard the sound of Duval's guns. McKinley then rode on to report to Sheridan Crook's intention to commence the assault, and asked for support along the whole Union line. The time was about 3:30 p.m.

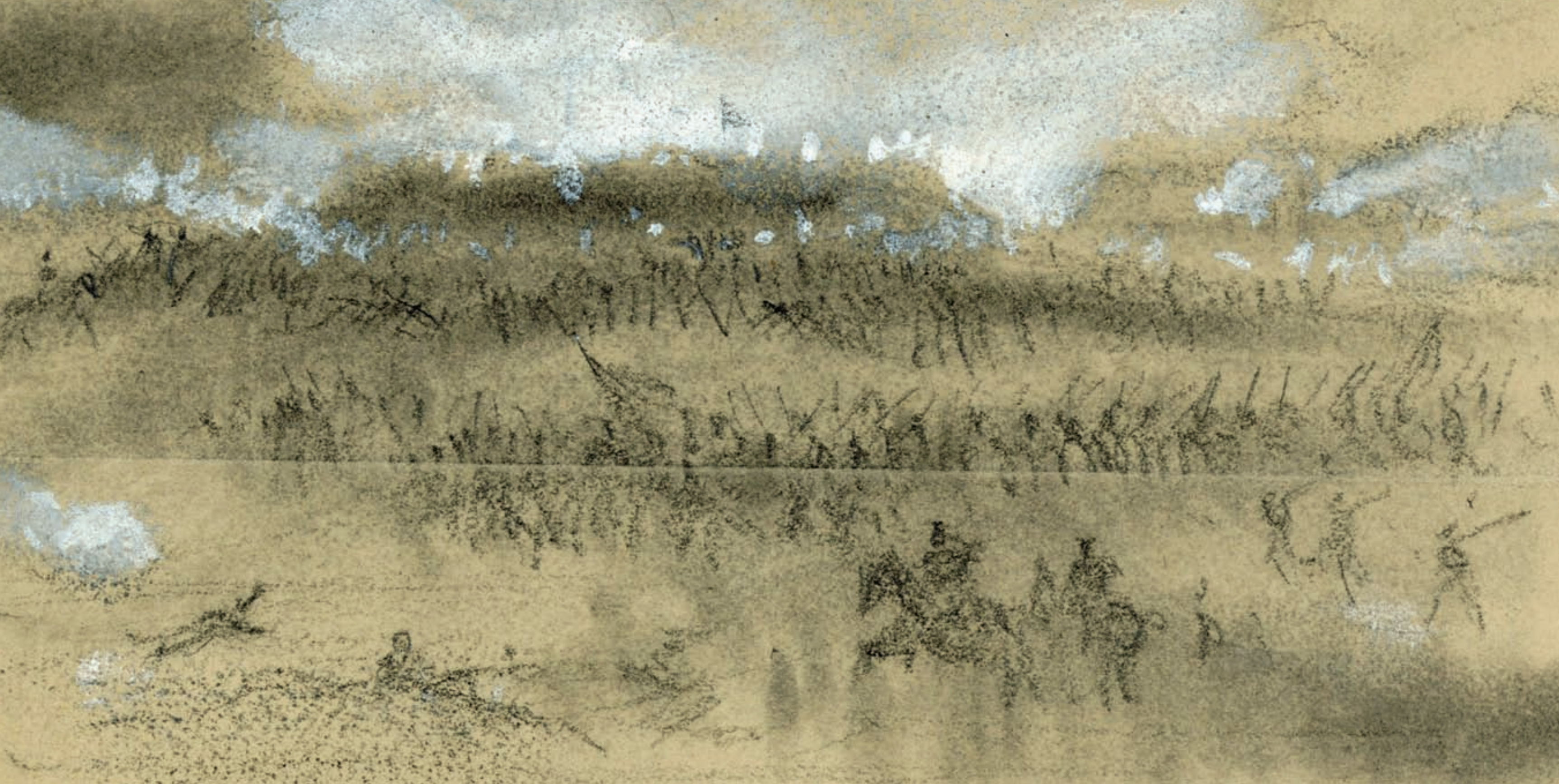
The column halted in an "almost impenetrable growth of cedar" where they fronted, facing toward the sound of the firing to the south. In the thick woods, Duval formed the division into two battle lines, with Hayes' brigade in the lead. The 23rd Ohio was at the right-center of the front line. Skirmishers were advanced to the front and orders passed down the line that the brigade was to keep silent until it was within a hundred yards of the Confederates, "and then with a yell to charge at full speed."

Upon Duval's order, Hayes' battle line stepped out of the thicket into an open field as the blue-coated skirmishers drove off some Confederate cavalry. One Rebel observed that Hayes' brigade "advanced in a splendid line."

The men of the 23rd Ohio scrambled over several fences, forcing Comly to dismount and lead them on foot. He remembered, "After advancing … over two or three open fields in this way, we reached the crest of a slight elevation." Upon gaining the eminence, the men of the 23rd observed the panorama of the battlefield open before them. The main line of Gordon's Rebel division was off to the left front, in front of Thoburn's Division and the XIX Corps. Off to the right (west), Comly observed elements of Torbert's cavalry advancing through open fields, moving parallel with Duval's Division. As Hayes' brigade gained the height, Confederate artillery over a mile away near Winchester opened a brisk fire on them. The flanking movement had been discovered.

"Now came hurrying times," recalled Hastings. Hayes ordered his four regiments forward through an open field at the double-quick—a light jog. To Hastings, it seemed that "everything on the enemy's left was turned on us, bullets, shot, shell, [and] shrapnel rained like hail." The "Mountain Buzzards" rushed forward through the galling fire. The 23rd soon reached a thick line of underbrush; the bluecoats plunged into the thicket and stopped short. Hayes' men had stumbled back upon Redbud Run. The men of the 23rd peered out from the growth at the center of a high-banked, reed-filled, 300-yard-long morass or slough, probably an old mill pond that had gone stagnant. Comly remembered the slough as being 20 or 30 yards wide, "nearly waist deep—with soft mud at the bottom and surface overgrown with a thick bed of moss.… It seemed impossible to get through it."

Hayes remembered, "The Rebel fire now broke out furiously. Of course the line stopped. To stop was death. To go on was probably the same." To retreat, however, was unthinkable. Quickly realizing that the men would cross the slough under fire only if led, Hayes "called out in a voice clearly



ABOVE: This sketch by war correspondent Alfred R. Waud shows Gen. George Crook's VIII Corps storming a Confederate earthworks on September 19, 1864, at the Third Battle of Winchester, sometimes known as the Battle of Opequon. Col. Rutherbord B. Hayes (after Col. Isaac Duval of the 9th West Virginia Volunteer Infantry was wounded) led the 23rd Ohio's "Mountain Buzzards" across a waist-deep swampy slough to begin the assault on Confederate Gen. Jubal Early's left flank. OPPOSITE: In conjunction with Gen. George Crook's VIII Corps attack in the Confederate left flank, Maj. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan ordered his last uncommitted troops—the cavalry divisions of brigadier generals Wesley Merritt and William Averell—to charge down the Martinsburg Pike and attack the Rebel flank further west at the Star Fort and Fort Colliers. Gen. Jubal Early's line collapsed and the panic-stricken Confederates fled through the streets of Winchester and south down the Valley Pike. This painting by Thure de Thulstrup (c. 1886) is titled, "Sheridan's Final Charge at Winchester."

heard above the hellish sound of the battle, 'Come on boys!'" He spurred his horse down the steep bank and splashed into the sticky morass. As Comly shouted orders, the men of the 23rd Ohio poured down the bank after him, cheering. Holding their weapons and cartridge boxes out of the stagnant water, the regiment began to fight its way through the swamp. Upstream and downstream of the slough the other regiments of the brigade also began to cross.

Hayes' horse plunged through the goo but midstream became "mired hopelessly." He jumped off and, sometimes having to use all four limbs to move, was the first to reach the other side of the slough. Dripping and muddy, under shelter of the far bank he turned and saw hundreds of men struggling in the stream. Bullets found their marks as some soldiers slipped, wounded, under the waters of the swamp, never to rise again.

On the 23rd's front, Comly was the second man across after Hayes. Years later, the Confederate commander on this portion of the field, Maj. Gen. John Gordon, recounted to Hastings, "When we first saw Hayes and his men coming over the hills, we rather laughed … knowing of this morass … but when on you came, plunging into the morass as though it was a mere pastime, we began to wonder of what metal [sic] such men were made."

Comly and Hayes led the now-disorganized regiment up the steep bank where the men, "inspired by the right spirit … charged the Rebel works pell-mell in the most efficient manner," driving off a line of graybacks from behind a nearby stone wall. Gordon recalled, "One of my staff officers remarked, 'they must be devils' and as [Hayes's men] rose to the brink of the bank, away went my boys as though ten thousand devils were after them."

The gray line reformed a few hundred yards from Redbud Run behind the stone walls around the Hackwood farmhouse. To the right of the 23rd Ohio, Hastings accompanied the 36th Ohio across the run and rode with its men as they impetuously assaulted the Rebel position at the Hackwood farm. He remembered, "[The 36th] suffered severely. All about the bridge, along the banks of the creek and up the lawn to the buildings the dead of the 36th were literally lying in heaps."

Halting at the stone wall, the 23rd Ohio and the rest of the division were partially reformed and, "with a ringing cheer begotten of the enthusiasm of the moment," charged on the new Confederate line. Several days later, Hayes wrote to his wife, "We steadily worked toward them under a destructive fire. Sometimes we would be brought to a standstill by the storm of grape and musketry." He recalled how, when the Yankee advance stalled, the flag of the 23rd Ohio, made by his wife, "pushed on, and a straggling crowd would follow." Federal officers on horseback were prime targets, but no one was immune from the flying lead. Among the seriously wounded was Colonel Duval, whom Comly saw carried off the field on a bloody stretcher. As the senior brigade commander, Hayes assumed command of the 2nd Division and Col. Hiram Devol of the 36th Ohio took over command of the 1st Brigade.

Hayes' horse was freed from the slough and he was soon re-mounted on the mud-caked beast; miraculously, Hayes was not scratched during the battle. At the Yankees' approach, the Rebels at the Hackwood farm retreated in disorder toward Winchester to the southwest, pursued by Federal cavalry with flashing sabers. Upon gaining the second stone wall, the men of the 23rd flopped on the ground in utter exhaustion. Hayes reported, "No attempt was made after this to form lines or regiments."

At the same time that the 2nd Division swarmed across Redbud Run, Thoburn's 1st Division charged out of the woods into the remainder of Gordon's Confederates. The battered XIX Corps refused to advance, much to Thoburn's ire. The tangled woods had disorganized his line so that "all technical order was gone." Events on the 1st Division's front proceeded similarly to the 2nd Division's fight, and soon the two jumbled halves of the VIII Corps were fighting side by side. Thoburn reported, "I have never witnessed more zeal and daring than was here displayed." To add to Early's consternation, off to the south, the VI Corps pitched into the Confederates along the Winchester-Berryville Pike. A Confederate sergeant facing Crook's men recalled, "Here the hardest fighting of the day took place.

Hastings recorded that Crook's two divisions were "but a mob," and soberly looked over his shoulder to see that "hundreds of our colleagues had gone down; some in the hills beyond Red Bud [Run], others in the morass and about Hackwood House. Our line was too weak and exhausted to venture on." Having spent itself in the charge, Crook's men temporarily rested behind the stone wall they had taken from Gordon's graybacks. Artillery shells continued to explode all around, some of them hitting the stone wall and scattering stones around. It seemed to the 23rd's commander that "men are dropping all about … like leaves in an October storm."

Comly recalled that Crook was present with Hayes' Division, "as cool as if he were sitting at home … riding up and down the line, saying nothing, but [by] his presence somehow charging the men with electricity." Hayes' conduct also impressed Comly: "He is everywhere—exposing himself [to fire] recklessly, as usual."

Hastings, realizing how hungry he was—no one in the division had eaten since before dawn—saw the colored cook who served Hayes' staff jogging across the field from the direction of the XIX Corps, "loaded down with haversacks, tin cups, and a large pot of coffee." The famished officers eagerly consumed the unexpected victuals.

The finely aligned ranks of the XIX Corps finally emerged from the tree line far in the rear of Crook's men. The surgeon of Hayes' brigade, Doctor Joseph Webb, was tending to the wounded behind the front line when a XIX Corps' staff officer, impressed at the spectacle of his unit's march, reined in near Webb and exclaimed, "See how the glorious XIX Corps comes up in perfect order!"

The surgeon sarcastically replied, "Yes, and I've been gathering the wounded of my corps from this field for the past half-hour."

Several hundred yards south and west of the VIII Corps, the Confederate line was reorganizing. While Gordon rallied his men, two brigades of Wharton's Division came up in support. Hastings lamented, "It was a mistake to stop at the stone wall even for the few minutes that we did." After a short while, at 4:30 p.m., Crook ordered another charge. The men of the 23rd Ohio rose and, following Comly, clambered over the remains of the stone wall and charged across the field at the double-quick. The regiment's line quickly came apart as the men increased speed to a run in an effort to cover as much ground as possible before the Rebel infantry could reload. After firing a few volleys, the Confederates retreated as "a mob" as Torbert's cavalry swooped in to scoop up prisoners. The main body of Gordon's and Wharton's men retreated a half-mile, to the very outskirts of Winchester, where they reformed. Years later, a member of the 23rd exclaimed, "What stubborn fellows Gordon and his men were!"

Following Hayes' orders, Hastings rode to the far right of the division to scout the new Confederate line. As he cleared a clump of bushes, he "came in full view of a long line of the enemy, not far away, lying in a farm ditch. This line opened on me and the bullets hummed like bees." Hastings turned his mount and rapidly rode away. Just before he reached cover, however, a bullet slammed into his right leg near the knee. He wrote, "The sensation was that of being struck by a club, without pain." Hastings rode back to Hayes to report, and the colonel quickly sent him to the field hospital in the rear where he arrived, "sick and fainting." Crippled for life, Hastings

Continued on page 98

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To the MONS

Smack in the way of the Kaiser's mighty right hook, the British Expeditionary Force effects a fighting retreat in the opening months of World War I.

BY ERIC NIDEROST

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Southwestern Belgium echoed with the ceaseless tramp of heavy boots on cobbled roads as long brown lines of khaki-clad men marched into Mons and its suburbs. They were British soldiers of the II Corps under Gen. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien and though the day was warming, all seemed in good spirits. On August 22, 1914, the Great War was only a few weeks old and these soldiers—part of a larger British Expeditionary Force (BEF) of some 87,000 men—were to guard the left flank of the French Fifth Army against the German enemy somewhere up ahead.

Unbeknownst to the British, *Generaloberst* Alexander von Kluck's First Army, nothing less than a juggernaut and a key component in the overall German plan, was pouring through Belgium. The First Army was the German right wing, whose mission was to smash through to France in a great wheeling arc to eventually envelop and trap the French Army. Though their intelligence was faulty, the Germans knew that the British army was somewhere ahead—but where, exactly, was a matter of supreme indifference. On August 19, Kaiser Wilhelm II had issued a peremptory order to General von Kluck. It was a typical missive of the Supreme War Lord,

After holding off the German First Army at the Mons Canal on August 23-24, 1914, the British Expeditionary Force began a 200-mile tactical retreat toward Paris. This painting by William Barnes Wollen (1928) depicts the retreating British 4th Guards Brigade being surprised at Landrécies, Belgium, by the advancing German 14th Infantry. The Germans torched nearby haystacks, illuminating the fight.

full of bombast and posturing, ordering von Kluck to "exterminate the treacherous English and walk over General French's contemptible little Army." In actuality, "insignificant" is closer in translation to the original German than "contemptible," but there was something about the word that appealed to the British Tommies' wry sense of humor. When they heard of the Kaiser's orders, the battered but unbowed BEF took the name "Old Contemptibles" as a badge of pride.

The British Expeditionary Force of 1914 was composed of professional soldiers, either active duty personnel or reservists recalled to the colors. The rank and file was drawn from the working classes: tough, hearty, and resilient. Army discipline may have been strict, but military life was no worse, and probably a lot better than the sometimes grim lives they left behind.

As professionals, British soldiers were patriotic, yet didn't allow love of country to inflame their passions. As they saw it, a soldier's main task was to fight the enemies of King and Country without knowing why they were fighting. That was something for the politicians to sort out. The regulars didn't hate Germans, though they didn't particularly like them—all non-British were "bloody foreigners." A British officer admitted that, "in the mercenary spirit we would equally readily have fought the French. Our motto was 'We'll do it. What is it?'"

But on that morning, the main concern of the BEF was marching to its forward position at Mons. Earlier, in their concentration areas in and around Maubeuge and Le Cateau, the mood had been almost festive. The countryside of northern France was basking in the golden days of late summer, where ripening wheat fields stood in sharp contrast to green pastures filled with browsing cattle. Picturesque farm houses dotted the landscape, and rural villages were thronged with peasants cheering the Tommies on their way.

As the British moved into Belgium, the lush wheat fields and idyllic pasture lands gave way to a barren, urban landscape scarred by the worst of the Industrial Revolution. Mons was a pleasant-enough town, but it stuck out like a jewel in a dung heap. The area was heavily industrialized, a warren of ugly blast furnaces, glass works, and sooty villages. Huge stacks pumped smoke into the hazy atmosphere and slag heaps dotted the face of the suburbs like festering sores.

Even the Belgians called this benighted heart of the coal belt *Le Borinage*, "the Black Country." Thick coal dust covered everything, with only a few patches of woods to give a hint of what the countryside had once been like. It was like a vision of hell, the illusion made even stronger by the sweltering August sun.

Overall, the Tommies were in a good mood, though they were tired and many reservists recently called up had sore and blistered feet. Most, however, were eager to come to grips with the enemy. The halt at Mons was going to be a brief one, a "breather" before the advance resumed once again. Even the heat was taken in stride, at least by some. Old hands who had served in India scoffed that the August weather was a "cold spell" compared to Asian climes.

BEF commanders didn't like the Mons area at all. Cluttered with factories and mines, it was far too urban for decent maneuver. It would be impossible to get a clear field of fire for artillery in the maze of slag heaps, factory smokestacks, and flapping laundry. In the absence of any other suitable point of reference in this urban jungle, the II Corps took up position on the southern bank of the Mons-Conde canal. Never more than 7 feet deep and 64 feet wide, the canal was used by great barges to haul cargo from the Meuse River.

Arrow-straight for most of its length, the 20-mile waterway developed a northeast bulge not long after leaving Mons. This bulge of about 3.5 miles was key to the whole position, and highly vulnerable to attack. Maj. Gen. Sir Charles Fer-

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

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ABOVE: German infantry in pickelhauben helmets swarm across a field in Belgium in the summer of 1914. The "Schlieffen Plan" called for an overwhelming force—seven German armies comprising 62 divisions—to push southwest through Belgium into northern France in a sweeping flanking maneuver that would envelop and trap the French and British armies. Unexpected resistance, first from the overmatched Belgians, then the expert marksmanship of the British Tommies, caused the plan to bog down. OPPOSITE: Composed of active duty professional soldiers and recalled reservists, the British Expeditionary Force crossed the English Channel with six infantry divisions and one cavalry division in August 1914, two weeks after Germany's declaration of war against France.

gusson's 5th Division held the straight portion of the canal, while Maj. Gen. Hubert Hamilton's 3rd Division was posted along the vital canal "bulge." To the southeast of the salient, almost at right angles to the II Corps, was Gen. Douglas Haig's I Corps, though they would play no major role in the coming battle. Beyond the I Corps, almost out of touch, was the French Fifth Army. It was a situation characteristic of Britain's relations with her French Allies in the early weeks of the war—tenuous at best.

Count Albert Von Schlieffen, Chief of the German General Staff, formulated the plan that bore his name in 1906. The scheme was innovative and risky, but to the Count it was a calculated chance well worth taking. In essence, only 10 German divisions would hold off Russia in the early stages of a war, while 62 divisions would march on France. It was hoped, rightly as it turned out, that the Russian bear would be slow to arouse from hibernation and mobilize for war.

But the key to Schlieffen's plan was a great enveloping movement that used the Swiss-German-French border region as a kind of pivot for a wheel maneuver. Seven German armies would sweep forward, but the strongest thrust would come from the right wing. This German "revolving door" would rush through Belgium, thrust into northern France and, as the "door" swept west and south, envelop and trap unsuspecting French armies from the flank and rear.

The plan called for the invasion of neutral Belgium, but little thought was given to such political considerations. Any such concerns were probably dismissed because of the overwhelming military advantages a successful maneuver would bring: the war might be won before anyone could protest the violation of Belgian neutrality. The German invasion of Belgium was one of the factors, though not the only factor, that caused Great Britain to declare war against Germany on August 4, 1914.

Time was of the essence; though its army was weak and poorly equipped, Belgium fought bravely and delayed the advancing enemy. Unfortunately, it took the Allied generals—both French and British—several weeks to grasp the significance of the German incursion into Belgium. The French, in particular, considered the German presence in Belgium a mere feint to lure away troops from the main theaters along the Franco-German border.

The BEF was assembled and soon on troopships bound for the French ports of Boulogne, Rouen, and Le Havre. After sorting themselves out, the British Army boarded trains for the region around the fortress of Maubeuge, near the Franco-Belgian border. Because the BEF (87,416) was small by continental standards— France had called up more than a million men— French generals overlooked the British as soldiers and tended to dismiss their Allies with a shrug.

The BEF commander was Field Marshal Sir John French, 62, a competent officer who mis-

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THE TOMMIES CONTINUED TO BLAZE AWAY WITH THEIR SHORT MAGAZINE LEE-ENFIELD RIFLES, CUTTING DOWN INCREDIBLE NUMBERS OF GERMANS, BUT SHEER NUMBERS WERE BEGINNING TO TELL.

trusted his French Allies. Indeed, the first meeting between Sir John and French Fifth Army General Larezac did nothing to assuage the mistrust. The meeting was not auspicious, and even Hely d'Oissel, Larezac's chief of staff, was sarcastic. When French and his officer arrived at French Army headquarters, d'Oissel snapped, "Well, here you [British] are—it is just about time. If we are beaten it will be thanks to you." The chief of staff's remarks set the tone for the conference, which was barely civil.

On August 22, as the British moved forward to Mons, reports began to filter in that were straws in the wind—if anyone would heed them. Ironically, the reports came from the oldest and newest methods of war—the horse cavalry and the airplane. From time immemorial, the cavalry had served as the eyes and ears of an army, screening its movements as well as scouting enemy positions. Major Thomas Bridges of "C" Squadron, 4th Dragoon Guards, was on patrol when he encountered some German cavalry. Surprised by the British, the Germans withdrew, and Captain Hornby begged the major for permission to pursue. There was a moment of hesitation as Bridges didn't know how many Germans were out there. But he could understand Hornby's excitement and gave permission.

Hornby took two troops of dragoons and pounded down the road at a gallop, the horses' flailing hoofs striking sparks on the cobblestones. Swords drawn, arms extended in classic cavalry fashion, the British troopers soon caught up with the Germans near the village of Casteau. The British cavalry saber was a thrusting weapon, 35 inches of glistening steel, lethal in the hands of experts. The opposing horsemen were elements of the 4th Cuirassiers, and like all German cavalry, were armed with lances. The Germans soon found they were at a decided disadvantage against sabers, and shortly withdrew.

When more German cavalry appeared, Hornby decided to switch to more modern tactics, calling out, "Fourth Troop! Dismounted action!" The troopers dismounted and took cover behind a chateau wall. Soon, the British cavalrymen poured a steady fire into the gray-clad cavalry, even though the Germans themselves tried to dismount and return fire. Trooper Edward Thomas was one of the first to go into action, killing a German officer at 400 yards. His was the first British bullet fired in anger in the Great War.

Major Bridges broke off the action. German prisoners had been taken and it was not the Major's task to start a battle. Hornby was triumphant, even ecstatic—he had taken part in a cavalry charge that evoked all the pageantry of medieval romance. Four inches of his sword blade was stained with German blood, proof of his exploits. But beyond the derring-do, some sobering facts emerged. Bridges, a keen observer, came to the conclusion that a very large German force was in front of the BEF. Unfortunately his intelligence, as well as that of other cavalry units, was blithely ignored by headquarters.

Confirmation came from an unexpected quar-

ter—the fledgling Royal Flying Corps. Considered by some to be a mere novelty, the airplane was about to prove its worth. True, planes in 1914 were fragile contraptions of wood, canvas, and wire, but they quite literally gave pilots and observers a bird's-eye view of the countryside. The Royal Flying Corps was conducting reconnaissance missions, and one flight observed a huge field-gray "snake" that looped and coiled to the horizon. The British airmen were certain the column below was a whole corps, and in fact it was the II Corps of the German First Army.

But the British airmen became disturbed when they discerned the direction the enemy was taking. The German troops were trudging from Brussels to Ninove, then turning southwest toward Gramont. If this line of march continued, it would place them outside the British left flank. The danger was real, and acute. The whole BEF might be encircled. Yet once again, British Headquarters turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to this troubling intelligence.

Lieutenant Edward Spears of the 11th Hussars wasn't in the front line, but his duties were hazardous in their own way. He was at French Fifth Army Headquarters, serving as the British liaison between General Lanrezac and Field Marshal French. Spears wasn't a trained diplomat, but he had to get information across without ruffling too many feathers. Because he was only a lieutenant dealing with senior officers, his task was not only unenviable, it seemed impossible at times. He arrived at French's Headquarters at Le Cateau with a crucial bit of information: The French had been so hard pressed by the Germans that they were falling back, leaving a nine-mile gap between the French Army and the BEF that could widen even more.

French took the news with his customary calm, and ordered that the advance beyond Mons be canceled. But French had his doubts—surely the reports of large numbers of Germans in Belgium must be exaggerated, products of faulty information or excited imagination. For the present, the BEF would hold at Mons. Although the participants had no way of knowing, a major battle, a battle no one had planned, was now in the offing.

The British troops along the canal fully expected to advance the next morning. Summer showers had doused them overnight, making for a somewhat cold and clammy wait for dawn. In the exposed canal salient just west of Mons the 4th Battalion of the Royal Fusiliers was facing the Ghlin and Nimy bridges, and on the right was the 4th Battalion of the Middlesex Regiment. The Middlesex companies held an outpost line from the deepest part of the "bulge" to the Bois de l'Haut in the southeast. The whole salient, crucial to the II Corps' survival, was thus held by eight companies and four machine guns. Just across the canal, the German 18th Division was rapidly approaching with12 Battalions (48 companies), 72 guns, and 24 machine guns.

The Battle of Mons began early on the morning of August 23. After skirmishing with some advance German cavalry patrols, the clash began in earnest with a heavy German artillery bombardment. Shells hammered all up and down the line, but the British held firm. The Tommies had managed to scrape shallow trenches along the canal but most were only a couple of feet deep. Their eyes smarting with smoke, ears deafened by explosions, and noses filled with the stench of cordite, the Royal Fusiliers and the Middlesex Regiment steeled themselves for the infantry assault that was sure to come.

Men in gray emerged from the woods just across the canal, heads covered in spiked *pickelhauben*. It was the first wave of German infantry coming in close formation. British officers barked commands, and then men opened fire at 500 yards. Private Bradley of the Middlesex Regiment recalled with some astonishment that "they [the Germans] went down like ninepins." The cacophony of sustained rifle fire filled the air, punctuated by the chatter of machine guns and the explosions of artillery shells. But it was the British rifle fire that seemed to dominate the affair, a hail of lead that swept all before it. Whole files of Germans crumpled to the ground, replaced by others who met a similar fate.

It was at this moment that the British "secret weapon" was revealed. Virtually each soldier was a trained marksman. The norm for British infantry was the "mad minute," that is, 15 aimed shots per minute into a 2-foot circle at 300 yards. Some soldiers could do 25 rounds a minute, and a few exceptional sharpshooters managed 30. The British Army's superior marksmanship could be traced to Lieutenant Colonel McMahon, Chief Instructor at the Hythe School of Musketry. Long before the war, McMahon realized that something had to be done to offset superior German numbers in the event of war. He recommended an increase of machine guns to six per battalion

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: In Belgium, a British cavalry trooper and his mount take a break from the action to eat. In the first weeks of the war, mounted troops proved valuable for communication, as well as combat. OPPOSITE: Troops from the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) man a defensive position in France during the opening weeks of the war. British infantry was trained to put 15 aimed shots into a 2-foot circle from 300 yards. Some soldiers could do 25 rounds and an expert marksman, 30. After Mons, the BEF fought a series of holding actions at Landrecies (August 25), Le Cateau (August 26), Étreux (August 27), Cerizy (August 28), Néry (September 1), Crepy (September 1) and Villers-Cotterêts (September 1).

Regimental Headquarters, Royal Highland Fusiliers

Captain Thomas Wright of the Royal Engineers had been detailed to oversee the destruction of eight of the bridges over the Mons canal. With the help of the 1st Royal Scots Fusiliers, sporting their jaunty Glengarry caps, the Jemappes Bridge was one of the few Wright managed to blow.

instead of the standard two. When turned down by the powers that be, McMahon focused on improving infantry marksmanship. The result of such foresight was Mons.

Some of the leading German units were cut to pieces, scythed down like gray stalks of wheat by British bullets. But the British were taking casualties too as German shell bursts ripped into shallow trenches, shrapnel wounding and maiming those not killed outright. But there was no question the Germans were getting the worst of the exchange. In fact they thought, and continued to think long after the battle, that the Mons-Conde canal was bristling with British machine guns. Yet in reality British machine guns were few. As mentioned, the whole length of the vital canal salient was protected by only four machine guns—and two of them were stationed at the Nimy Railroad bridge.

Captain Thomas Wright of the Royal Engineers had been detailed to oversee the destruction of eight of the canal bridges, but he and his men were having no end of difficulties. Some bridges were demolished, but others were not due to heavy German fire, faulty equipment, or even lack of equipment. Wright found to his dismay there was a lack of exploders to ignite the charges. At the Mariette Bridge, the Captain swung hand over hand under intense enemy fire in order to ignite the charges, but without success. Wounded in the head, Wright and his RE sappers were forced to fall back, covered by the accurate musketry of the 1st battalion, Northumberland Fusiliers.

Wright had better luck at the Jemappes Bridge, which was ably defended by the 1st battalion, Royal Scots Fusiliers. Distinguished by their jaunty Glengarry caps, the Scotsmen poured a heavy and accurate fire into the Germans as they vainly attempted to cross the span. Lance Corporal Charles Jarvis and Sapper Neary had been assigned the Jemappes Bridge, but found they lacked the proper equipment for demolition. Charges were strategically placed on the bridge, but they were without exploders and leads.

Sapper Neary was sent to fetch the exploders, but he failed to return. Lance Corporal Jarvis somehow got a bicycle and went in search of the materials himself. In the course of his pedaling he came across the wounded Captain Wright, who told him to get back to the bridge. Wright himself would bring back the exploder in a car. The Captain was as good as his word, and after an hour and a half of hard work Jarvis managed to blow the bridge. Jarvis was assisted by a Private Heron of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, the two men laboring under heavy German fire from three sides.

German pressure was mounting, and it was clear the British could not hold indefinitely. The Tommies continued to blaze away with their short magazine Lee-Enfield rifles, cutting down incredible numbers of Germans, but sheer numbers were beginning to tell. The vulnerable salient held by the Royal Fusiliers and Middlesex was coming under particularly heavy pressure. In the afternoon the forward companies of the Royal Fusiliers were ordered to withdraw, but they had 250 yards to cross before reaching the comparative safety of the covering companies.

The two machine guns at Nery Bridge had had a rough time of it, with crew after crew killed and wounded by German fire. But when one machine gunner was killed, another came forward to take his place. Lieutenant Steele decided that if the Fusiliers had to withdraw, their best chance was to have covering machine-gun fire. Lt. Maurice Dease was in charge of the machine gun section, but after being hit several times he finally succumbed to a mortal wound.

Steele now came up and asked—not ordered—Private Sidney Godley to remain behind and man the machine gun. Godley agreed, removing the corpses of three previous gunners before he could take his position. The Fusiliers withdrew, covered by his machine-gun fire. According to one account Steele flung the now-unconscious Dease over his shoulders and took him away, staggering under the latter's dead weight. It was a miracle that Steele reached safety with his burden, since

German fire buzzed through the air and peppered the ground all around them.

Private Godley manned his post for more than two hours, his Vickers-Maxim machine gun spitting out a stream of bullets at five hundred rounds a minute. He managed to prevent the Germans from crossing the railroad bridge, but wasn't going to emerge unscathed. A German shell exploded nearby, sending a piece of shrapnel lancing into Godley's back. Later, a German bullet slammed into his skull, but he kept up his rate of fire. Exhausted, sweat-drenched, blood pouring from wounds, Godley could no longer delay the inevitable. In a final act of defiance, the Royal Fusilier broke his machine gun up and flung the pieces into the canal.

Godley's heroic one-man stand had given his comrades a precious two hours to retreat. Captured, Sidney Godley spent the remainder of the war in a German prison camp. For his heroism he was awarded the coveted Victoria Cross.

There were small rear-guard actions with the Germans, and usually the British gave their pursuers the slip after inflicting heavy casualties. Young trumpeter Jimmy Naylor of the Royal Field Artillery, just 16, witnessed an infantry action that made an indelible impression on him. It was as if it were a peace-time drill, or a competition for a marksmanship badge. The officers called out the ranges, and as the Germans drew closer the numbers went ominously downward. "He [the officer] was saying," Naylor recalled, "'At four hundred … At three-fifty … At three hundred … Rifles blazed, but the Germans came on … And the officer, still cool as anything, [said] 'At two-fifty, At two hundred.'"

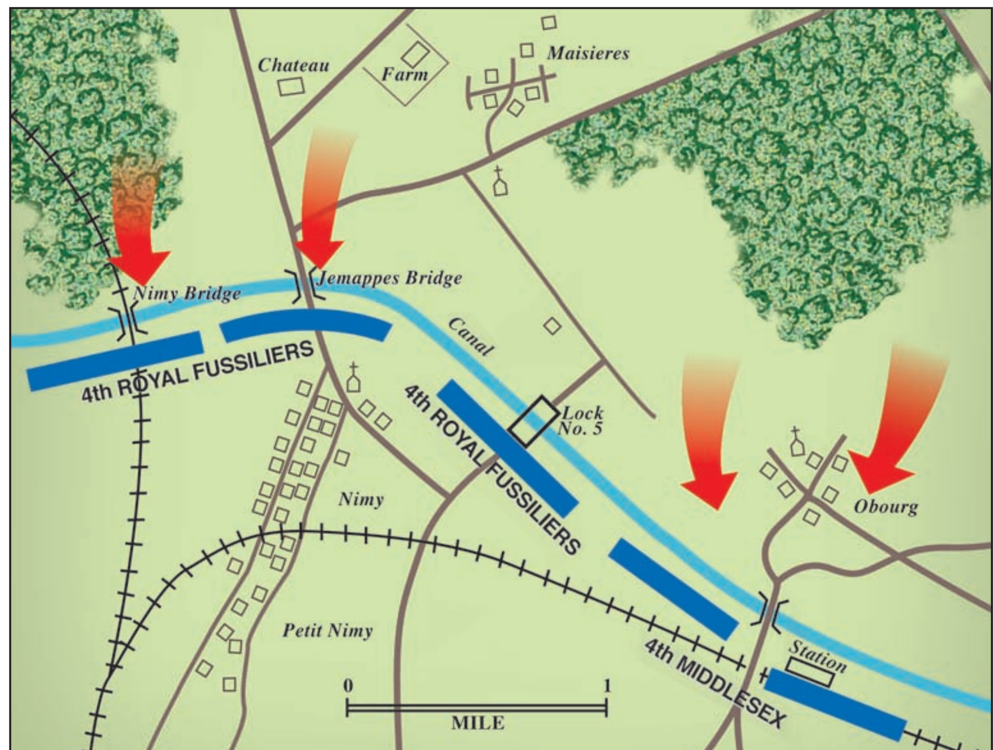
The Germans wilted under a punishing fire, only to surge yet again as fresh units came forward into the British meat grinder. Then, as Naylor continued to watch, the British officer "said 'ten rounds rapid!' And the chaps opened up—and the Germans fell down like logs." The Germans were driven off, albeit temporarily, and the withdrawal continued.

The German Army was in some ways the best army in Europe, but its ranks were largely filled with conscripts. Such marksmanship as the British displayed was beyond their experience. Hauptmann (Captain) Von Brandis of the 24th Brandenburg Regiment said, "Our battalion alone lost three company commanders … besides every second officer and every third man." Another German unit, the 75th Regiment, lost 5 officers and 376 men.

The Battle of Mons and its immediate aftermath was over, even though the campaign had barely begun. It was a truly amazing achievement: General Smith-Dorrien's II Corps of only two divisions had held off no less than four, and even-

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

ABOVE: Scottish troops man one of four machine guns during the British Expeditionary Force's defense of a bridge over the Mons Canal. The British compensated for their lack of automated weapons with experienced infantrymen, whose well-aimed fire decimated the attacking Germans. BELOW: Though they had only four machine guns, the British stand along the Mons-Conde canal was stubborn, thanks to rapid and accurate rifle fire against a German force of mostly conscripts. Ultimately, the overwhelming number of German soldiers forced the British to fall back southward into France.



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tually six, German divisions. Yet for Sir John French, commander-in-chief of the BEF, the situation was grave, since it was his responsibility to save Britain's field army. Not far away was the French fortress town of Maubeuge, with solid ramparts built by the 17th-century French engineer Vauban. It was well fortified and provisioned, and might provide the battered BEF a welcome refuge. French later admitted he was sorely tempted to retreat to Maubeuge, but the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 provided a cautionary tale for the wary British general. In 1870, an entire French Army had been bottled up in Metz and eventually forced to surrender.

French decided to ignore the siren call of Maubeuge and ordered a continued withdrawal. British Army morale was high, and they were masters of the "leapfrogging" withdrawal. Units fell back, dug in, and held up the enemy while other units passed through them. Then, the covering units withdrew and the process was begun all over again.

On August 25 the 4th (Guards) Division found itself at Landrecies, a quiet town of no real consequence. The 4th (Guards) brigade were part of the King's Household troops, those red-coated, bearskin-hatted sentries that patrol the monarch's palaces and whose colorful Changing of the Guard ceremonies were and are popular attractions. But the Guards were tough, seasoned soldiers, not merely ceremonial troops. The Coldstream Guards, for example, could lay claim to being the oldest regiment in the British army, with origins that could be traced back to 1650.

On the evening of August 25, The Guards brigade gratefully relaxed in the billets they found at Landrecies. The town was guarded by machine-gun picquets posts manned by the Coldstream Guards, and though the night was pitch black the soldiers had no reason to feel nervous. It was thought that the Germans were many miles away. But then the rousing strains of the French anthem *La Marseillaise* floated on the wind; a body of lustily singing troops were coming up the road. The forward Coldstream picquet shouted out a challenge, and a reassuring "Francais!" came out of the darkness in reply.

Before the Coldstreamers could react, German soldiers emerged out of the night like ghostly phantoms. The French speaking had been a ruse, hastily contrived, as the Germans had not expected to find British troops in Landrecies, and were initially just as surprised as the Tommies. The men rushing forward were the vanguard of the German 27th Regiment and although the forward picquet was overwhelmed, the defenders of the main British picquet 20 yards behind had been more suspicious.

Fighting soon broke out and Landrecies became bedlam, with Coldstreamers and other Guards units rushing into action or hastily fortifying the little town. The confusion was made worse by the presence of the I Corps Headquarters. Rear echelon staff officers aren't used to front-line dangers, and some added to the overall turmoil. A few even panicked; one full colonel was seen excitedly emptying his revolver down a street, his targets some innocuous horses tethered there.

I Corps commander Sir Douglas Haig didn't panic, but he did feel they might be surrounded and cut off from the main body of the BEF. "If we are caught, by God," a grim-faced Haig exclaimed, "we'll sell our lives dearly." The crisis was more apparent than real; the Guards were seasoned professionals, and soon sent the Germans packing. The I Corps then shortly resumed its withdrawal without further molestation.

The seeming crisis at Landrecies diverted attention from the very real peril the bloodied II Corps was facing. Its commander, Gen. Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, was known as an excellent officer who genuinely cared for the welfare of his men. He had been in the army for more than 30 years and as a young subaltern, he had survived the dreaded assegai spears of Isandlwana during the Zulu War of 1879. Smith-Dorrien knew that constant marching and fighting, coupled with lack of sleep and the enervating heat, was taking a heavy toll. But if he could stand and fight, at least long enough to give the Germans a bloody nose, they might back off. At the very least, it would win some precious time.

And so it was that Smith-Dorrien resolved to fight at Le Cateau, about 25 miles southwest of Mons. The British right flank was allotted to the 5th Division, which was anchored at a point near Le Cateau. The 3rd Division was in the center, with two brigades on high ground near the villages of Inchy and Caudry. The Germans soon appeared, and heavy fighting ranged for six grueling hours. The British right flank was subjected to particularly heavy attacks.

The battle began on August 26, the anniversary of the great English victory over the French at Crecy in 1346. Perhaps the date would be a good omen for the British II Corps. The Germans began shelling British positions at 6 a.m. More and more German batteries unlimbered and went into action, and by 10 a.m. the 5th Division was being subjected to enfilade fire. The 2nd Battalion, the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (KOYLI) was hard hit, as were the Royal Field Artillery batteries that were returning German fire.

Much of the battle became a repetition of Mons. After it was judged that the British were sufficiently softened up by their artillery, German infantry was moved forward in close formation. Once again, superior British marksmanship shredded German ranks, and once again sheer superiority of numbers began to tell. Smith-Dorrien ordered the 5th Division to retire. Above all, the precious artillery was taken to safety, the cry of "save the guns!" being an army maxim since the days of Marlborough and Wellington. A few British units were overrun,

Imperial War Museum

British staff officers from the Scottish Rifles confer at the Battle of Cateau (France), fought during the retreat from Mons on August 26, where once again, the fast and accurate rifle fire of the British infantry caused heavy German losses. OPPOSITE:German cavalry on the move in France in August 1914. Their advantage lay in numbers, as their 10-foot tubular steel lance was no match for the more maneuverable thrusting weapon—a 35-inch steel saber—carried by the British cavalry.

but the majority managed to slip away safely.

Yet again, the Germans were shaken by the heavy losses sustained at Le Cateau. Smith-Dorrien's gamble had paid off, and never again was the II Corps so hotly pursued. As he had hoped, Smith-Dorrien dealt the enemy "a smashing blow," as he reported in his autobiography, and then was able to "slip away before he could recover."

German blunders, miscalculations, and sheer wishful thinking undermined their plans. After Mons, von Kluck persisted in believing the "defeated" British would scurry away to the channel ports and home. At one point von Kluck sent his II Cavalry Corps to head them off, and then moved forward four infantry corps to drive them to Maubeuge—an option the British had already decided to bypass.

The British slipped the net, but von Kluck still clung to his illusions. German problems were compounded by the decisions made by the Chief of the German General Staff, Generaloberst Helmuth von Moltke. From his Supreme Headquarters at Coblenz, things seemed to be going very well for the Germans in France. Indeed, it seemed to von Moltke that "the great decisive battle in the West had been fought and decided in Germany's favor."

Nothing could have been further from the truth. The French had experienced setbacks, but were not decisively defeated, and the BEF was far from the broken reed of von Kluck's fevered imagination. Nevertheless, von Moltke was so convinced the Germans had won in France that he committed a fatal error by transferring two corps from the German right wing to the hard-pressed Eastern Front.

In the meantime, the BEF had managed to evade its pursuers, though the soldiers were exhausted almost beyond human endurance. Many were hobbling painfully on badly blistered feet; boots cut into sores, but soldiers didn't dare remove them for fear they would never be able to put them on again. Most of the troops hadn't had a decent night's rest in many days, and could barely keep their red-rimmed eyes open. They were ragged, unshaven, and filthy. The merciless sun still seared man and beast alike, producing a tormenting thirst.

Yet conditions improved, slowly, at least for some. Troops were able to snatch some sleep, and a few were even close enough to water to wash, shave, and drink their fill. Rations were also coming in, so hunger was put at bay. Most of all, the British soldiers still had high morale, and their sardonic sense of humor was still intact. They were delighted when they discovered the opposing German general's name was von Kluck. It had great possibilities for a marching song, because it rhymed with their favorite Anglo-Saxon obscenity. Spirits lifted and marching was made easier when the troops cheerfully bellowed, "Oh, we don't give a f—k for old von Kluck, And all his f—king great army!"

On September 1, French Commander-in-Chief Gen. Joseph Joffre huddled in conference with Field Marshal French. Joffre was receiving reports that von Kluck's First Army was marching sharply southwest. Instead of sweeping west of Paris then swinging east, von Kluck was actually marching far east of the French capital. As he marched southeast, von Kluck was unwittingly exposing his flank to a new French army assembling under Gen. Joseph Maundury. The Germans were apparently unaware of this new Sixth Army that was gathering to the north of Paris. All the British needed to do was to cooperate with their French Allies and draw the Germans on. Once von Kluck reached the Marne River, the trap would be sprung.

On that same day, a cavalry and artillery action took place that, though small in scale, was to have a decisive impact on the future course of the campaign. General von Kluck was indeed moving southeast, his objective to "settle with the debris of the Franco-British army." The German general seemed almost obsessed with destroying the BEF, or at least its "remnants." It must have been infuriating and puzzling to von Kluck. The British lion's fangs had been drawn, yet in battle after battle it still possessed a considerable bite. It didn't make sense. And yet von Kluck clung stubbornly to his illusions, insisting he was mopping up shattered and defeated remnants.

On August 31, General C.J. Briggs' First Cavalry Brigade halted at Néry, a small village some 50 miles northeast of Paris. The First Brigade, part of General Edmund Allenby's Cavalry Division, was screening the western, or right, flank of the BEF. The command consisted of the 2nd

Dragoon Guards (The Queen's Bay's), the 5th Dragoon Guards, and the 11th Hussars. Each of these regiments was distinguished in its own right; the 11th Hussars, for example, had been commanded by Lord Cardigan of Crimean War fame, and had taken part in the Charge of the Light Brigade at Balaklava.

Altogether, there were nine squadrons of cavalry. The First Cavalry Brigade was accompanied by "L" Battery, Royal Horse Artillery. It made sense to stop at Néry; the Germans were far away, and here was a chance at last to snatch a bit of rest after a fatiguing few weeks. Horses were picketed for the night, and cavalrymen cocooned themselves in their cloaks around blazing campfires. Although the heat lingered in during the day, the nights were becoming chilly—a sure sign of the approach of autumn. The soldiers had to get some sleep, because the brigade was due to move out again at 4:30 a.m. But fog enveloped the area like a blanket, so the departure was postponed for an hour.

It was a chance for some extra rest, and an opportunity for Battery "L" to water its horses at a small pond near a sugar factory. After watering and feeding, the teams were hitched to the guns and limbers in preparation for moving out. Colonel Pitman of the 11th Hussars was a sensible man, and though the Germans were probably far away, he decided to send out a patrol to scout the high ground west of Néry.

The 11th Hussars rode on through the clammy mist, then were brought up short by the sight of gray horsemen in spiked-topped *pickelhauben*. They were Germans of von Garnier's 4th Cavalry Division, whose main mission was to screen von Kluck's exposed right flank. At the command "Files About! Gallop!," the British troopers rode hell for leather to warn their comrades at Néry. Almost simultaneously, German scouts had reported to von Garnier that they had seen British cavalry and artillery bivouacked nearby. The Tommies still had their mounts picketed, and their guns were limbered for transport, not a fight. They would be easy prey, an opportunity too good to miss. Von Garnier had 24 squadrons and a full battery of artillery.

In the meantime, the 11th Hussar patrol galloped in to report what they had seen. Caught by surprise at this sudden turn of events, troopers and gunners scrambled to prepare for the attack they knew must come. Major Sclater-Booth, commander of "L" Battery, shouted to young trumpeter Harry Gould to sound the alarm. Just as Gould raised the instrument to his lips, the first German shell came crashing down, knocking the Major unconscious and throwing the trumpeter to the ground. Shaken, Gould got up and blew the alarm as ordered, the clarion notes sounding above the rising chorus of artillery bursts.

Nery was transformed from a peaceful haven to an incarnation of hell. Some cavalry horses stampeded in terror as men grabbed weapons or tried to saddle rearing mounts. The German cavalry was accompanied by three 4-gun horse artillery batteries, and they soon found "L" Battery's range. It was a scene that almost defied description, with flaming shell bursts flaying, ripping, and disemboweling men and horses with horrifying ease. Horses whinnied with fear, plunging and rearing, but constrained because they were hitched to limber poles that were on the ground.

Within minutes, the battery was a bloody shambles, a torn landscape of smashed limbers, overturned guns, and eviscerated horses. Gunners who tried to get their artillery into action were cut down before one shell was loaded. But Battery Capt. E.K. Bradbury appeared, shouting, "Come on! Who's for the guns?" His example seemed to galvanize the others. Bradbury and his companions managed to get three 13-pounder guns into action, but one gun took a direct hit that disabled it, and a second gun's fire ended when all its crew was dead or wounded.

Only No.6 gun fought on, one solitary British 13-pounder against a whole German battery. Bradbury was assisted by Lieutenant Campbell, Sergeant Nelson, Gunner Darbyshire, and Driver Osborne. Later, Battery Sgt. G.T. Dorrell lent a hand. Bullets zipped through the air like angry wasps; more than 20 yards of open ground had to be covered to get to the ammunition limbers. More and more German guns stopped firing at Néry and concentrated their fire on the lone British field piece. At one point 12 German guns were blazing away at No. 6, creating a storm of fiery explosions, smoke, and cascading shrapnel. German shell bursts mushroomed with gouts of flame and acrid clouds of greenish cordite smoke, killing and wounding with every passing minute.

It was an incredible experience, something indelibly etched in the minds of the survivors. Darbyshire later recalled: "These 13-pounder guns can be fired at the rate of fifteen rounds a minute…. The concussion of our own explosions and the bursting German shells was so awful I couldn't bear it for long … my nose and ear was bleeding because of the concussion." The gunner needed a break, so he switched to carrying shells from the limber. His place was taken by Campbell, but moments later a German shell exploded under the gun shield that tossed the lieutenant like a rag doll, throwing him six feet. Mortally wounded, he lived only a few minutes.

Against heavy odds gun No. 6 and its valiant crew managed to silence three German guns. But finally, No. 6's ammunition ran out. By that time most of the crew were dead or wounded. Bradbury was lying to the side, his legs blown off by a German shell.

Illustrated London News

ABOVE: British soldiers man a field gun in this newspaper illustration commemorating the heroics of Battery "L, " Royal Horse Artillery, which suffered 49 of the 135 British casualties at the Battle of Néry. At one point, only one British 13-pounder—the No. 6 gun—took on an entire German battery. OPPOSITE: On August 24, the first day of the retreat from Mons, the 9th Lancers charge German infantry and guns at Elouges, Belgium, in this engraving done from a Richard Caton Woodville painting and published in the *Illustrated London News* in 1914.

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

While the remnants of Battery "L" had fought so desperately, the cavalry troopers had maintained a brisk fire against opposing German horsemen and infantry. Just when the issue seemed most in doubt, reinforcements arrived in the form of the British 4th Cavalry Brigade, Battery "I" of the Royal Horse Artillery, and some infantry. Suddenly the tables were turned, and apparently the German commander ordered a retreat. But the German horse soldiers panicked and a retreat quickly became a rout. Reeling from the new British pressure, the gray soldiers pressed the flanks of their mounts and galloped away in headlong flight.

German artillerymen seem to have panicked as well, their fear heightened by Battery "I"'s well-aimed bursts. Lt. Willoughby Norris, C Squadron, 11th Hussars led his men toward the Germans, the troopers entering the battery with a cheer. Germans who could not flee surrendered; Norris bagged some 78 prisoners.

The action at Néry was small in scale, but large in its repercussions. British casualties amounted to 135 officers and men, of whom 49 were from Battery "L." Victoria Crosses were awarded to Sergeant Nelson, Battery-Sergeant Dorrell, and Captain Bradbury, the latter awarded posthumously. The German 4th Cavalry Division had ceased to exist as a fighting force. Eight guns had been taken by the 11th Hussars, and four more were found abandoned in the woods. In effect Von Garnier's command had been neutralized. Shaken and demoralized, the survivors of the 4th Cavalry Division did not reassemble until September 4, and even then they were not considered fit for active duty.

In the meantime, von Kluck was wheeling east, doggedly determined to destroy the "remnants" of the BEF and French Army. Reports of French troops to the west he dismissed as second-line Territorials. The Germans, too, were getting ragged and exhausted, but the dream of impending victory sustained them. It was soon to prove a nightmare.

On September 7, General Maunoury's 6th Army, still largely undetected by the Germans, struck hard at von Kluck's right flank. This action was the first of several clashes collectively known as the Battle of the Marne. Surprised, von Kluck turned westward to face Maunoury's threat—and in so doing, opened a gap between his own First Army and von Bulow's Second Army. A resurgent BEF plunged into the gap between the two armies.

French and British forces hit hard at the Marne, successfully turning the German flanks. Both the German First and Second armies managed to extricate themselves and retire behind the Aisne River. A "race to the sea" eventually established the infamous trench lines of the Western Front. It would be the beginning of a bloody stalemate destined to last for four years.

The Marne had proved a decisive turning point, depriving the Germans of their best chance for victory in World War I. It was here that the seemingly insignificant—at least in terms of scale—action at Néry was brought into sharp relief. If von Garnier's German 4th Cavalry Division had not been neutralized and scattered on September 1, it is more than probable they would have discovered the newly forming French 6th Army assembling on von Kluck's flank and alerted the general of its presence. The Battle of the Marne might have turned out differently.

The French Army numbered well over 1,000,000 men, and by most estimates the BEF less than 100,000. The British army made several contributions during those crucial opening weeks of the war. For one thing, they blunted von Kluck's advance, even if they did not stop him, and inflicted far greater numbers of casualties on the Germans than their numbers would suggest. The sheer professionalism of the " Old Contemptibles," their toughness and "mad minute" marksmanship, more than made up for the mistakes of their commanders. ■

American Patriots prove their mettle and capture loyalist prisoners, weapons and cash in a brief fight at Moore's Creek, North Carolina.

Patriots Early Test at Moore's Creek Bridge

BY JOHN MILES

Loyalist soldiers of the 84th Regiment of Foot, Royal Highland Emigrants, attack Patriot militia with their swords drawn and a bagpiper playing in this fanciful illustration of the very brief battle of Moore's Creek Bridge in North Carolina.

U.S. National Park Service

On February 27, 1776, near the west bank of Moore's Creek, 30 miles above Wilmington in the colony of North Carolina, Lt. Col. Donald McLeod and the men of the 1st Battalion of the 84th Regiment waited for daybreak. As they took what little rest they could, they were told that when the sun came up, they would do something their grandsires had done 30 years before at Culloden. They were going to channel their ancestors' martial spirits and make a Scottish Highland Charge.

The 1st Battalion of the 84th Regiment was originally organized by Scottish Lt. Col. Allan Maclean and was made up of former Scottish soldiers recruited in Canada and New York, including many who had served in the French and Indian War and stayed in North America. Joining them in North Carolina were loyalist recruits, including some who had emigrated to the colony in the years following Bonnie Prince Charlie's failed Scottish rebellion in 1745, and subsequent British oppression. With the official British designation of 1st Battalion, 84th Regiment of Foot, Royal Highland Emigrants, the unit's soldiers wore the same uniform as the famed 42nd "Black Watch" Regiment.

The force, numbering some 1,500 soldiers under the command of Brig. Gen. Donald MacDonald, had been ordered to march to the coast. There they were to unite with more British Army troops arriving by ship. Lord Charles Cornwallis, sailing from Ireland, was arriving with seven regiments, while a group of 2,000 regulars under the command of Sir Henry Clinton, was sailing from New England. The combined British forces would campaign to eliminate any American Patriot units operating in the Carolinas.

General Donald MacDonald was a veteran of the battle of Culloden, the final battle in the Scottish Jacobite rebellion of 1745. He was certainly one of the most noteworthy Scottish Highlanders to serve the King's cause in America during the Revolutionary War. He joined the 84th Regiment early on and was in Massachusetts with other 84th officers where, as a Lieutenant Colonel, he fought and was slightly wounded at the Battle of Bunker Hill. Soon afterward, he was sent to North Carolina by Gen. Thomas Gage, then in overall command of British troops in the American Colonies. MacDonald was expected to recruit fellow Scots to join the Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment. In this he was accompanied by his nephew in marriage, Donald McLeod.

The two officers arrived at New Bern, North Carolina in July 1775 and were questioned by the town's Committee of Public Safety. Since the commencement of war, Committees of Public Safety had sprung up across the Colonies to serve as improvised Patriot law enforcement organizations. MacDonald and Macleod had to convince an incredulous committee that they had only come to recover from wounds suffered at Bunker Hill and to visit relatives. Lacking any evidence to detain the two, the committee released them.

Josiah Martin, the Royal Governor of North Carolina, was then residing on a British Navy warship off the coast after the governor's mansion was taken over by revolutionaries. The Governor met with MacDonald and appointed him Brigadier General of militia. The governor also promoted McLeod to Lieutenant Colonel, making him second in command of the 1st Battalion of the 84th Regiment.

These two native-born Scots were sent to North Carolina to recruit for the regiment because of the large number of Scottish immigrants there. Scots Gaelic sermons were still being preached in North Carolina Presbyterian churches as late as 1858. Well-aware of the fighting abilities of the Scottish immigrants, the Continental Congress had sent recruiters to try to win them over to the Patriot cause. But because the Continental envoys spoke no Gaelic, their efforts met with little success.

After arriving in New Bern, Donald MacDonald linked up with his brother Allan, who was a captain in the 84th. Allan was the husband of the famed Flora MacDonald, heroine of the escape of Charles Edward Stuart, "Bonnie Prince Charlie," to France following the Battle of Culloden in 1746. After the final

Maffia

New York Public Library

Jacobite rebellion failed, the MacDonalds suffered, along with many Scots, the breaking up of their vast clan holdings and enforced loyalty to the British Crown. Partly to escape this persecution, in 1774 Allan and Flora arrived in North Carolina, where they purchased two plantations.

The Royal Governor authorized Donald MacDonald to offer generous inducements for enlistment. Each Highlander was offered 200 acres of land, the same pay as regular British troops, and liberal compensation for the use of their horses and wagons. Additionally, they received the assurance that they would not have to fight outside the colony of North Carolina. These incentives resulted in the Scots, including many who were new in America and did not feel attachment to the rebel cause, to eagerly fight for the Crown. Initially, more than 1,500 flocked to the British colors and enlisted in the 84th Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment at Cross Creek (Fayetteville.)

Once MacDonald had a robust number of new recruits in the ranks, he intended to march the 1st Battalion of the 84th, now commanded by Allan Maclean, south towards Wilmington to link-up with Cornwallis and Clinton. While the MacDonald brothers and McLeod were in the process of recruitment, local Patriot sympathizers contacted the American militia in the area. They were able to alert the militia to MacDonald's plan. Even worse for the loyalists, a courier for the Royal Governor defected and told the Patriots all.

As the Crown's forces finalized preparations for their march towards the coast, Col. James Moore, commander of Patriot forces in southeastern North Carolina, masterminded a strategy to foil MacDonald's rendezvous with Cornwallis and Clinton. When MacDonald began his advance on February 21, Moore was able to block the initial route taken by the Highlanders. MacDonald then altered his route by crossing the Cape Fear River and moving toward Corbett's Ferry on the Black River. When Moore learned that MacDonald had won the race to Corbett's Ferry, he ordered the Wilmington battalion of 150 militia under Col. Alexander Lillington to join Col. Richard Caswell's 800 militia from New Bern at Moore's Creek. The bridge there crossed the last significant water obstacle on the 84th Regiment's march to the coast. When they assembled, the combined Patriot force numbered more than a thousand.

Up to this point, Brigadier General MacDonald had been striving mightily to carry out General Gage's orders to link up with the British troops approaching the coast. He did this by refusing to engage in combat with the Patriot forces trying to prevent the rendezvous. Whenever the 84th Regiment's scouts discovered Patriots blocking their path toward Wilmington, MacDonald would have his command move around

Both: U.S. National Park Service

the blocking force and continue their march south. However, as they reached Moore's Creek, the Loyalists decided not to bypass their opponents, but to meet them head-on.

This was not the original intention of General MacDonald. However, the Culloden veteran was an elderly man in his mid-60s and he was near collapse from the exhaustion of the long march. Therefore, he passed command to McLeod, who decided that the time to avoid battle might soon be over. From his sickbed, General MacDonald cautioned McLeod and Maclean against an attack, especially as he felt the 84th Regiment was probably outnumbered and knew almost half of his men had yet to be issued firearms.

The Patriots at Moore's Creek, found that the ground around a narrow bridge, located on a sandbar, offered an excellent defensive position. Situated at the highest elevation in the area, the bridge crossed the dark, swampy tidal creek at a

ABOVE: A Scottish officer, possibly Lieutenant Colonel MacLeod, center-right, prepares to lead the Loyalist troops across the remains of the bridge across Moore's Creek. The men stuck their swords into the greased trusses to keep from falling into the water below. TOP: Aerial illustration of the Patriot earthworks at the Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge. The bridge can be seen in the upper right quadrant. OPPOSITE: A soldier of the 84th Regiment, Royal Highland Emigrants, wears a standard Scottish uniform of the British Army, including blue bonnet, red coatee, kilt, diced stockings, broadsword and Brown Bess musket. The unit's North Carolina recruits were not yet supplied uniforms.

Both: U.S. National Park Service

ABOVE: This modern illustration depicts the Patriot militia firing on the advancing loyalists from inside their earthworks in the predawn Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge. A small cannon mounted on a "galloper" carriage fires from close range. RIGHT: Loyalists attack Patriot earthworks at Moore's Creek Bridge in North Carolina on February 27, 1776. Those wearing Scottish kilts, bonnets and stockings, are soldiers of the 84th Regiment who arrived from Canada and New York. Others in simple hunting shirts are likely local recruits. The figure falling on the road at right could be Lt. Col. MacLeod, who was killed in the charge.

place where the waterway was 50 feet wide and nearly chin deep.

On the afternoon of February 26, General MacDonald sent a loyalist courier to the Patriot camp, offering them the chance to lay down their weapons, which Colonel Caswell refused. When the courier returned to MacDonald, he indicated the Patriot position would be vulnerable to attack, not having seen earthworks built by the Patriots. Realizing that the courier sent by MacDonald would be thoroughly questioned about the layout of the Patriot's bivouac, Caswell had his men move their camp across the creek.

After crossing the creek, the Patriots took the planks off the bridge, leaving only the girders, which they covered with axle grease and soap. In the Patriot breastworks a short distance from the southeast bank of the creek they placed at least two light artillery pieces aimed at the bridge. The largest was known affectionately as "Mother Covington," and the smaller was called "The Daughter." Not only would the attacking Highlanders have to face dug-in musketeers after crossing the dismantled and greased bridge, but artillery pieces as well.

Solid cannon projectiles were called round shot, and the weight of the cannonball was what gave the individual cannon their specific designation. During the Revolutionary War, the weight of projectiles typically ranged from three pounds up to twenty-four pounds. The larger caliber cannons were used for defending fortifications and for besieging them. In common practice, 12-pounders were normally the heaviest used in field service, as they weighed approximately 2,000 pounds each. In addition to round shot, cannons could also fire a projectile known as a shell. A shell was a hollow iron ball that was filled with gunpowder. A fuse inserted into the shell was lit by the blast as it was fired at the enemy. The shell would then land in the opposing ranks where it would explode, throwing shrapnel into the enemy. Both shell and shot could be fired the farthest and were generally used when enemy troop formations were at a distance.

Cannon of the era could also fire antipersonnel ammunition at close-range targets. These close-in munitions included grapeshot and canister. Grapeshot was a group of one-inch solid iron balls, stacked around a center pintle and held together with rope and canvas. When the cannon was fired, the projectile opened up as it left the barrel. Another defensive munition was case shot or canister. This consisted of iron shot or musket balls placed inside a cylindrical tin canister that fragment on discharge. Both grapeshot and canister turned artillery pieces into giant shotguns that would prove devastating to attacking troops.

Camped about six miles from the Patriots at Moore's Creek, and believing the courier's observation that the Patriots would be vulnerable to attack, McLeod held a council of war. In the council the younger officers prevailed, and the attack on Moore's Creek was set for dawn the next day, February 27, 1776. At 1 a.m. the Loyalist force began the march to the Patriot camp, and by 5 a.m. arrived at the west bank of the creek.

The stillness of the wetland was broken at sunrise when several hundred Highlanders, their broadswords in hand, stormed the bridge in a Highland Charge. Other Highlanders were trying to cross farther upstream and attempt an envelopment. Bagpipes played in the background as the attackers shouted, "King George and broadswords!" A picked company of 80 Scots under Lt. John Campbell led the charge, to be followed by McLeod and the main force. Campbell, McLeod, and others got across the greased bridge stringers by sticking the points of their broadswords

into the girders to prevent them slipping off.

Those who got across the dismantled bridge were then hit by musket and cannon fire as they approached the enemy breastworks. More than 50 Highlanders, including McLeod, became battle casualties, with many of the wounded falling in and drowning in the neck-deep creek. A postmortem inspection showed that McLeod's body was riddled with nine musket balls and twenty-four birdshot, fired by some of the Patriot militiamen shooting their civilian muskets loaded for bird hunting. It is quite possible that some of the musket balls in his body came from Patriot artillery canister rounds.

With the men of the 84th Regiment now in retreat, the Patriots left their entrenchments and ran to the creek, where they quickly re-laid the planks and chased the Loyalists. About 850 Loyalist soldiers were taken prisoner, including Lieutenant Colonel Maclean, General MacDonald, and his brother, Allan. In the battle at the bridge, which lasted only a few minutes, only two Patriots were wounded, one of whom, John Grady of Duplin County, died four days later of his wounds. His body was later buried on the battlefield. The war trophies claimed by the victorious Patriots were substantial: 150 broadswords, hundreds of muskets, and £15,000 British Pounds, which would be more than $2.5 million in today's U.S. currency. The Battle of Moore's Creek Bridge only lasted a few minutes, but was significant as the first decisive Patriot victory of the war.

Since there would be no 84th Royal Highland Emigrant Regiment to link up with, Generals Clinton and Cornwallis bypassed Wilmington and sailed for South Carolina. The Battle of Fort Sullivan was fought on June 28, 1776, near Charleston during the first British attempt to capture the city. Col.William Moultrie commanded the partially constructed fort and Francis Marion was one of his officers. The British amphibious assault failed when the channel between the two islands was found to be too deep to wade, and the American defenses prevented a naval landing. The British Navy's bombardment had little effect due to the spongy nature of the fort's Palmetto log construction. Conversely, the shot and shell fired by the defenders wrought significant damage on the British fleet, which retreated after a day. The British withdrew their expedition force to New York and did not return to the Carolinas until 1780 when they captured Wilmington and Charleston and then eventually proceeded up the coast to Yorktown, Virginia. ■

Divisions went in, and all but disappeared, in the U.S. Army's worst defeat in Europe.

BY ROBERT A. LYNN

The 1944 invasion of France, the breakout from the beaches, the surprise German counterattack in the Ardennes, and the final reckoning with the Third Reich have all been exhaustively chronicled. Whole libraries have been written on these events, all of which were victories. Even the Battle of the Bulge became a victory in the end. But of the U.S. Army's greatest defeat in Europe, an engagement most modern observers agree should never have happened—a terrible battle of attrition in a remote German frontier forest—there is virtually nothing. That's because it was a defeat and, for obvious reasons, the top brass doesn't like defeats and discourages attempts at writing about them.

At the time, the few journalists who ventured into the Hürtgen Forest (Ernest Hemingway being one of them) called the slaughter taking place there "Passchendaele with tree bursts" (referring to the 1917 battle now synonymous in British Army annals with useless human carnage). But the GIs who went into that forest to fight and to die by the thousands had another name for it: "the Death Factory." That grim sobriquet was never publicized by the media back home during that gray, bitter winter more than 80 years ago, for obvious reasons.

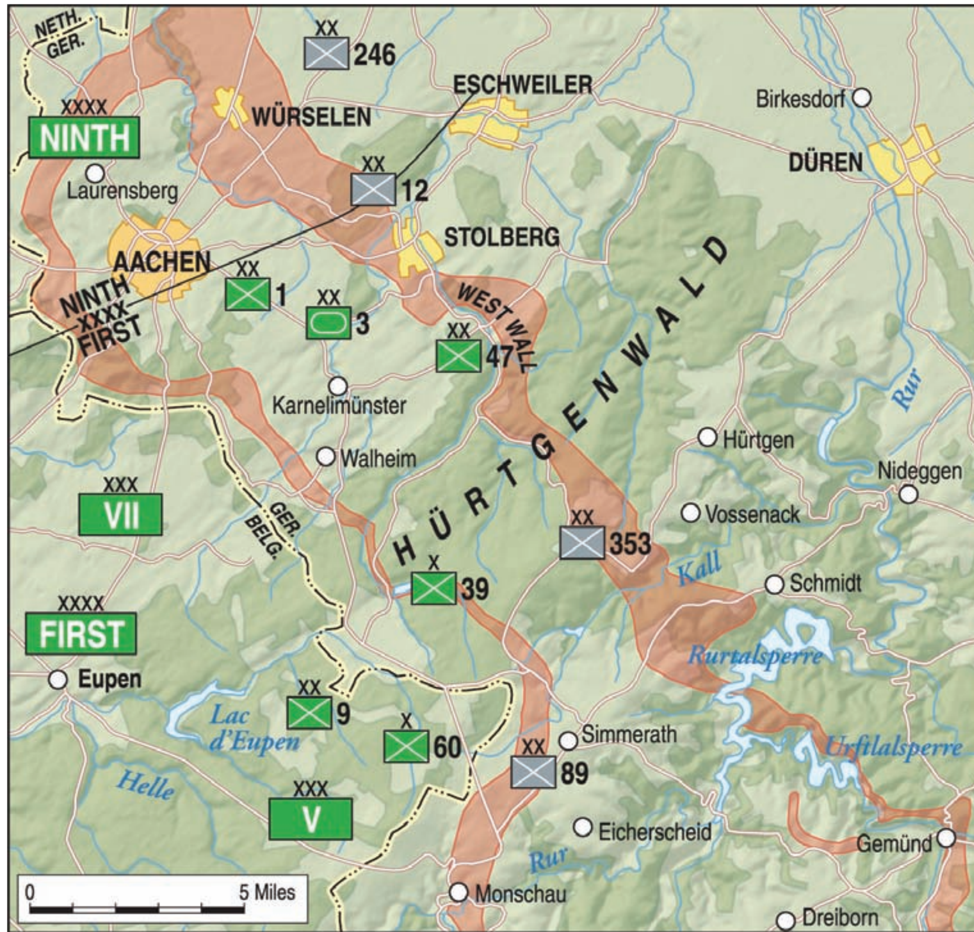
By August 1944, Allied forces had broken out of the hedgerows of Normandy; Paris had been liberated; and the German Army was fleeing, apparently in disarray, back to the Reich. Many Allied soldiers believed that, with just a little push, the war with Germany would be over by Christmas. At Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF), however, there was less optimism because they saw the German resistance stiffening at the Siegfried Line, Adolf Hitler's defensive line

Into the Hürtgenwald

National Archives

After Operation Market-Garden failed make it into Germany in September 1944, U.S. Lt. General "Lightning" Joe Collins suggested the Hürtgen Forest might offer a safer route into the Reich through the German Siegfried Line.

Map © 2024 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



Ullstein Bild

n the western border of Germany.

The Siegfried Line, or West Wall, was a series of prepared positions that would be very costly to assault. General Dwight D. Eisenhower hoped to accomplish his mission of defeating Germany with a minimum of casualties, but looming ahead of the rapidly advancing Allies was this forbidding network of defenses. Part of that defensive system was the dark and brooding *Hürtgenwald*—the Hürtgen Forest.

Trying to avoid a direct assault on the Siegfried Line and the Hürtgen Forest, Eisenhower weighed the situation. First, it was painfully apparent by September 1944 that supplies were becoming short and his two dynamic and demanding subordinates, Lt. Gen. George S. Patton and Gen. Bernard L. Montgomery, were in direct competition for supplies and the ear of their commander. As it turned out, Montgomery was able to convince Eisenhower to attempt a combination land and airborne assault toward Arnhem, called Operation Market-Garden, that would outflank the Siegfried Line to the north. One of the reasons Eisenhower allowed Montgomery to make his attempt to defeat the Germans in Holland was the specter of the Hürtgenwald and the Siegfried Line. But toward the end of September it was obvious that Montgomery's "dagger thrust" into Holland was a failure and new plans had to be considered at SHAEF.

Meanwhile, by the beginning of September 1944, Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges' First Army had breached the Siegfried Line in two places, the most significant of which was at the city of Aachen. Hodges's 750,000-man army comprised three U.S. Corps, the VII, V and VIII, deployed from north to south facing the Hürtgenwald.

Feeling that the Germans were nearly defeated, Maj. Gen. "Lightning" Joe Collins, commander of the 80,000-man VII Corps, proposed to his superior, Lt. Gen. Courtney Hodges, a "reconnaissance in force" to breach the Siegfried Line before the Germans had time to put troops into the fortifications. Neither man considered the realities of the Hürtgen Forest.

The region started some five miles south of Aachen, where it was a collection of several woods extending 50 square miles within a triangle formed by the cities of Aachen, Duren and Monschau. From the southwest to the northeast two ridges point toward the Roer River. On the northern ridge lie the small townships of Hürtgen, Kleinhau and Grosshau, with the ridge itself extending some two miles. The southern ridge stretches from Lammersdorf to Schmidt, townships which were then mainly unknown outside the area, even to the Germans themselves. Between these two ridges is the deep gorge of the little, but fast-flowing, River Kall.

National Archives

ABOVE: Members of Company E, 110th Infantry Regiment, 28th Infantry Division advance through the Hürtgen Forest near Vossenack, Germany, on November 2, 1944. Most of the rifle companies in the 28th suffered up to 50 percent casualties in as little as two weeks. OPPOSITE TOP: Fighting the terrain and the weather as much as the fiercely motivated Germans defending their homeland, the efforts of the U.S. V and VII Corps to penetrate the thickly wooded Hürtgen Forest met with difficulty from the outset. OPPOSITE BOTTOM: Armed with antitank panzerfaust weapons, these German troops were among those who tenaciously fought for every yard of the Hürtgen Forest during the winter of 1944-1945. Two soldiers (center) are armed with the Sturmgewehr 44, considered by many to be the world's first assault rifle.

The terrain, tough enough already, had steep, wooded heights reaching up to 1,000 feet and packed with close-knit fir trees and fast-flowing little streams racing through the tight valleys.

For the attacker, the Hürtgen Forest was made even more difficult by the German fortifications: concrete pillboxes and bunkers fronted by "dragon's teeth," with interlocking fields of fire, concrete stumps to stop the advance of tracked vehicles, and extensive minefields filled with the dreaded "Schu" mine, which couldn't be detected by mine detectors, and "Bouncing Bettys," known more irreverently by the GIs as "de-ballockers." These crude but effective devices, with a series of metal balls that exploded to about waist height, had devastating results when detonated. They were also called "50-50 mines" because of the chances once you stepped on it. If you hit it with your right foot, the rod flew up your right side, but if you hit it with your left, you'd end up singing tenor.

To guard the right flank of this "reconnaissance in force," Collins proposed to send an American force into the forest to root out the second-rate German 353rd (and later the 275th) Infantry Divisions. But unknown to Collins, the attack through the forest would cost him the mobility and superiority given him—at that time—by his tanks and aircraft. Instead, the advantage would shift to the defenders.

To Hodges' infantrymen, contained in eight veteran, hard-fighting combat divisions, the Hürtgenwald promised to be a dismal fight. Infantry without proper support from artillery, armor and air would have a difficult time in any terrain. The Hürtgenwald's road network was very poor, and the fall rains turned what few trails there were into knee-deep quagmires. Not only would the advance be slow, but the resupply of ammunition, food and equipment would be almost impossible. To make matters worse, the combat infantry veterans knew that to be wounded in such terrain meant long hours of travel to aid stations, mainly by walking or being carried on a hand litter—if that was even possible in such circumstances. Moreover, artillery was fired so that the shells would burst in the treetops, and deadly splinters of wood and steel would rain down on the lightly protected foot soldiers, Germans and Americans alike. It was poor terrain on which to fight an infantry battle.

Mesmerized by the rapidity of the advance across France, Hodges allowed his corps commanders to start their move against the German positions on September 12. The defending German forces in the forest, however, were veteran units. Unknown to Hodges, or to higher headquarters, many of those combat units had their staffs intact and were being quickly bolstered by reinforcements from the Reich.

The Allies made a critical error by underestimating the resilience of the German war machine.

Simply put, the Americans had morale and momentum, but the equation was balanced by the Germans having the element of surprise and a desperation born of now having to defend their homeland. The great German military theoretician, Carl von Clausewitz, argued a century before that in combat a determined defense was actually the strongest method of waging war. While the offense promised more of a decision, a well-prepared defender could even the odds. That was to prove true in Hürtgenwald in the fall of 1944.

Complicating matters for Allied planners was the Roer River on the eastern side of the forest. It

was not so much the river itself that presented a problem—it was the number of sizable dams which, if destroyed, could flood the area. Thus if Hodges' troops crossed the Roer and the Germans opened the dams and flooded the plains, the attackers could very well be trapped. Initially the dams were not an Allied objective, nor was the small town of Schmidt, which controlled the routes to the dams. That neither Hodges nor his corps commanders seemed to see the value in taking the town or the dams proved a costly oversight.

The men of the U.S. 9th Infantry Division led the assault and, at first, their progress was good. The GIs quickly penetrated the outer defenses of the Siegfried Line, advanced 6 miles and captured 400 prisoners while sustaining just a handful of casualties. But on September 15, the 60th Regiment of the 9th ran into roadblocks, pillboxes, narrow trails, thick minefields and bitter German counterattacks. German real estate became expensive, with gains measured not in miles, but in yards.

Now the "PBI," or poor bloody infantry, and combat engineers took over to clear the pillboxes that stopped the American advance. The combat engineers crawled forward through the mud to prod with their bayonets for the enemy mines, made even more dangerous because they were often booby-trapped. By the time both the 9th Infantry Division and the 15th Combat Engineer Battalion were moved temporarily to the rear at the end of September 1944, they had lifted l,352 mines, defused 100 booby traps, and neutralized 125 fortified pillboxes while under fire. But the 9th's casualties were horrendous, worse than they had suffered in North Africa, Sicily and France. Its 60th Infantry Regiment, which bore the brunt of the fighting, suffered in the end almost 100 percent turnover in combat personnel since September 3. To begin with, the forest had beaten the attackers, but they would be back again.

After Montgomery's operation to end the war quickly by going through Holland into Germany had failed, there was more emphasis on a broad assault all along the German border. The attack kicked off on October 6 in the Hürtgen. The initial objectives were the villages of Germeter and Vossenack, with a southward drive over the high ground beyond the Germeter-Hürtgen Road. The objective was to continue through the Hürtgen Forest and have as its final aim the clearing and seizing of the Schmidt-Steckenborn ridge. The 60th Regiment and, to its right, the 39th Regiment of the 9th would go in to clear the forest on a three-mile front, while the 47th Regiment would secure the left flank and carry out day and night patrolling as well as supplying the reserve in an emergency.

In his riveting and haunting *Battle Of Hurtgen Forest*, Charles Whiting described that "the firs in the Hürtgen were so thick that they interlocked. The advancing infantry would be faced with a solid mass of dark, impenetrable green. At the level of a crawling man there was room, so that it was as if the individual soldier were entering a dark green forbidden cave that immediately cut him off from his fellows. In these caves regiments lost battalions and battalions lost companies. Even at the company level it would be difficult to maintain control. In the end it came down to squads of men fighting on their own, cut off in a claustrophobic green little world without support of tanks, aircraft, or artillery."

Into this dreadful maze of mystery and darkness, the 9th began its advance once again after both air and artillery support—such as it was—had been delivered. But German resistance was so heavy that by the end of October 6 it was costing the 9th exactly one man lost for every square yard of ground captured. Aid stations filled up so rapidly that 2,000 men were being air-evacuated daily from the First Army's front, back to England, and they were only the serious ones.

The fierce German resistance was led by none other than Field Marshal Walter Model, a loner and a ruthless commander much hated and feared by his subordinates but loved by his front-line soldiers, or "front swine" as they proudly called themselves. He quickly assessed the situation and took charge by using anything and anyone who could fire a weapon: reserve units, police battalions, convalescent companies, training units and stomach battalions.

For four long, bloody days, both the 39th and 60th regiments continued to battle the Germans while their casualties mounted steadily. Tanks were brought up to assist in their advance but found they had to bunch up, and thus became easy marks for the German artillery. Combat engineers were lifting mines by the hundreds. In one area, they estimated there was a Teller mine every eight paces for three miles. In one narrow firebreak they found 500 of the deadly devices.

Heads began to roll at 9th Infantry Division headquarters. The assistant divisional commander, the 9th's 60th Regimental colonel, and the division's chief of staff were relieved. (The division's new chief of staff, incidentally, was the commander of the 34th Field Artillery, Col. William C. Westmoreland.) But the 9th kept attacking until October 24 when they were finally relieved by the 28th Infantry (Keystone) Division. The 9th's casualties had been enormous: For a gain of exactly 3,000 yards on a 3-mile front the division had suffered 3,836

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ABOVE: GIs of 18th Field Artillery Battalion use 4.5-inch rockets fired from two-and-a-half-ton trucks to dislodge German defenders. Tree bursts were especially deadly for Americans and Germans alike. OPPOSITE: American M-10 tank destroyers crawl up a muddy road through the Hürtgen Forest. The few roads that existed in the rugged, thickly wooded terrain were made nearly impassable by the wet winter weather.

National Archives

casualties, or 30 percent of its strength.

The 28th and its commander, Norman "Dutch" Cota, were ordered to capture the Hürtgen township of Schmidt, which controlled the road network that would provide additional lateral supply routes for the main drive on the Rhine by Collins' VII Corps . Cota had orders to accomplish this mission by November 5. Cota protested both to V Corps commander Maj. Gen. L.T. Gerow and Hodges on the dangers of attacking the Germans head on, but to no avail.

As dawn broke on that cold, damp morning of November 2, American aircraft and artillery did the best they could. Then the 109th, 110th and 112th Infantry Regiments advanced. What followed mirrored or surpassed the horror of the Civil War's Battle of the Wilderness in 1864 or the Argonne Forest fight in 1918. The Germans put up a fierce resistance, exacting a huge cost on the Americans. Consequently the regiments moved at a snail's pace. Communications broke down. Then discipline cracked. By the end of the day, the 28th's advance was stalled.

But on the following day, things got better for the 28th. Aided by a combat command of tanks from the 5th Armored Division, men of the 112th Regiment captured Schmidt. But as night fell, a sense of uneasiness came over the Americans. As supporting tanks advanced forward in relief, they found the "road" to Schmidt, called the Kall Trail, too narrow and unstable under the weight of armor. The combat engineers moved up to work on the trail, and finished by the morning of November 4. But as the tanks were advancing, one rolled over a mine and lost its track.

Only three tanks were able to negotiate the trail to Schmidt before the Germans counterattacked with artillery, tanks and men. The scene was horrendous. The German Mark IV tanks rolled over American mines and kept coming. Nor were GI's bazookas a match for the Mark IVs. Soon the men of the 3rd Battalion, 112th Infantry, broke in a panic. Both officers and NCOs attempted to rally the troops and eventually were able to bring some order to this chaotic situation.

Cota now had Eisenhower, Hodges, Collins and Gerow breathing down his neck to get the attack rolling again. He immediately sent two badly shaken battalions and seven tanks up the Kall Trail to attack elements of a German infantry division and the famed 116th Panzer Division (The Greyhounds), who had been in the forefront of the fighting since D-Day.

But as the American tanks inched forward, they ran into Germans on the Kall Trail. A fierce and bloody fight ensued with heavy casualties on both sides by the end of the day. Neither side could make progress and both Germans and Americans then fell into an exhausted sleep.

Before disaster could overtake the 28th, the battle-worn survivors of the 112th and 110th regiments, plus engineers and tankers who supported them, began their withdrawal back down to the Kall River. But even this withdrawal had a price.

Next, Cota ordered two mutilated battalions (hastily reinforced by five hundred men) to support the drive of the 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division, on what was known as the Monschau Corridor.

This second attack on Schmidt would become the most costly American division-strength attack during all of World War II. The 28th's casualties were estimated at 6,184, or 45 percent of their original strength. As the official U.S. history of the battle states: "It represented a major repulse to American arms."

Nevertheless the commanders were so intent on clearing out the forest that they ordered a massive offensive. On the morning of November 16, Operation Queen was launched into the Hürtgen Forest with a force totaling 100,000 men, including First Army's V Corps (8th, 28th Infantry and 5th Armored) and VII Corps (1st, 4th, 104th Infantry and 3rd Armored), as well as Ninth Army's XII Corps (84th, 102nd Infantry) and XIX Corps (29th, 30th Infantry and 2nd Armored). Air support would be provided by the U.S. 8th and 9th and the Royal Air Forces as well as artillery.

After a long and thundering barrage, the new offensive set off. But like every other assault in the forest since mid-September, it quickly ground down. The weather was cold and wet, and the German resistance determined. Indeed the Ger-

National Archives

ABOVE: During hazardous house-to-house fighting in the town of Hürtgen, an American tank destroyer creeps forward along a cobblestone street. Throughout the forest, the Germans turned every cottage and barn into a strongpoint that had to be reduced by a formal, planned attack. OPPOSITE: Soldiers of the Company I, 3rd Battalion, 121st Infantry Regiment trudge through the ruins of Hürtgen in December 1944. After Maj. Gen. L.T. Gerow's V Corps 8th Infantry cleared the town with armored support, the Germans reduced it to rubble with mortar and artillery fire.

mans had another reason for holding the Americans in place. They could not let the GIs cross the Roer for fear of discovering and upsetting the massive assemblage of German divisions gathering for their last great offensive. Thus for the next four weeks both sides fought one another, pouring in more men and materiel but to no great advantage.

On December 15, the GIs were ordered to dig in and await new orders. They never came because of the surprise attack by the Germans the next day through the Ardennes, south of the Hürtgenwald. Then, not only did the Battle of the Bulge just south of them divert the attention of senior commanders, but also overshadowed the immediate and long-term memory of the horrific fight of attrition in the Hürtgen.

As December 1944 slowly gave way to January, and then February 1945, and the Battle of the Bulge was turning into a defeat for Hitler's armies, a new and final effort to take the Hürtgen Forest was in the making. This time the 78th Infantry Division of V Corps, with massive artillery support, began its attack on "the Death Factory" on February 5, 1945.

At first, the attack went off well. Combat engineers and a combat team from the 7th Armored Division were quickly dispatched to assist in the offensive and the Americans moved forward, but as the Germans became aware of the imminent threat to the Ruhr dams, their resistance stiffened. Then a mix-up in orders from higher headquarters confused both the 309th and 310th Infantry Regiments. This, and nightfall, halted their advance.

They weren't the only ones confused. Brig. Gen. James M. Gavin, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, who attacked on February 7 on the flank of the 78th, immediately surveyed the terrain and went to V Corps' headquarters. He posed one question to both Maj. Gen. Clarence Huebner, then in command of V Corps, and Maj. Gen. Edwin Parker in command of the 78th: "Why in the world had we attacked through the

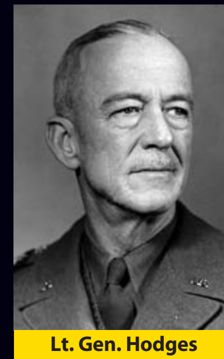
The Southerner and The Prussian

The disastrous Hürtgen Forest campaign was the thankless mission given to the U.S. First Army, then commanded by Lt. Gen. Courtney H. Hodges. Opposing him was Adolf Hitler's feuerwehrmann, or fireman (so called because of his bold actions when sent to trouble spots), Generalfeldmarschall Walther Model. The commanders were quite different in both background and personality.

Hodges, a native of Perry, Georgia, attended the U.S. Military Academy at West Point to pursue his childhood dream of becoming a soldier. But he failed to pass mathematics his first year and returned home. In 1906, he enlisted in the army as a private and was commissioned a second lieutenant in 1909. In 1918, Major Hodges rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel and earned the Distinguished Service Cross and the Silver Star for his "fearlessness and courage" in combat. Returning to the U.S., Hodges attended the Field Artillery School, the Command and General Staff College, and the Army War College. He became an instructor at West Point and the Infantry School at Fort Benning (now Monroe), Georgia.

In 1940, newly promoted Brigadier General Hodges returned to the Infantry School, where he launched a series of reforms to improve the school's curriculum. He was succeeded by Gen. Omar N. Bradley, who regarded him as "an august figure."

In 1941, Hodges became chief of infantry and a major general. It was in this final post before World War II, where Hodges promoted the use of the bazooka, jeep, M-1 carbine and airborne troops. His enthusiastic interest in training sol-



Lt. Gen. Hodges

Field Marshal Model

diers helped him lay a foundation for the techniques of training infantry used during the army's rapid expansion.

Hodges activated X Corps in Texas as part of the Third Army. He was then promoted to lieutenant general and assumed command of that army in February 1943. A year later he preceded it to England and became deputy to Omar Bradley.

Hürtgen Forest in the first place?" Gavin received no reply because that was a "no-no question."

Meanwhile, to the north of the Hürtgen Forest, 1,000,000 Allied soldiers of both the U.S. Army's Ninth Army and Montgomery's First Canadian Army waited for the 78th to capture the dam at Schwammenauel before the Germans blew it up. If the Wehrmacht blew the dams, millions of tons of water would flood the flat plain on both sides of the Roer and the mobility of the Allied armor would be lost.

The Germans turned every cottage and barn into a strongpoint that had to be reduced by a formal, planned attack. Casualties mounted on both sides, but with the support of the 744th Tank Battalion and the 60th Infantry Regiment of the 9th Infantry Division, the Americans were able to seize the dam intact.

After more than five months, engaging eight infantry and two armored divisions, plus several smaller U.S. units, the Battle of the Hürtgen Forest had finally ended. During the struggle most of the rifle companies suffered up to 50 percent casualties in as little as two weeks. In two unfortunate regiments, the 9th Infantry Division's 60th Regiment and the 4th Infantry Division's 22nd Regiment, the losses were 100 percent.

By the end of the horror, 30,000 Americans had died or were wounded, and many thousands more cracked and went down with combat exhaustion, no longer able to cope. Company commanders refused to attack, battalions broke and ran away, even a regimental commander seemed to desert his outfit. By the time the battle had reached its high point, the top brass was relieving divisional commanders due to their apparent lack of drive and will to succeed.

National Archives

The United States lost more than 25 percent of all troops engaged, exceptionally high for American casualties in World War II. Despite the fact that German records were lost in the last days of the war, it is most probable that their casualty rates were even higher.

The Hürtgen Forest campaign also produced a postwar bitterness, especially on the part of the U.S. 28th "Keystone" Division (Pennsylvania National Guard). The veterans felt that their operations, from November 2 to 16, were poorly planned, and represented the undue optimism by Hodges and then V Corps Commander Lt. Gen. Gerow that the Germans were all but beaten, and that combat in this area, which offered so little inroads for support and resupply, would be against half-hearted defenders.

The IX Tactical Air Command (TAC) was

Continued on page 98

Hodges looked more like a successful businessman than a military commander, but he had a reputation for painstaking attention to detail. Bradley termed him "a military technician" with "faultless techniques and tactical knowledge."

His glowing opinion, however, changed during the bloody Hürtgen Forest campaign. During this time, many of his peers and subordinates thought him too reticent and restrained. Under stress, Hodges could be querulous and brittle.

Even though Hodges wasn't an aggressive general, he still gave the First Army the firm guiding hand that allowed its aggressive subordinate commanders to defeat the Wehrmacht.

Model, Hodges' opponent, was quite the opposite. He served in World War I as an infantry officer and was one of the first ranking German officers to support Hitler. At a time when old-line Prussian officers were sneering at or plotting against Hitler, Model embraced the Nazi party. It was this dedication and unwavering support that would serve him well as he rose quickly through the ranks of the Wehrmacht.

He served first as chief of staff of the IV Corps during the assault on Poland and then chief of staff of the 16th Army during the invasion of France. His performance was rewarded with command of the 3rd Panzer Division in Operation Barbarossa, the invasion of the USSR, with a promotion to commander of the III Panzer Korps in 1941. In 1942, he commanded the 9th Army, where he pioneered the use of dug-in tanks, demonstrating the defensive value of armor. During four weeks of fierce winter fighting, he destroyed one Soviet army and decimated another.

In October 1943, Model was selected to command Army Group North, which he brilliantly withdrew in good order from Leningrad in January 1944. In April he was promoted to field marshal and took command of Army Group Northern Ukraine (formerly Army Group South). He subsequently stopped the Soviets along the Vistula. He was then sent west to relieve von Kluge in France.

A leader with an iron hand, Model wasn't always popular with his men or with the senior Wehrmacht leadership. But he retained Hitler's favor to the end, just as he retained faith in Hitler. He was the first commander to denounce the failed July 20, 1944, plot to kill the Fuhrer. His excellent organizational skills, especially when on the defensive, enabled him to scrape together men and materiel—forging them into effective fighting units that, while not able to stop the Allied advance, could significantly delay it.

Model went on to command the troops who launched the Battle of the Bulge and continued his defensive efforts even into the spring of 1945. He killed himself near Dusseldorf in late April of that year. ■

The Berezina Bridges

During the retreat from Russia, Napoleon's weary troops force their way across the River Berezina in November 1812. | BY JONATHAN NORTH

The shattered remains of Napoleon's once brilliant Grande Armée entered Smolensk on November 9, 1812. Taking stock of the situation, the emperor realized that he and his army couldn't possibly winter in the charred remains of the city. Between the 12th and the 17th the weary, starving frozen mass, reduced now to some 50,000 effectives, quit Russia's second city to continue its chaotic withdrawal. But near the little village of Krasnoi to the west, Napoleon's line of retreat was cut off by the Russian main army, which had been following the French but circumvented Smolensk. For the next three days the Grande Armée fought a ferocious series of battles, cutting their way through the Russians with the loss of some 20,000 men.

The defeat of Mikhail Kutuzov's Russians, bloodied and swept aside, raised French morale, as did the numerous supplies gathered at Orsha. But they were to be plagued by misfortune and it was here that they first heard ugly rumors of the surrender of Minsk—a key French base 150 km to the southwest—and the news that Russians under Admiral Pavel Tchichagov were advancing to cut the French line of retreat at the Berezina River. The

The final battle in Napoleon's disastrous 1812 invasion of Russia is depicted in the painting, "The Grande Armée Crossing the Berezina," by Polish artist and army officer January Suchodolski (1866). His original force of more than 600,000 had been decimated by death, disease, desertion and capture; only about 30,000 men made it across the river as Napoleon went on ahead to Paris.

National Museum, Poznan, Poland

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

bridge at Borisov now assumed tremendous importance, threatened by Russians advancing from the south and Peter Wittgenstein's Russians pressing down from the north. The Grande Armée that once numbered more than 600,000 on this campaign, was still being followed by Kutuzov and in danger of being crushed between three Russian armies.

Tchichagov took Minsk on November 17 but did not spend long there, hurrying northward to the Berezina with his veteran force, battle-hardened by five years of war against the Turks in Bulgaria. Count Langeron, who commanded a division in this Army of Moldavia, wrote: "We had over 35,000 excellent troops—more than enough to gain the result we hoped for. These 35,000 heroes, veterans of ten campaigns, in good health, well fed, well armed, well equipped, could, if properly employed, overcome the 80,000 ragged, discouraged, and demoralised wretches with whom Napoleon was fleeing from Moscow."

On the 21st his vanguard defeated a weak French garrison defending the bridge at Borisov. The Russians drove the French, commanded by Johann Dombrowski, over the bridge and out through the little town. The remnants of Dombrowski's troops ran into the II Corps of Nicolas Oudinot, who had been ordered by Napoleon to protect the Berezina crossing. Alarmed by the news that the enemy now occupied Borisov, he sent his cavalry and the cuirassiers of Doumerc against Pahlen's Russians.

The French swept into the town but were unable to secure the bridge, which the Russians burned as they withdrew, severing the only crossing over the Berezina. Things looked bleak for the French. As Capt. Johann von Borcke, a Westphalian staff officer in Jean-Andoche Junot's VIII Corps, wrote: "A dark rumour had spread that two enemy armies were threatening our line of retreat, after Kutuzov's army had let us out of its clutches and halted on the Dnepr. Without really being pursued, we approached the Berezina, but on the way these rumours steadily gained substance, and the names 'Tchichagov' and 'Berezina' passed from mouth to mouth. At the time of our advance in the summer the river had looked insignificant, but now it looked as though any crossing would be strongly contested. People remembered the long wooden bridge at Borisov and its black marshy banks; these recollections, and the prospect of having to fight our way through another Russian army, sent shudders through us."

At Tolochin, Napoleon heard that Minsk had definitely fallen, its slow-witted governor, Mikolaj Bronikowski, having been surprised and chased out of the city by the quick-moving Russians. At Bobr news came that the Borisov bridge had been taken by Tchichagov. On the morning of the 25th the emperor was told that the Borisov bridge had been destroyed by the retreating enemy. At first the emperor hoped a crossing might still be attempted at Borisov and even reconnoitered the site in person—but with 30,000 Russian troops in the area, a successful operation seemed highly unlikely. Oudinot reported that his light cavalry commanded by Jean-Baptiste Corbineau had discovered a ford near the little village of Studienka and the Marshal decided to use this ford as a crossing point, although the water was 1.5 meters deep and the river had widened due to a recent thaw.

Napoleon dispatched General of Engineers Jean-Baptiste Éblé and General François Chasseloup with four hundred pontonniers—pontoon bridge builders—to aid Oudinot's artillery, commanded by Gen. Claude-Charles Aubry, in construct a crossing at Studienka.

A detachment of Oudinot's troops made a demonstration to the south of Borisov, hoping to draw the Russians away from the scene of the impending action. To the surprise of all, the ruse worked. Not knowing the exact whereabouts of the armies of Napoleon and Kutuzov, Tchichagov thought that Napoleon might well try and cross the Berezina farther south in order to make for Minsk, so he took his troops to Usha—leaving just Langeron opposite Borisov and a screen of cossacks opposite Studienka.

The cossacks, attached to Yefim Tchaplitz's cavalry division, were cleared away by Corbineau's cav-

alry, which swam across the river, and the French began the painstaking task of constructing their bridges. Studienka had virtually no available wood and Eblé, who had destroyed the bridging train at Orsha saving only two wagons with essential tools, began work on the night of November 25. His gallant pontonniers—some of whom were Dutch and some sailors of the Imperial Guard—worked shoulder deep in freezing water. Many were swept away by the current, while others were battered by ice floes. Napoleon had spent the 26th supervising the construction of the bridges and encouraging the pontonniers and engineers and by the early afternoon two 100-meter bridges had been constructed—one for infantry and cavalry and the other for vehicles and artillery.

Oudinot and Dombrowski were the first to cross, forcing the cossacks and Chaplitz's troops back to Bolshoi-Stakhov. They also secured a series of bridges that took the Vilna road over treacherous marshes around Zembin. As Oudinot was crossing, the main army—consisting of the Imperial Guard and the shattered remains of I (Davout), III (Ney), IV (Eugene, Viceroy of Italy), V (Zajonczech), VIII (Junot) Corps and the Reserve Cavalry (Latour-Maubourg)—lurched onward toward Borisov and upriver toward the crossing point. The weary Grande Armée was largely ignorant of what was taking place, as Capt. Heinrich von Brandt of the Vistula Legion writes: "After passing through Borisov, we stuck close to the banks of the Berezina and followed it upstream until we reached a village. We halted there for perhaps 15 minutes. On the far bank we could see the glare of Russian campfires. The snow continued to fall, and we sank into it up to our ankles. We were again ordered to move forwards. Our superior officers had been kept in complete ignorance as to the meaning of these movements and still believed that Napoleon would attempt to repair the Borisov bridge and cross there."

Claude-Victor Perrin, known as Victor, commanded three divisions of IX Corps and took over rear-guard duties from Davout. He prepared to face Wittgenstein, Platov, and Yermolov, who had been sent on ahead from Kutuzov's main army at Kopys.

Throughout the morning and the afternoon of the 27th, Marshal Michel Ney, with III and V Corps, the remnants of the Minsk garrison and Gen. Michel Claparède's division of the Young Guard, crossed over in support of Oudinot, marching three men abreast over the fragile infantry bridge. Brandt, in Claparède's division, describes the crossing: "It had stopped snowing, the cold had eased off slightly and it promised to be a fine day. It must have been around ten o'clock when our division, deployed in columns, began to cross the Berezina. Our carriage was following on behind but was stopped by gendarmes posted by the bridge who told everyone to 'get out as coaches can go no further'. We had to walk, relinquishing our carriage which had served us so well since Smolensk and which we would never see again. All the vehicles abandoned on that side of the river fell into the hands of the enemy and this was a savage blow indeed for the wounded. At this point the Berezina was at least fifty paces wide and was from eight to ten paces deep and bore drifting ice floes along in its current. The planks of the bridge were by no means even and when we crossed some of the planks were already missing, especially as we drew closer to the far bank. There the entire

BELOW: Ragged French cavalry troopers crowd around a campfire during their long retreat from Moscow in this watercolor by Dutch artist Jan Hoynck van Papendrecht (1858-1933). OPPOSITE: Eight days before the French battled their way across the Berezina River, they lost as many as 20,000 men in a three-day battle with the Russians at Krasnoi. This watercolor by William Heath (1815) shows the deteriorated condition of the Grand Armée in retreat across the frozen Russian landscape.

Public Domain

Amsterdam Museum

bridge was below the water-level and we had water up to our ankles."

With Victor now covering the army, Napoleon felt secure enough to send his Guard over the river. Count Jozef Zalusky, of the Polish Lancers, remembered "having never been so hungry as I was at Borisov. Fortunately, the officers of the regiment were able to purchase provisions at the village and even a litre of rum for a louis d'or." While the Polish Lancers seem to have got across the river with little trouble, it was a different story for the Dutch "Red" Lancers: "We had to open a way through by brute force. In the end we were forced to draw our swords and behave like madmen, using the flat of the blade to knock aside those who blocked our way. It was in this style that we cleared a path, despite being pursued by a thousand curses."

The Guard crossed followed by Junot, Eugene, and Davout. Napoleon himself crossed the Berezina escorted by 200 Chasseurs à Cheval and accompanied by Murat, Eugene, Berthier, Lefebvre, Lauriston, Lobau, Rapp, Durosnel, and Bessieres, late in the afternoon of the 27th. Between the units, numbers of stragglers made their way over to the far side of the river and a mob of stragglers had encamped at the approaches to the bridge, blocking access and wreaking havoc on the further movement of troops. Despite entreaties by Eblé, Victor, and Marbot, if he can be believed, this mass seemed oblivious to all. The night of the 27th was cold. Chevalier, an NCO in Napoleon's Chasseurs à Cheval described it thus: "Napoleon was lodged in a miserable barn while we established ourselves in a stable, man and beast together, managing to light a fire in the centre and lying, all about. We slept until the arrival of the wounded General Legrand, and Latour-Maubourg; they begged to be allowed in amongst us—how could we refuse such brave men? Legrand was suffering from his wound and Latour-Maubourg had completely lost his voice. I was fortunate enough to be able to offer them some hot tea, which warmed them somewhat, but that was all we had."

CLOCKWISE, FROM TOP LEFT: Russian Admiral Pavel Tchichagov, Grande Armée Marshal Michel Ney, Grande Armée Marshal Claude Victor-Perrin, Imperial Russian Army Field Marshal Peter Wittgenstein.

Not everyone found shelter that night. Cesare de Laugier remembered that "although IV Corps had been ordered across the river at 8 p.m. a good number of officers and men, scattered in farms and stables, [never] heard the order, or perhaps ignored it." Laugier crossed and camped on the right bank: "We camped behind a burnt village on a frozen marsh close to the banks of the river. The wind, snow and cold made it necessary for us to run about in order to stop ourselves from freezing. To add to our woe, wood was so rare that we had to beg some from a group of Bavarians."

As dawn broke after that bitter night, the scene was set for two battles and a veritable fight for sur-

Military History Museum, Rastatt

ABOVE: To buy time for Napoleon and the remains of his Grande Armée to cross the hastily built bridges over the Berezina River, the cavalry brigade of Baden Hussars and Hesse-Darmstadt Chevaulegers launched an attack on superior Russian forces, depicted here in the painting "Downfall of the Baden Hussars at the Battle of Berezina 1812," by Fedor Dietz (1842). OPPOSITE: With the bridge at Borisov destroyed and the Russians closing in, Napoleon ordered his General of Engineers Jean-Baptiste Éblé, along with General François Chasseloup and 400 pontoon bridge builders (*pontonniers*) to construct a crossing at Studienka—pictured here in "Crossing of the River Berizina, 1812" (c. 1859-69) by Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema.

vival as Napoleon's army, caught in the delicate act of crossing a river, was attacked from both sides. Tchichagov, finally realizing his mistake, and hearing of Tchaplitz's defeat, made his way northward to Borisov and sent Langeron in the direction of Brilowa. Langeron was beaten back by Ney, and Tchichagov, who had sent messages across the Berezina to Wittgenstein and agreed to a joint offensive on the 28th, made preparations for an all-out attack.

Clumsily moving forward out of Bolshoi-Stakhov with 9,000 infantry, Tchichagov advanced against Oudinot and Ney. Oudinot had deployed the 123rd Line, a Dutch regiment, and his four Swiss regiments in the front line. To their left were arrayed Ney's corps and the three regiments of the Vistula Legion under Claparède. Next to the Berezina, to the left of Ney, stood Delaborde's Young Guard division. Doumerc's cuirassiers, Poniatowski's V Corps, commanded by Zajonczech, Legrand's and Lagrange's divisions of II Corps, plus some elements of the Old Guard, were placed in the second line.

At 9 a.m. the first wave of the Russian assault, seven regiments of Jägers supported by artillery, made its way forward through the partially wooded, snowy and broken terrain, opening a heavy fire on the French position. The Swiss began to run out of ammunition, keeping the Russians back by repeated bayonet charges through the thick snow, until being forced back in turn by deadly Russian artillery. Oudinot was wounded while encouraging his four Swiss regiments, and Ney assumed command.

Ney then launched a counter-attack, using Claparède's Poles, the Dutch regiment, a Croatian regiment, and Doumerc's cuirassier regiment. The cuirassiers— the 4th, 7th, and 14th Cuirassiers supported by some 70 Lithuanian Gendarmes—fell upon Cherbatov's Russian division, caught it in column, and rode over it. "Our grenadiers were taken by surprise, sabred and routed," a Russian officer wrote. A brief and ferocious melée followed with infantry and cavalry fighting in the snow.

Of these events, Brandt records a tragedy: "Many officers, such as Colonel Kousinowski, had worn furs on that day and had been indistinguishable from the Russians. This had led to a terrible mistake when French cuirassiers had fallen upon the infantry and sabred friend and foe alike."

The French cavalry pursued the fleeing Russians as far as Bolshoi-Stakhov, riding down the reserves only to be beaten back by two squadrons of the Pavlograd Hussars led into battle by Chaplitz himself. Taking advantage of the confusion, Ney seized the initiative and launched his Swiss and Poles into an attack and ordered the 4th and 5th Voltigeurs of the Young Guard forward. As the drums began to roll and the Voltigeurs prepared to advance, Col. Jean-Francois Hennequin of the 5th had his horse shot from under him. As his men ran to him, he called out, "I am at my post gentlemen; let others remain at theirs." Hennequin mounted another horse and led his men into the battle.

Unable to stand the pressure, it was the Russians who were next beaten back, only resuming a cautious advance toward the French lines very late on the 28th. But the French line held, allowing the Grande Armée to slip away and on to Vilna.

Wikimedia

ABOVE: "Red Lancer crossing the Berezina, 1812" by the French artist Jules Rigo (1810-1892). A Dutch Red Lancer from the 2nd Regiment of the Imperial Guard tries to save his family by crossing the frozen Berezina River. The Polish Lancers crossed without much trouble, but the Dutch Lancers had to fight their way across, often using the flat side of their swords to clear a path. OPPOSITE: Bavarian painter Albrecht Adam accompanied Prince Eugene de Beauharnais (Viceroy of Italy and Bonaparte's stepson) on the 1812 expedition to Russia. A civilian, he was attached to Eugene's Topographical Bureau and given an officer's rank. He recorded all the major actions through writing, sketching and painting. Napoleon, on a white horse, is depicted in retreat in Adam's 1830 painting, "Retreat of French troops from Russia."

The battle had been costly for both sides: The French had lost 5,000 men, Marshal Oudinot had been seriously wounded, and generals Claparède, Zajonczech (who had his leg amputated by Larrey on Napoleon's camp bed), Rapp, Amey, Dombrowski, and Kniaziewicz had also been wounded. The Swiss had suffered enormous casualties (46 officers killed and 37 wounded from the 4 regiments), as had the Croats (3 officers killed and 15 wounded in two battalions) and the Vistula Legion (5 officers dead and 42 wounded in the Legion's 3 regiments).

The Russians had also suffered, losing some 3,000 men captured—and paraded before Napoleon covered in bloody wounds according to General Armand de Caulaincourt—and considerably more killed and wounded. The wounded mostly died, exposed to the bitter cold with no shelter. While the bitter battle swung first this way and then that, the process of crossing the river continued. As Russian artillery could now be heard behind them, the stragglers camped on the banks made a convulsive effort to cross the swaying bridges en masse. Captain Vossler, a Württemberg cavalryman in Ney's III Corps, describes the scene:

"An immense flood of men, horses and wagons now surged towards the bridge. I was thrown to the ground by a sudden sharp thrust of the mob and was severely trampled and bruised. Once more I was about to resign myself to my fate, seeing how remote, in such circumstances, was the chance of a helping hand, when I saw looming above me a fellow-German, a Saxon cuirassier. I called out to him, he seized me by the arm, pulled me up and heaved my horse to its feet also."

Another Württemberger, Jakob Walter, adds: "Everyone crowded together into a solid mass, and nowhere could one see a way out or means of rescue. We stood unprotected from grenades and cannonballs which the Russians hurled at us from all sides. At each blow between three and five men were struck to the ground, and yet nobody was able to move a step to get out of the way. Only by filling up the space where a cannon-ball made room was it possible to move further forward."

Meanwhile, on the left bank, Wittgenstein launched a series of assaults to cut Victor off from the bridges. The French marshal was warned of the coming threat when he and Captain Boyenbourg were showered with earth and snow by a Russian roundshot. Russian artillery began falling on the stragglers and the bridges, causing still more panic and confusion in Victor's rear.

Victor was anxiously awaiting his rear guard, Louis Partonneaux's division; unfortunately the division took the wrong road from Borisov and found itself confronted by Russian troops. Its commander, riding ahead, was captured first (Chevalier writes that Partonneaux rode into the midst of the Russians shouting "Let us die with our weapons in our hands, Vive l'Empereur!," but he was in fact taken entirely by surprise).

His division was shattered by point-blank Russian artillery and attacked by Czenozukov's cossacks and Russian infantry, which drove the French and Dutch conscripts into a miserable wood. Here, they defended themselves heroically until, running out of ammunition, they were forced to lay down their arms and surrender. Some 5,000 infantry and two regiments of cavalry passed into captivity, just one

Kremlin

battalion (Duboul's 4th battalion) of the 55th Line managing to escape.

Caulaincourt records how news of Partonneaux's division was received at imperial headquarters: "As may be imagined there was little inclination to spare General Partonneaux, to whose surrender this misfortune could largely be attributed. The emperor and the General Staff, the marshals and the officers, the whole army, were more than severe in their judgment on him. 'His lack of foresight,' everyone agreed, 'is unpardonable. The surrender of this division without a fight [sic] is shameful.' The word "cowardice" was used, and his surrender was compared to Ney's brave resolution a week earlier. 'If generals lack the courage to put up a fight, they might at least allow their grenadiers to do so,' said the emperor."

Meanwhile, Victor placed his remaining troops on the plateau that rings Studienka "like an amphitheatre." He positioned Hochberg's Badeners ("the only troops worth anything," according to Victor), protected by a skirmish screen of Baden Jägers and the last remaining battalion of Partonneaux's division on the right, its flank secured by the Berezina. Damas and his inexperienced Berg brigade—much depleted as many Berg troops had been left and lost as garrison in Vitebsk—held the center; and, on the left, General Girard placed his three regiments of veteran Polish infantry (the 4th, 7th, and 9th). Unfortunately the Polish left hung in the open and could be protected only by Francois Fournier's small Hessian and Baden cavalry brigade. In reserve Victor had two Saxon infantry regiments and a battery of 14 guns.

Wittgenstein attacked Fournier's cavalry first, sending hussars and cossacks against the Germans. He then opened up with a battery to pound the French right and shell the bridges. He then launched an assault against the Badeners, with Russian columns advancing at the double in their heavy greatcoats to loud "hourrahs" and the beating of drums. The Russians swept back the Jägers and the battalion of the 55th, but were halted and turned back by a determined bayonet charge by Baden line infantry. The bayonet was, as with the battle on the right bank, playing a crucial role in the horrendous conditions.

Wittgenstein steadily increased his artillery barrage, concentrating on breaking the weakest part of the French line—the position occupied by the Poles. To give the Poles some respite Victor ordered his Berg brigade to advance. The young troops met with disaster when they were swept by Russian artillery and charged by Russian infantry. The Berg troops fell back in complete disorder, having suffered heavily from the fire of 32 guns, and withdrew, covered by the Poles and the Saxon regiment von Low.

Seeking to take advantage, Wittgenstein launched an assault against the Poles. Victor ordered Fournier's cavalry to counter attack and buy time for his troops to steady the line. Fournier had been wounded early in the action and command of his cavalry brigade, consisting of the Baden Hussars and Hessian Chevau-légers, passed to Colonel Laroche of the hussars and he ordered the charge. Colonel Dalwigk, commanding the Hessian cavalry, describes what happened next: "Enemy light infantry appeared and engaged ours in skirmishing; the Russian artillery opened up on us but we were fortunate not to suffer much as the roundshot mostly passed overhead. Soon

a Russian infantry regiment [the 34th Jägers] debouched from the woods, supported by a battery. I charged the infantry but was beaten off. I charged again, this time supported by the Baden Hussars, we broke the square and we took prisoner all those who were not sabred. We continued our attack, despite the artillery fire. We advanced through a defile, which made things difficult, and the Russian cavalry—mostly cuirassiers—caught us before we had time to deploy. We could not withstand their charge and our men were almost all killed or taken."

Laroche had been wounded during the attack and taken prisoner; he was rescued by Sergeant Springer and brought back to the French lines. The charge, although costly, bought time and passed into history as the "Charge of Death." Of the 350 men who rode forward only 50 returned. Wittgenstein attempted one more assault, attacking the right and left flanks simultaneously. It was beaten off and "at 6 p.m. the enemy artillery fire ceased, the enemy remained in position and we held ours." Casualties had been heavy. Victor himself had been wounded, as had generals Damas, Gauthier, Gerard, and Fournier. Command of the corps passed to Hochberg, the marquis of Baden. That night, lit by a bright moonlight sky, IX Corps began withdrawing, pushing its way toward the bridge and crossing in good order at 9 p.m.

A Hessian soldier remembered the scene as he made his way to the bridges: "The press of men and animals was indescribable. Huge munition wagons bore down on the crowd crushing and mashing everything in their path." The Berg brigade had been reduced to 120 men, commanded by Oberst Genty. The Poles were down to 250, and the Badeners just under a thousand. The last formed troops to cross were von Zech's Baden grenadiers, marching over at 1 p.m. They left 20,000 stragglers huddled around the flickering fires; worn out and inert, they awaited the morning.

Victor and Eblé harangued the stragglers as dawn broke on the 29th, but few responded. Colonel Seruzier records the scene: "In vain I told the stragglers that they would be saved if only there was a little order; that their safety depended on crossing at once, and that our army's salvation depended on the bridges being broken. A few responded and crossed over. The greater number lingered on the left bank."

Eblé had orders to fire the bridges at 8:30 a.m. but he delayed as long as possible to give the noncombatants a final chance. Then, being unable to risk the bridges falling into Russian hands, he ordered Seruzier to fire them at 9 a.m., which he reluctantly did. Eyewitness accounts report that an agonizing howl went up from those stranded on the left bank. Sergeant Bourgogne saw what happened: "Numbers jumped into the water, hoping to swim through the ice floes, but not one reached the shore. I saw them all in the water up to their shoulders, and, overcome by the terrible cold, they all perished miserably. On the bridge was a sutler carrying a child on his head. His wife was in front of him crying bitterly. I could not stay to watch any longer, it was too much for me to bear."

Anne S.K. Brown Military Collection

ABOVE: Published a year after the event, English artist John Massey Wright's aquatint work, "The Flight of Bonaparte from the Battle of Krasnoi," (1814) depicts Napoleon crossing the Berezina River as Russian artillery lands among the soldiers and followers on the overcrowded temporary bridge. Nearly 50,000 soldiers and civilians died trying to cross the river from November 27 to November 29, when the bridges were destroyed by the French. OPPOSITE: This accurate watercolor sketch is thought to have been made by a witness or a veteran of the Battle of the Berezina. Napoleon's Grande Armée was able to escape complete destruction via two bridges hastily built by General Eblé and his pontonniers over the swollen, ice-filled river. On November 29, 1812, Napoleon's forces could no longer hold the crossing and burned the bridges, leaving as many as 10,000 men, women and children behind on the eastern bank. In all, some 25,000 soldiers and 30,000 civilians were killed and "Berezina" entered the French language as a synonym for disaster.

Musee de l'Armée

In fact a few did manage to swim across—such as Lieutenant Lippert of the Hessian Chevau-légers, leading 12 troopers—but most drowned in the attempt. A majority of the stragglers were left to the mercy of the Russians. They were pillaged by the omnipresent cossacks, drawn as ever by the prospect of loot, but there was no general massacre. Most would die of hunger or of cold—their captors had little to offer them and were suffering themselves—and a vast number would die of typhus, which swept the little town of Borisov over the next few weeks. A Russian officer describes the scene at the foot of the fatal bridges: "Nothing in the world more saddening or distressing. One saw heaped bodies of men, women and even children; soldiers of all arms, all nations, choked by the fugitives or hit by our artillery; horses, carriages, guns, ammunition wagons, abandoned carts. One cannot imagine a more terrifying sight than that of the two broken bridges, and the river frozen to its very bottom. Both sides of the road were piled with dead in all positions, or with men dying of cold, hunger, exhaustion, their uniforms in tatters, and beseeching us to take them prisoner. However much we might have wished to help, unfortunately we could do nothing."

The French, turning their backs on the disaster, pressed on toward Vilna. But their troubles were not over. Heinrich von Brandt records the scene as his regiment quits the banks of the Berezina and marches for Vilna, passing a convoy of men wounded in the battle of the 28th November 28: "At Zembin we came across fires lit by Davout's troops. These had crossed the Berezina the day after we had crossed. Here and there were men gathered around the fires, asleep—for ever! We ourselves were just settling down when the cry went up, 'Look out! Here come the stragglers! Let's get going before it is too late!' Our little column marched on, steadily reducing in numbers. As day approached, it grew colder. We passed a convoy of ammunition wagons onto which badly wounded men had been loaded. They begged us, as we marched past, to put an end to their sufferings. Onwards, ever onwards. Anguish soon began to turn into despair. We were constantly tripping over officers and men who had fallen to rise no more. The sun was blood red and the cold was unbearable."

Of those that crossed the Berezina, barely one-third would make it back across the Russian frontier. That any made it at all was due to General Eblé and the bravery of the troops under Victor, Oudinot, and Ney, who fought and died so that others might live. Ten years later Major Blesson visited the scene of the various battles and the point where the French army crossed:

"Near Studyanka we spotted—just think of it, ten years after the catastrophe—a mass of cloth, leather-ware, shako covers strewn around the ground and fields. These relics grew thicker as one approached the river, lying in heaps, mingled with the bones of human beings and animals, skulls, tin, bandoliers, bridles and such like. Where the main bridge had been, an island close to the bank divides the river into two arms. The island owes its origin to the vehicles and bodies which fell off the bridge, and to corpses covered in mud and sand. We made our way with difficulty along the bank amid more relics, and soon reached the second footbridge. Here in particular we came on piles of fittings and mountings, or what remained of them, but there were no mounds of the dead here, since the bodies had been swept further downstream. Below the island three boggy mounds had been formed, and these were covered in forget-me-nots." ■

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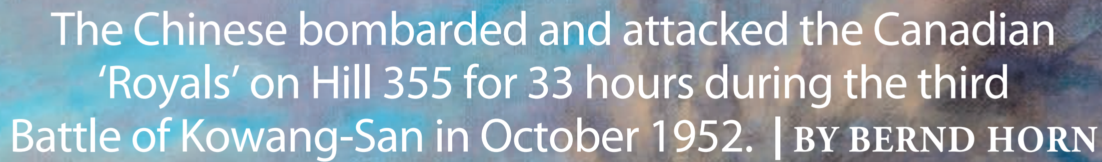
"Incoming," by Ted Zuber, shows soldiers of B Company, Royal Canadian Regiment, reacting to an enemy artillery attack on "Little Gibraltar" (Hill 355). Zuber served as a sniper with the RCR in 1952 and, though not an official war artist, he brought his sketch-book with him and later painted scenes of the war.



The Chinese bombarded and attacked the Canadian 'Royals' on Hill 355 for 33 hours during the third Battle of Kowang-San in October 1952. | BY BERND HORN

Desperate Struggle for Survival on 'LITTLE GIBRALTAR'

The ground heaved and trembled under the ferocious climax of the Chinese bombardment that shook the Canadian soldiers from their bunkers and weapon pits. Concussed and fighting for oxygen in the thick dust and smoke, they strained their eyes for any movement of the enemy they knew was coming. Already they could hear the whistles, trumpets and orders, as well as the hollow booms of Bangalore torpedoes as the Chinese infantry breached the wire. Private Charlie Morrison gripped his Bren gun and braced himself. Finally, he could lash back at his antagonists who had been tormenting him and his comrades for almost a month. He saw nothing in the shroud of smoke and debris. And then, the Chinese infantry was upon them with burp guns and grenades. Charlie hammered away with his Bren gun, changing magazines as quickly as he could while avoiding the overheating barrel.

The Korean War was already into its second year of bitter, sometimes savage, fighting. For the 1st Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment (1 RCR), the war had started about five months before when it replaced its sister battalion, 2 RCR. After only nine days in Korea and two in the line, 1 RCR found itself manning the front lines and dispatching patrols into no-man's-land. Out of necessity, the Battalion quickly focused on learning the ropes. The patrol schedules for the first few weeks ensured everyone was able to gain confidence and experience in operating in the new combat environment. By late May, activity on both sides increased dramatically. Each night the Battalion had approximately 40-60 all ranks engaged in a myriad of standing, fighting and reconnaissance (recce) patrols. The "Royals" also introduced the "jitters" patrol—using bugles, whistles, tin-cans and any other noise making instrument—to keep the enemy in a state of anxiety.

CWM 19890328-008, © 1978 Beaverbrook Collection of War Art, Canadian War Museum

Patrols ranged from 20 men to entire companies, with heavy supporting fire from tanks and artillery. Working their way through existing gaps in their own wire and defensive minefields the patrols crossed the floor of the valley and worked their way to the hills opposite them.

The war had in many ways evolved into a war of patrols, with deadly raids and attacks designed more to inflict casualties and dominate ground than to actually seize and hold terrain. The conflict teetered between overwhelming boredom and sheer terror. Tensions increased along the front lines during the fall of 1952 as the Royals continued with their active patrolling and the constant struggle to dominate no-man's land.

On the night of September 24, one particular daring snatch patrol was conducted to obtain a prisoner and deliver the enemy a psychological blow. Lt. H.R. Gardner and Corp. K.E. Fowler, infiltrated deep into a Chinese defensive position to their field kitchen area behind Hill 227 where they cut a signal wire and waited for an unsuspecting Chinese technician to come repair the line. They did not have long to wait. As the unsuspecting Pvt. Wang Teh Shen began to fix the break, Gardner struck him with a blackjack while Fowler attempted to pin his arms. A furious struggle commenced with Shen shouting for help. After several minutes Shen submitted after he was threatened with a gun. However, just as the prisoner was being lifted to his feet, the first of the armed enemy response arrived. A hot pursuit was now undertaken as the Royals withdrew with their prisoner.

Fortunately, Gardner had planned well, and a series of firm bases through which he could pass assisted his party, with prisoner in tow, in breaking clean of the enemy pursuit. The 1 RCR War Diary graphically captured the safe arrival of the group: "the snatch patrol came in about 0730 hours complete with a Chink prisoner—Cpl. Fowler brought him in by the scruff of the neck." The daring nature and success of the patrol was seen as "a feather in the cap of the Regiment."

The daring feat, however, came at a price. The Regiment would pay dearly for their prisoner. Within a week, the Royals noted that "the front is continually being probed by small numbers of enemy with no damage being done." At the time not much was thought of the activity. But, as events began to unravel, the Royals were struck with a chilling sense of foreboding. By end March 1952, 1 Commonwealth Division intelligence staff had developed a fairly comprehensive picture of Chinese tactics. Large scale attacks and battalion-sized raids were generally preceded by a series of nightly probing attacks that increased in size each night.

In addition, the actual attack was always preceded by artillery fire. The bombardments generally started hours prior to the actual assault working up to the most intense fire at H-Hour—the Chinese Army was known to attack through their own supporting fire. Large scale attacks were always accompanied by at least a battalion-size diversionary attack to a flank. Often tanks and self-propelled guns were used to support the attack by providing direct fire on bunkers and entrenchments. Directional tracer, flares, bugles, and whistles were all methods used to control and guide attacking enemy elements.

A Chinese attack on a given objective was always made by a direct assault on the feature itself, with an effort at a simultaneous envelopment from two sides. The enemy was adept at leaving troops to contain and attack defended localities while passing through other troops between these strong points to attack positions in depth such as command posts and gun areas. The assaulting troops were invariably armed only with sub-machine guns and grenades. Bangalore torpedoes and home-made devices were normally utilized by assaulting elements to remove defensive wire which was not destroyed by the artillery bombard-

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Captain (retired) Robert H. Mahar

ment. In addition, the Chinese had stopped using mass attacks on a large front because of initial failures. They now concentrated on obtaining complete superiority at a given point, allowing them to concentrate their support weapons at the focal point of the attack.

The Royals would soon experience this first hand as, unbeknownst to 1 RCR, a tempest had been brewing. Nonetheless, activity in the line continued. The War Diary captured the harsh reality:

"Patrol activity continued…6 Royals had accomplished what the remainder of the Div[ision] had been trying to do in capturing a prisoner. All ranks are very proud of Lt. Gardner and his gallant men. Other patrols were of a less spectacular nature. There were short, sharp, bitter clashes by night where the courage and common sense of the patrol members triumphed over the enemy and the darkness. Each day …has been a testing of one or several members of this Battalion. Tests have been met."

And so, 1 RCR continued its vigilance on Hill 355, labeled "Little Gibraltar" by the Americans because from the rear it bore a striking resemblance to the actual feature in the Mediterranean Sea. To the north and west, however, its features were more gradual. It was the highest feature of the surrounding area. Five company positions secured Hill 355, also known as *Kowang-San* on Korean maps. Area I, which was on the southeast portion of the position, was garrisoned by E Company (abbreviated as "Coy") and faced the enemy positions on Hill 227. Area II was secured by D Coy. This critical piece of ground lay on the immediate opposite side of the saddle that ran between Hill 227 and Hill 355. In many ways, it was the doorway to Little Gibralter. Areas III and IV, manned by A and C Coy, respectively, anchored the northern front of Hill 355, and Area V, was a reserve position manned by B Coy. The Battalion felt secure on Kowang-San. In fact, one Royal wrote, "D Coy is settled in and ready for whatever happens. We on 355 feel secure in the knowledge that no Chinks can sneak up on us."

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ABOVE: A Canadian defensive position on the side of Hill 355 lit up by flares. The "Royals" held out against Chinese forces for 33 hours in October 1952. TOP: Canadian bunkers can be seen across the top of Hill 355 (Kowang-San), known to United Nations forces as "Little Gibraltar." OPPOSITE: Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry occupied positions on the flank of Hill 355 in the fall of 1951 during the second Battle of Kowang-San. After the U.S. 3rd Infantry Division was knocked off the hill's summit on November 22, the Canadians fought off seven Chinese attacks over the next three days and the U.S. 3rd Infantry was able to retake the hill on November 25.

Royal Canadian Regiment rear echelon area north of Seoul, Korea, sheltered on the reverse slope of a hill overlooking the Nabu-ri River valley.

Captain (retired) Robert H. Mahar

October literally began with a bang as the Chinese, in keeping with their typical offensive doctrine, began a systematic hammering of Hill 355. On October 1, 1952, they fired nearly 1,000 rounds, primarily into Area II. The next day, the enemy dropped in another 600 rounds and succeeded in destroying the defenses in the Vancouver Outpost, which was subsequently abandoned, as well as knocking out the tank in the southern platoon area. A similar intense bombardment occurred on the third day, after which firing slackened somewhat until October 17, when the intensity of fire picked up once again. On August 21, 1,600 rounds thundered into 1 RCR. The next day, "1 RCR received 2,426 rounds from the 'friendly' Chinamen…18 tons of assorted misery," according to the War Diary. In the interim, B Coy relieved D Coy in Area II, the hardest hit, after last light on October 22.

The effect of the prolonged bombardment was clearly evident. Maj. Bob Richards, the officer commanding (OC) D Coy, spent 21 days under shell fire in crowded dug-outs. "It's bunkeritis, that's what gets you," Richards observed. "It's knowing that you can't walk around or you'll get hit. It gets so that even when there's almost no shelling at all you still get nervous." He added, "and, when they pour in 1,275 a day you've got a problem."

Richards acknowledged that a few men might break and then there is a risk of the feeling spreading. He proudly noted, "They all were getting a bit starey-eyed toward the end, but they all came out with their weapons." Lt. M.F. Goldie added, "Life there is very primitive indeed. You can't move an eyebrow without being hit. You just lie all day with your face in the dirt."

For others, it was more literal. Privates Wilfred Main and Wilfred Mangeon were buried. They managed to make air holes to prevent smothering and then dug themselves out with their bare hands. Main lost his boots and manned an observation post for 48 hours in his stocking feet.

That the number of casualties wasn't higher was down to discipline, according to Major Richards. "The only casualties were from direct hits on bunkers and trenches and you can't control that. But reactions got slower all the time. At the beginning you'd give an order and they'd jump to it. Later they got to looking for shelter on the way. They'd get there all right, but it would take longer."

When B Coy arrived into the position they found the field defenses very badly damaged and the greater part of the reserve ammunition, which was stored in the weapons pits, had been buried. In addition, the bunkers were caved in and the telephone lines cut. The fire continued throughout the day on the 23rd and into the night. B Coy stayed on alert after dark. Throughout, they could hear the detonation of heavy explosions, distinctly different from the incoming artillery and mortar shells. The soldiers knew the Chinese were blowing gaps in the wire, but the intensity of the fire prevented them from providing any form of response.

Throughout the day the bombardment had continued to wreak havoc on the company position. Bunkers, command posts and trenches collapsed. Ominously, during the day the enemy moved several self-propelled guns and infantry guns forward. Around 1700 hours, the scale of the destruction led Lieutenant Gardner and Sgt. G.E.P. Enright to attempt to reorganize the men in their platoons, which now represented a collective strength of approximately 30 men.

At 1730 hours the firing almost completely ceased. "The silence was eerie," recalled Lt. Scotty

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ABOVE: On the night of September 24, 1952, Lieutenant H. "Russ" Gardner, left, and Corp. Karl E. Fowler penetrated the Chinese lines into a kitchen area behind Hill 227 intending to snatch a Chinese soldier. They cut a signal wire and subdued Pvt. Wang Teh Shen when he came to fix the break. Under fire and pursued by the enemy, they managed to escape with their prisoner. BELOW: Private Heath Matthews of C Company, 1st Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, awaits medical aid for facial wounds sustained in a night patrol in June 1952 during the Korean War.

Royal Canadian Regiment

Martin, "and somewhat unsettling after so many days of harassment." The reprieve was not to last long. Approximately 45 minutes later the enemy hurled its most intense concentration of shells to date, focusing particularly at the left most platoon of B Coy and the right most platoon of E Coy. The Chinese had chosen the seam between the two sub-units for their break-in. As the bombardment reached its climax, the Chinese poured in shells and mortar rounds at a rate of 6,000 shells an hour for 30 minutes. This deluge of fire effectively destroyed any remaining field defenses. "At 1815 hours," Martin recalled, "Baker and Easy companies disappeared in clouds of smoke and dust." Pvt. Ted Zuber, who would go on to become a famous war artist, remembered, "the smoke was so thick you couldn't see anything, it burnt your lungs." Lt. D.G. Loomis later wrote:

"Its effect can hardly be described. It was shattering. I stopped counting the rounds about halfway through this bombardment—at 700—and I only counted the orange flashes which I could see. Before it was over visibility was less than an arm's length due to the heavy pall of black fumes which caused everyone's eyes to water."

The fire then lifted and shifted to the positions adjacent to B Coy. The sub-unit was now effectively cut off from the other positions as the enemy fire pummeled A and E Coys on the flanks for 45 minutes. The Chinese then launched an attack to take the 1,500-foot peak.

As the bombardment continued on the flanks, an enemy battalion swarmed over B Coy's shattered position. "At 1815 hrs," the War Diary revealed, "the tense words came to the CO, 'B' Coy was being overrun." It noted, "Heavy mortaring and shelling was followed by the enemy charging into 'B' Coy position in the gathering dusk."

Pvt. Arthur Alexander remembered, "The Chinese came in almost on top of the barrage screaming and firing their burp guns and throwing grenades." The OC and his headquarters (HQ), reported, "the sound of 'burp-guns', horns, bugles and whistles were heard even before the bombardment lifted." Lieutenant Martin recalled, "Loud Chinese voices, whistles and bugles could be heard in Baker Company position only 50 yards away."

Clearly, the Chinese attack was not unexpected. As a result, a defensive fire plan had been organized and was now executed. Artillery and 4.2-inch mortars thundered in assistance and hammered likely form-up points (FUPs) and approach routes. In addition, all possible Battalion heavy and medium machine-guns, as well as 81mm and 60mm mortars were called in for defensive fire (DF) tasks. As a result, a curtain of fire now rained down in front of B Coy and on to the approaches to the North of Hill 355. The

Communist Chinese positions near Hill 355, "Little Gibraltar," under artillery fire from United Nations forces near the Imjin River, about 25 miles north of Seoul, Korea.

Captain (retired) Robert H. Mahar

A Coy War Diary recorded, "The enemy attacked 'B' Coy in estimated 2 Bn [battalion] strength, quickly overran 'B' Coy position and part of left-hand Platoon 'A' Coy before being brought to a standstill."

The battle for Area II had dissolved into desperate, savage hand-to-hand combat. During the barrage Pvt. Johnny Johnston crawled from foxhole to foxhole to repair weapons. He cleaned each part with gasoline and ensured they were ready when called upon. Later he calmly stripped two jammed Bren guns in the heat of the action and put them back in service. "He's the calmest man I've ever seen," praised his platoon commander, Lt. Edward Mastronardi after the battle.

But he was not alone. Private Morrison was rooted in his fighting trench when the Chinese hordes swarmed the position. He remained in place and fought desperately to enable his comrades to withdraw. "When last seen he was engaged in close combat with enemy."

Sergeant Gerald Enright of 5 Platoon also displayed selflessness and courage. Ordered by his platoon commander to report their situation after all radio communications broke down, Enright fought his way through to A Coy's position under heavy fire. He reported the desperate plight of B Coy and then grabbed a radio and as much ammunition as he could carry and made his way back into the anvil of fire to assist his comrades beat back the seemingly endless tide of Chinese attackers.

Similarly, Lieutenant John Clark set a stirring example as he tenaciously held his position through the thick of the fighting. "He personally took an active part in the close fighting, throwing grenades and manning in turn a rifle, Bren and Sten until each weapon's ammunition was expended." When he realized that the remaining options were either annihilation or surrender, he reorganized the remainder of his platoon and successfully withdrew, carrying one of his wounded soldiers on his back, from their position to A Coy's entrenchments to continue on the fight.

B Coy by now was completely cut-off. Its neighboring sub-unit, E Coy was the source of information for the Battalion HQ. Lt.-Col.Peter R. Bingham was on leave, so the fight was now in the hands of the acting CO, Maj. Francis Klenavic.

Observation was obscured by the smoke and dust of the raging fire-fight. The first clear information occurred at 1836 hours, when the 4 Platoon Commander arrived at Battalion HQ and reported that his platoon had been over-run. At this time, it was impossible to contact the left most platoon of A Coy and it was presumed that they had also been overwhelmed. D Coy, in the unit's depth position, was warned off at 1850 hours to put in a counter-attack at 1900 hours. At 1910 hours, OC A Coy called in a close-in DF. To this point the extent of the enemy attack or

The Creation of a Divided Korea

When the Japanese surrendered in 1945, the U.S. occupied the southern half of Korea and the Soviet Union moved into the northern half. The 38th Parallel was used as a boundary. The intent was a temporary occupation pending steps to establish a unified independent country. However, as the Cold War developed the divided country became part of the growing conflict between former allies.

The Americans created a democratic state under Syngman Rhee. On May 10, 1948, elections were held in South Korea and on August 15 the Republic of Korea was established and subsequently recognized by the UN General Assembly. The Soviet Union immediately countered and established and armed a Communist state, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, under the control of wartime guerilla leader Kim Il Sung. Moreover, by December they announced that they had withdrawn all their forces from the peninsula and thus, forced the Americans to do the same.

Shortly thereafter trouble began to brew as North Korean patrols began to penetrate into South Korea. With the withdrawal of the Americans the ROK army, armed with only small arms and mortars, was left to face a hostile well-armed neighbor.

penetration had not been determined. It was not until later, that it became clear the Chinese had merely conducted a diversionary attack against A Coy's position.

At 1916 hours, OC E Coy deployed a small patrol to investigate the status of B Coy. They determined that the Chinese now possessed Area II. A and C Coys continued to report movement directly to the front of their positions and continued to call in "danger close" artillery strikes. At 1943 hours, OC B Coy reported that he, 5 Platoon Commander and 12 men had reached the left platoon of A Coy. He grimly reported that no friendly troops remained in action in the former B Coy area. As a result, Area II was now cloaked with fire.

Plans were now consolidated for the counterattack to regain the lost position. By 2045 hours, all was set. A relieving force from A Coy took over D Coy's position and all supporting tank and air assets were coordinated. The plan entailed a complex pincer movement with one platoon attacking from behind E Coy's position, while another platoon (a diversion) would attack through A Coy.

As the final preparations were made for the counter-attack, Battalion HQ could still not determine the intent of the enemy. The weight of the attack, and the enemy's continuing activity to the west and north of Hill 355 reinforced the belief that this was just Phase 1 of a larger attack. At 2110 hours, a sudden increase in enemy artillery and mortar fire on E Coy seemed to indicate an impending assault.

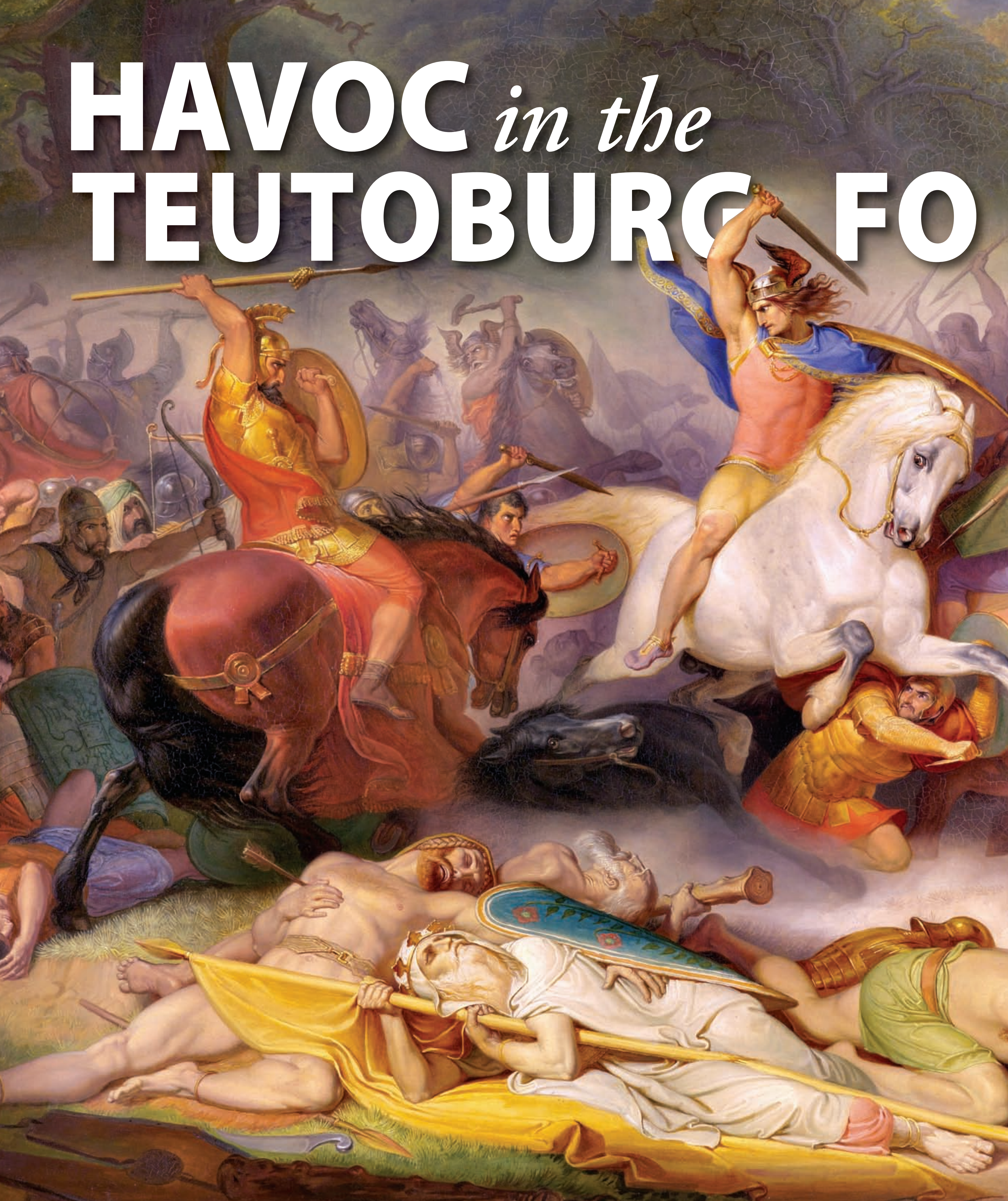
In response, all available artillery and mortar assets fired an impressive response. Area II and all approaches to Hill 355 were now covered in a blanket of fire. It appeared that the speed and weight of the response fire took the steam out of the enemy's advance. Chinese supporting fire faltered, slackened and then tapered off to harassing fire for the remainder of the engagement.

By 0105 hours, October 24, D Coy was poised to launch the counter-attack. Seven minutes of artillery fire preceded the assault. Ten Platoon assaulted from the left and into the most extreme position of Area II. They encountered no opposition. At the same time 12 Platoon attacked from A Coy's position on the right and occupied the center position in Area II. Once again, they too met no opposition. The enemy had melted away. By 0331 both assaulting platoons linked up and the situation was restored. D Coy then cleared out the rubble and made the position "fightable." The grim task of evacuating the dead and the wounded then commenced.

In the end, the battle cost the Battalion 18 killed, 35 wounded and 14 taken prisoner. Interestingly, RCR prisoners released at the end of the war recounted that the attack on Little Gibraltar that triggered the Royal's desperate struggle was the daring snatch patrol the month earlier. In fact, they insisted that the Chinese were looking for Lieutenant Gardiner and Corporal Fowler. Nonetheless, 1 RCR fought valiantly and inflicted a heavy price for the damage the Chinese had caused. As recorded in the War Diary, "The Regimental Banner atop 355 is shot and shelled—but it still flys." ■

Both: Captain (retired) Robert H. Mahar

ABOVE: Corporal Karl E. Fowler escorts Chinese Private Wang Teh Shen back to Royal Canadian Regiment lines after a successful "snatch patrol" to obtain a prisoner and deliver the enemy a psychological blow. BELOW: Chinese prisoner Private Wang Teh Shen receiving medical aid after he was captured by Lieutenant Gardner and Corporal Fowler in a snatch patrol on September 24, 1952. After the war, returning Royals POWs said that the attack on Little Gibraltar had been triggered by the daring capture of Shen.


HAVOC in the
TEUTOBURG FO

REST

BY MICHAEL D. GREANEY

One of the most devastating events to shake the early Roman Empire was the defeat of Legate Publius Quinctilius Varus and his army at the hands of Arminius in the Battle of the Teutoburg Forest (*Teutoburger Wald*) in 9 CE. Arminius, or Armin (also known by the presumed Teutonic version of his name, Hermann), was of the Cherusci, the tribe most involved in the revolt. The battle was the worst setback to Roman territorial expansion up to that time. Unlike previous defeats, it was not the signal for regrouping, consolidating and carrying on the fight later. There was a fundamental shift in Roman foreign policy, with the Rhine established as the imperial frontier.

In his *Historiæ Romanæ*, Gaius Velleius Paterculus relates that the dreadful news of the defeat was received in Rome five days after the conclusion of the war carried out by Augustus in Pannonia and Dalmatia. The Pannonian war was the result of a master plan to develop a Roman province of Germania along lines laid out by Tiberius (Tiberius Claudius Nero, born 42 BCE, emperor 14 CE, died 37 CE), and his younger twin, Drusus. Nero Claudius Drusus died

'Quinctilius Varus, Give Me Back My Legions!'

in 9 BCE, presumably in a fall from a horse or, as others recount, from a wasting disease while on campaign in Germania after appropriate portents. A festival in celebration of the end of the long and costly war was about to begin when word arrived that three entire legions, the XVII, XVIII and XIX, had been cut to pieces in Germania, along with three troops of cavalry (*equitati*), and six cohorts of auxiliaries. Approximately 20,000 men had perished.

Augustus, fearful of a general uprising among the many Germanic and Gaulish inhabitants of Rome, both civilian and military, ordered the army to patrol the city at night. Since the Germans and Gauls were perceived as being the same people, Augustus sent all the unarmed representatives of both out of the city. He then transferred all Germanic and Gaulish military personnel to distant islands where, in the event of a rebellion, they could cause little harm.

In an ambush led by Arminius (later known as Hermann), three Roman legions were destroyed in Germania in 9 CE. The event, one of Rome's worst defeats, was seized upon by nationalists in the 19th-century, and later by the Nazi Third Reich, as the mythological origin of the German state. Paintings such as "The battle of Hermann in the Teutoburg Forest," (1840) by Wilhelm Lindenschmit the Elder, helped popularize Hermann as the father of the German nation.

State Art Gallery-Karlsruhe, Germany

Both: Wikimedia

ABOVE: This modern photo of a hiking trail through the Teutoburg Forest in Germany shows why Arminius chose to lead the Romans here for an ambush. The Germans would have been hard to see and the close quarters wouldn't allow the centurions to maintain their disciplined formations. LEFT: Replica of a bronze Roman coin with a bust of Varus and the inscription, "Publis Quinctilius Varus, Achulla," minted during the time he served as governor of Byzacena (c. 7-6 BCE), a Late Roman province in the central part of Roman North Africa, which is now roughly Tunisia. Achulla was a Roman-Berber city on the Mediterranean coast.

This was not the first defeat suffered by the Romans, nor the only one in Germania. The defeat of the Legate Marcus Lollius in 15 BCE, although as devastating, was considered "merely" ignominious, but that of Varus endangered Rome herself. Augustus gave additional orders to extend the term of all provincial governors throughout the Empire so as to have trustworthy men upon whom the allies and *fœderati* (non-citizen tribes bound by treaty to defend the empire) of Rome could depend. He also vowed to celebrate expiatory games in honor of Jupiter Optimus Maximus ("Jupiter the Best and Greatest") as soon as the political situation improved.

It was the personal effect on Augustus, however, that seems to have made the greatest impression on chroniclers and contemporaries. Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus relates that, "Indeed, it is said that he [Augustus] took the disaster so completely to heart that he left his hair and beard untrimmed for months; he would often beat his head on a door shouting, 'Quinctili Vare, legiones redde!'—'Quinctilius Varus, give me back my legions!'—and always kept the anniversary as a day of deep mourning."

While 19th-century Romantics attempted to make a national hero of the German leader Arminius and credited the victory to the intrinsic superiority of the Aryan race, Roman historians put the blame squarely on the shoulders of the commander of the army in Germany, P. Quinctilius Varus. Certainly few of them have anything good to say of a man under whose leadership Rome suffered one of its worst disasters. Some recent historians have attempted to characterize Varus as an unfortunate scapegoat whose reputation was sacrificed to Roman pride, but the comments of contemporaries support a less worthy reading of the man.

Paterculus in particular points out the flaws in Varus's character, although he retracts some of his statements later. He notes that while Varus came of noble lineage, it was not illustrious. He also claims that Varus was lazy in both mind and body, and preferred to take his ease in camp instead of campaigning in the field destroying Cæsar's enemies like a proper Roman. Astonishingly for a civilization that viewed public office as a normal means of self-enrichment, Varus was considered exceptionally greedy and corrupt as an administrator.

An epigram related by Paterculus was that while governor of Syria from 6 to 4 BCE, Varus entered the rich province as a poor man, and left the poor province as a rich man. Flavius Josephus goes into great detail about Varus's activities in Judea, at that time linked administratively with Syria, cataloging the seemingly endless list of uprisings that took place during his term of office. Even considering the fact that Josephus's goal was to curry favor with the Romans, the Jewish historian hints darkly that Varus was responsible at least in part for the course of Herod the Great's bloody career.

Varus had previously served as governor of Byzacena (c. 7-6 BCE), a country in North Africa on the coast south of Carthage. He had earlier attained Consular dignity in 13 BCE, probably more on the strength of his marriage to a grand-niece of Augustus than anything else. The objective record of his career seems to demonstrate a man with more influence than talent.

Following his Near Eastern venture, Varus dropped out of sight for a while, presumably to enjoy his Syrian loot in the fleshpots of Rome. Probably needing to replenish his coffers, Varus finagled an appointment to an obscure post in the new province of Germania about 12 years later. Augustus might have felt his rapacious in-law could do little harm among the swamps, woods and complacent barbarians of the north while filling his purse. Among these "savages" were the Cherusci, at this time following a program laid out to civilize them over time without upsetting them or outraging their current customs and way of life.

The situation was delicate, although not dangerous until Varus showed up. The Romans had a portion of the area under control, but not all. It was winter quarters for a number of the legions, and the inhabitants were becoming gradually used to Roman ways and Roman rule. Cities were being built, markets established and Roman forms of government implemented.

The new legate, however, started off on the wrong foot. So great was his arrogance that he presumed the Germans were human in appearance only, and proceeded to enforce his idea of a civilizing program by stirring up the inhabitants with all manner of insulting and degrading imposts and regulations. Cassius Dio, the Greek historian of the reign of Augustus, relates that Varus treated the Germans like slaves, even levying tribute from them as if they were a conquered people instead of fœderati presumably enjoying the benefits of Roman imperium. Impatient with the progress being made, and anxious to establish his ascendancy and start collecting graft, he implemented his own accelerated program ill-suited to imposition on a proud people, with the expected results.

Although considered "savages," the Germans of whatever tribe were also, according to popular opinion of the time, "exquisitely artful, a race, indeed, formed by nature for deceit," and far from stupid. The leaders were anxious to regain their former condition of ascendancy, and the common people were chafing under the impositions of Varus. He was apparently operating under the assumption that he could treat Germans as he had Syrians. The Germans therefore decided to bide their time and await an opportunity for revenge. Given Varus's incompetence both as civil administrator and military commander, this was not long in coming.

Rheinisches Landesmuseum/Bonn, Germany

The empty memorial tomb of Marcus Caelius, 53, the senior centurion of Roman Legion XVIII, killed at the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. This cenotaph was discovered in northwest Germany in 1620. The inscription reads, in part, "His bones, if found, may be placed in this monument...."

The Germans were fortunate in locating Arminius, a war leader who had benefited from Roman military training. He was the son of a Cheruscus noble named Segimer. Arminius was notable for being "brave in action, quick in apprehension, and of activity of mind beyond the state of barbarism, showing in his eyes and countenance the ardor of his feelings."

Arminius had served as a German fœderatus in the auxiliaries, and was thus a Roman citizen, it being the custom to grant citizenship upon completion of service. He had been raised to the Equites, the Equestrian Order (usually translated as "knights") for his outstanding services to the Res Publica. Many of the men who Arminius would be leading had also served in the Roman military, a fact apparently forgotten by Varus when he assumed that he could carry out a program of subjugation with impunity.

While Cassius Dio paints Arminius more as being the right man in the right place at the right time, Paterculus makes him the chief plotter, taking advantage of Varus's incompetence to carry out atrocities, "not unwisely judging that no man is more easily cut off than he who feels no fear, and that security is very frequently the

Sovereign Media

ABOVE: A map of Roman Germania, showing *Teutoburger Wald*—the forest where Arminius, both a tribal leader of the Germanic Cherusci and a Roman citizen, led Quinctilius Varus into an ambush and destroyed three legions of Roman centurions. RIGHT: A highly romanticized illustration of Arminius, a Germanic chieftain and Roman citizen who lured three legions (20,000 men) into a trap in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE. The spears wielded by the Germans proved more effective weapons in the dense woods.

commencement of calamity."

Arminius opened his mind to a few well-chosen confidants, and receiving encouragement, he sounded out a broader base of support. He assured the people that the Romans could easily be surprised and defeated in detail. In this he was helped not a little by Varus himself.

Arminius and his co-commander Segimerus constantly put themselves in Varus's company, and were frequent guests of the officers' mess. This gave them not only the opportunity to play on Varus's weaknesses by flattering him at every opportunity, but also to size up their opponent on his home ground. Varus could not believe that two such genial fellows, barbarians though they might be, would plot against their good friend. Against Rome, possibly, but Varus himself? Never!

A Cheruscus fœderatus named Segestes, still apparently holding a hope that there could be a peaceful resolution to the situation, warned Varus during a feast immediately prior to the rising when he learned that a time had been selected to carry out the insurrection. Segestes went so far as to insist that Varus arrest Arminius and all the other leaders, including himself, which would immobilize the plot. The governor could then separate the innocent from the guilty at his leisure.

Segestes was forced to go along with the plot and fight alongside Arminius because the Cherusci were fully committed to the war. In addition to his political misgivings, however, Segestes had a personal grudge against Arminius. His daughter, engaged to another man, had been abducted by Arminius, causing lasting enmity between the two men. Knowledge of this quarrel may have led Varus to believe that Segestes was simply attempting to blacken the name of Arminius, that good friend of Varus and all Romans, and that there was no foundation to the story other than envy.

For whatever reason, Varus refused to believe Segestes. The Roman governor professed to trust in the good will of the people and their love for him, which they had expressed on numerous occasions in order to lull him into a false sense of security. It was a fatal exercise of fatuous self-deception.

At Arminius's suggestion, Varus then made a mistake deadly to any commander in hostile territory. He dispersed his forces among people whom, he was assured, desired protection against possible incursion by (other) barbarians. Almost immediately after this misjudged action, a contrived rebellion broke out among those who lived farthest from the Roman base. This was in order to ensure that Varus would have his troops strung out on a long and arduous march through mountainous and wooded, though presumably friendly territory, burdened with baggage and camp followers.

Unlike most such plans, the arrangement worked to perfection. Locals rose and slaughtered detachments quartered on them ostensibly for their own protection. This not only dealt a severe blow immediately, but also prevented Varus from receiving critically needed reinforcements, the deployment having used up his reserves. The Roman commander set out through the Teutoburg Forest to crush the rebellion. Presumably under the illusion that he was in for a short, glorious little war, Varus burdened the columns with baggage wagons, and even soldiers' families and vast numbers of servants, "as they would for a journey in peace-time," thus ensuring that the advance would be broken up into small groups. He apparently still fancied that Arminius and Segimerus were his faithful allies.

Wikimedia

Specific details of the battle are impossible to reconstruct from the remaining evidence. Paterculus promised to relate the exact circumstances

in his "large history" but, if he carried out his promise, the work has been lost. The details given by Cassius Dio contradict in some respects the evidence found by the expedition of Germanicus to the site of the battle six years after, and recorded by Cornelius Tacitus in the *Annales*. Even Tacitus cannot be considered completely reliable, for archeological findings have yet to verify the events he described.

The battle began badly for the Romans, and ended worse. One excessively romantic source, intent upon turning Arminius into a Teutonic superhero, relates the disingenuous story that, in order to fool the Romans into thinking that they were outnumbered by a small barbarian force, the Germans made great shouts and beat their shields with their swords.

A few errors were committed in this exercise in myth formation. First, the Germans were not "vastly outnumbered" as the source claims, but probably had a slight superiority in numbers thanks to the success of Arminius's stratagem that resulted in Varus splitting his forces for easier slaughter while on garrison duty.

Second, the majority of the Germans were not armed with swords at this time, but with short spears called *frameæ*. Swords were expensive and difficult to manufacture. They were not common among the Germanic tribes until centuries later. Finally, Arminius was a trained Roman officer, and hardly likely to think that, foolish as their commander might be, the Roman soldiers would be hoodwinked by such a childish trick. He had arranged the confrontation in a far more effective manner.

In his battle plan, Arminius was aided not a little by a terrible storm that broke out—which incidentally would have drowned out any shouting or other noise-making intended as a diversion. The storm caused the already-fragmented columns to break up even more. It was then that Arminius made the first attack.

Initially the Germans threw their spears from a distance, screened by the underbrush and the confusion caused by the storm. Encountering no

Eon Images

ABOVE: Led by Quinctilius Varus, the Roman army met an ignominious fate at the hands of the traitor Arminius and his Germanic Cherusci tribe in the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE. BELOW: A reconstructed earth and brush rampart at the Kalkriese Museum and Park in northwest Germany, believed to be the site of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. The rampart was built after the discovery of what has been identified as either part of the Roman fortified camp built during the battle, or a German fortification built to trap the Romans on the lower trail.

Carole Raddato

effective resistance, they closed in. The Romans, scattered among the baggage train and mixed in with noncombatants, were unable to form up and concentrate their forces properly. This increased the number of casualties dramatically and prevented any attempt at a counterattack.

Somehow the Romans managed to fight their way to "a suitable place," as Cassius Dio describes it, where they made camp, fortified with a trench and a stockade. In this operation, they would probably have been protected by cavalry screens presumably under the direct command of the Legate Numonius Vala. Vala seemed to work well with the auxiliaries and employed both the Roman cavalry and the allied horse to good effect.

It is at this point that the account given by Cassius Dio begins to contradict the evidence found by Germanicus and recorded by Cornelius Tacitus in his *Annales*. Germanicus (Germanicus Tiberius Cæsar) was the son of Nero Claudius Drusus, the younger brother of Tiberius Cæsar. Nero Claudius Drusus received the title of "Germanicus" at his death for his attempts to extend the Empire northward, and it was conferred on all his male descendants. It is a coincidence that Germanicus Tiberius Cæsar's military feats were in Germania.

Cassius Dio relates that the next day, having burned or abandoned most of the baggage train, the column marched out in good order. How the wagons could have been burned after the torrential downpour the historian had already described is not explained. According to Cassius Dio, the Romans even made it to open ground, suffering minor casualties. Then, for no discernible reason, they re-entered the woods, where they suffered the heaviest casualties of the battle.

Unable to form up properly for a charge, the Romans were decimated over the next two days until, on the fourth day, another heavy rainstorm made even maintaining footing impossible. Cassius Dio neglects to relate anything that happened on the third day, leaving many modern readers to suppose that the "fourth" day was a misstatement, it actually being the third. In any event, the soldiers were unable to employ their missile weapons because of the trees and the downpour. Even their shields were too heavy to hold, having become sodden with the continued rain. Those officers not already slain committed suicide. They were followed by those of their men who did not simply cast down their weapons and wait for death.

The evidence found by Germanicus's expedition suggests that the battle did not go quite as Cassius Dio reported, especially on the second day. The nephew and heir of Tiberius Cæsar found the fortified camp constructed on the first day of battle. There was, however, more than a suggestion that the stockade had been assaulted and breached, probably early on the second day. There was, of course, no effective way of carrying out a fight at night under conditions in a dark forest with an overcast sky.

Once the stockade was breached, the Roman soldiers probably made a run for it. Far from putting up an effective defense, Paterculus asserts that Varus punished men for attempting to fight their

way clear. Sensing that all was lost, Numonius Vala failed to provide cover for a retreat. Although normally he "conducted himself as a modest and well-meaning man, [he] was on this occasion guilty of abominable treachery." Vala deserted with the auxiliary cavalry and tried to reach the Rhine on his own. His "Fortuna" deserted him in turn, however, and he perished in the attempt, along with most of the auxiliary troops.

The heaps of whitened human and animal bones found by Germanicus indicated that some groups of soldiers had attempted to stand and fight, while others had been slain while running away. The Romans had been unable to reform and present a united front. The woods and rain rendered them unable to use their bows and javelins to any good effect. What may have started as an attempt at an orderly retreat after the breaching of the stockade became a three-day Great Hunt with man as the game. The running battle covered a killing ground estimated at more than 50 kilometers.

The Germans were at a substantial advantage, not being troubled with heavy armor in the mire. While they lacked swords and used spears, these, like the Zulu assegai, were more often used for thrusting than throwing. This made them good close-order weapons, ideal for the conditions under which they were fighting. The Germans also had the advantage of receiving constant reinforcements, while the Romans had already suffered heavy losses the first day.

Reports as to the end of the battle differ. Most sources hold that Varus and all the senior officers, "fearing that they would either be taken alive or slaughtered by their bitterest enemies—for they had already been wounded—nerved themselves for the dreaded but unavoidable act, and took their own lives."

Of the two camp præfects, Paterculus reports that Lucius Eggius took the path of honor and committed suicide, while Ceionius preferred life and disgrace to honor, and advised surrender, probably living just long enough to regret his decision. The centurions and senior officers who survived were sacrificed on altars especially constructed for the occasion near the first day's camp. Their heads were cut off and nailed to trees in the area, to be found years later and removed for burial. Germanicus himself laid the first sod for a memorial mound in a triangular cemetery near the stockade, an act for which Tiberius rebuked him. The Emperor apparently construed it as an exercise of imperial authority to make a public

Das Hermannsdenkmal

Misplaced Monument

Completed in the 1870s, the Hermann Memorial was more propaganda for a glorious German past, than a history lesson. It is not located at the site of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest.

Wikimedia

ALTHOUGH TO THIS DAY IT IS A POPULAR tourist attraction and has a firm place in the affections of modern Germans, the Hermannsdenkmal commemorates something that never existed in a place where it never happened. Ostensibly a monument to Arminius, the victor in the Battle of Teutoburg Forest, it was intended by its designer, Ernst von Bandel, as a symbol of the force and power of youthful Germany. It drew inspiration from the myth of the ancient German nation—a concept that existed only in the imaginations of the late-18th and early-19th-century Romantics.

Arminius himself would have been puzzled at being characterized as a German national hero. He was a Cheruscus. Other Germans were as much enemies to him as were the Romans. A Pan-German spirit was alien to him and to most of the Germanies until the rise of the modern nation-state concept with the French Revolution. The new political orientation was finalized with the subsequent dissolution of the old order by Napoleon, setting the stage for the rise of Prussia and German unification on the northern state's terms.

The Hermannsdenkmal was an expression in concrete form of the mystic vision of the German nation as a Volk, connected with and intrinsic to the land itself. This Volksgeist was later to find expression in Nazi law with the concept of Bodenstandigkeit, "Rooting in the soil." This was applied in such a way as to obviate the institution of private property. Title was a continuous process dependent on the ability to make whatever was possessed productive for the greater good of the state.

The creation of a heroic, mythic past was necessary to provide a common heritage for peoples who, differing in ethnic, cultural, historical and religious backgrounds, shared the same—or nearly the same—language: German. Culturally this artificial myth creation was to find its highest expression in Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* (culture struggle) and the attempt to remove all "foreign" influences from the Reich. This extended even to what G.K. Chesterton called the invention of a completely new language, the so-called "Germanic" or "Classical" pronunciation of Latin. The language of the vanquished at Teutoburg Forest was now to be transformed and assimilated as something entirely "German;" a "Latin" from which all Latin influence had been removed.

Politically and socially, this idea of the German people arising out of the misty north, purifying and saving humanity from the decadent and degenerate Mediterranean civilizations, found its highest expression in Nazi Germany's glorification of the Aryan "race"—in reality a language group, not a cultural or racial classification. Ironically, Hitler disliked the Hermannsdenkmal, considering its "Gothic" style outmoded with no place in his New Order.

The edifice was begun in 1841, but the political situation in the 1840s prevented its completion until 1875. The massive pedestal was intended to contain a Hall of Heroes celebrating famous Germans, but this feature was never completed. Towering high on a hill in the Teutoburg Forest, the statue depicts a somewhat misproportioned medieval German warrior, with an anachronistic winged helmet, armor and sword raised in defiance. While the monument is impressive, archeologists are certain of one thing: The victory it celebrates occurred nowhere near it. ■

Wikimedia

When he was sent north to quell the rebellion and defeat Arminius six years later, Germanicus Cæsar found heaps of whitened human and animal bones at the site of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest. The scene is depicted in "Germanicus after the Disaster of Varus," an 1896 oil painting by French artist Lionel-Noël Royer.

demonstration of honor for the dead. The memorial mound was later destroyed and never rebuilt, making the search for the site significantly more difficult than it would have been.

The specific location of the main battle is still a matter of conjecture. The clues in the various accounts are of little use after almost two millennia. More than 700 possible sites have been investigated with little result. The most promising area is in the neighborhood of Oberesch, today occupied by a farm. In 1987, Major Anthony Clunn of the RAF, stationed with a helicopter squadron in Osnabrück, reported seeing a site in this location that could be the battlefield during a "flyby."

Archeological investigation began almost immediately, but it was not until 1994 that the first traces were found of human and animal remains, as well as military equipment. Additional traces have been found since, but nothing to indicate the location of the fortified camp, the wreckage of which was found by the expedition led by Germanicus six years after the battle, or of the triangular-shaped cemetery in which the remains of those Romans whose bodies could be located after more than half a decade were interred.

The area in which most of the remains have been found is in the narrowest gap in the mountains between Wiehengebirge and the Great Moor, known today as the Niewedder Senke. This is a clear indication that what had been found was probably the location of the desperate fighting during the attempted retreat on the second day of battle. The remains of the fortified camp and cemetery could thus still be many kilometers away. There is one thing upon which all authorities agree, however: The site of the "Hermannsdenkmal," the monument to Arminius begun in the 1840s and completed in the 1870s, is not the location of the battle.

While devastating, the defeat in the Teutoburg Forest did not have exactly the effect that succeeding generations of German Romantics imputed to the disaster. Germanicus Cæsar was sent north to quell the rebellion and defeated Arminius. Although successful, and one of the more popular and well-loved members of the imperial family, Germanicus met an untimely death in Antioch in 19 CE, presumably by poison. This was blamed by contemporaries on Tiberius out of jealousy for his adopted son and heir, but may have been the more usual instance of accidental food poisoning, commonly attributed to design in earlier times.

Arminius himself, although he regained the territory after the recall of Germanicus and rose to the position of chieftain of the Cherusci, became involved in the constant inter-tribal warfare that was one of the ostensible reasons for the imperial program of conquer, occupy and civilize. He was killed a few years later by his own relatives. The Germans mutilated the body of Varus, but cut off the head and sent it to Augustus who, after a while, gave it burial in Varus's family vault.

Teutonophiles point with pride to the fact that Rome never again succeeded in making any great additional territorial expansion in Germany. This is generally attributed to the virility and strength

of the pure Aryan strain opposed to the decadent and degenerate Romans and those weak enough to succumb to civilization.

True, the Cherusci were the most intractable of tribesmen, but there were additional reasons why Rome halted its program of expansion in that direction. A glance into Tacitus's *Germania* reveals that, as far as the Romans were concerned, the country east of the Rhine was a vast wasteland containing little but savages, swamps and dark woods—hardly attractive to a Mediterranean people. The prospective province laid out by Tiberius and Drusus held within it some of the most difficult terrain in western Europe, and potential revenue for the Imperial treasury was small.

There were no known deposits of gold or silver and, unlike the more favored Gaul, no vast tracts of agricultural land. Farming equipment of the time was ill-suited for the sticky soil of northern Europe. An adequate plow would not be invented for centuries—after the Germans themselves began to adopt more settled ways, and needed effective tools to increase crop production. Tiberius's realistic appraisal (the decision was his, Augustus having turned into a god in 14 CE) was to punish the Germans for the defeat inflicted on Varus, regain the eagles that had been lost—and abandon the place to the savages. The numbers XVII, XVIII and XIX were never again used to designate any legion.

Future policy was dictated by the desire to shorten the salient between the Rhine and the Danube in order to secure the borders of the Empire. This required establishing the longest artificial border in Europe, the Limes. It was characterized by small outposts on the frontier staffed with border troops, Limitanei, and larger military installations behind the lines, with garrison troops, Comitatenses, near the cities on the interior lines of communication ready to move in whatever direction danger threatened. It was not until the reign of Marcus Aurelius (born 111 CE, emperor 161 CE, died 180 CE) that Rome was to have a larger vision concerning Germany, by which time she lacked the ability to sustain a campaign that could take generations.

The Empire dropped the practice of absorption through conquest and occupation, and adopted a policy of "build it and they will come." The strategy was now to welcome barbarian settlers into the Empire on a limited basis, which in later centuries was to become a flood of immigrants. These would provide critically needed manpower for the legions, gain Roman citizenship and, after their term of service was up, a grant of land in a colony on which to settle their families and relatives as Roman fœderati. In the end, although the intent was to Romanize the Germans, what resulted in many respects was a Germanization of the Romans. ■

Tiwaz: The Teutonic God of War

AS SHOCKING AS IT MIGHT APPEAR to modern as well as Roman eyes, the immolation of captives was a not-uncommon practice of the Teutonic and Scandinavian tribes. The ritual would survive until at least the 10th century, when it would be carried out by some leader of a war band in order to gain favor with whatever god he was honoring. The leader would make a vow to kill every living thing captured during a raid. Sometimes the vow would be modified by limiting it to all male creatures, all animals, or all human beings, but that was viewed a little askance by true devotees, who believed that, to be an effective act of worship, there could be no holding back.

In later centuries the god usually chosen to receive this honor was Odin, to whom at a special ceremony every nine years at his center of worship, nine of every kind of male—including man—were sacrificed by hanging, the usual Teutonic method of execution. Remains found in the bogs of northern Europe give ample evidence of the practice, where a criminal, captive, or volunteer would be hanged, and the body carefully deposited in the peat for preservation. Of the many myths surrounding Odin, one was that, "I hung by the neck for nine days, a sacrifice to myself."

Icelandic National Library

An Icelandic manuscript with the likeness of Tyr or Tiwaz, the god of war and justice in Norse mythology. A son of Odin, Tyr is often depicted with only a left hand, having lost his right to the wolf Fenrir.

The sacrifices made after the Battle of Teutoburg Forest, however, would probably have been in honor of Tyr or Tiwaz, usually considered different names for the same god, even though the area around the Weser was sacred to Thor or Donar. Tiwaz, since he was predominantly a god of war, was most often identified by the Greeks and Romans with Ares or Mars. He was a much older god than Odin, the guardian of crossroads and travelers, who at this time probably still had both eyes and had not yet become head of the Teutonic pantheon.

The sacrifices carried out by the Cherusci under Arminius may have been intended as a dedication or creation of a "sacred grove" in honor of the god of war who had, presumably, brought them a great victory. A consecrated site of that kind would have been similar to the sacred grove where the supreme god of the Semnones (the oldest clan of the Suevi, according to Tactitus), also presumably Tiwaz, was worshiped with human sacrifice, although little else is known of the specific rites celebrated. The sacrifices after Teutoburg Forest were carried out à la Aztec directly on the altars, as the horrified Romans under Germanicus discovered when they arrived on the site six years after the battle.

One does not have far to look to see why other gods, such as Thor, had a wider following among people attempting to carry out the activities of everyday life. Thor was a much more user-friendly god, one reason why his worship was more popular and lasted so much longer than many of the others, even in our day reaching the heights of becoming a comic-book hero. The Thunder God generally didn't demand human sacrifice. This, along with his more homely attributes, made him the only real competition in the north for the "White Christ" with the coming of the new religion. ■

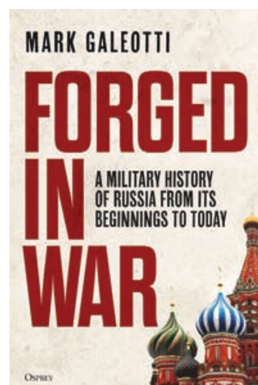
BOOKS

Wikimedia-Military Historical Museum of Artillery, Engineers and Signal Corps (St. Petersburg)

The blood-soaked history of Russia as a military power is a study of contrasts in defeat and victory.

By Christopher Miskimon

When the Battle of Austerlitz turned against the Alliance of which Russia was part, it was the cavalry of the Russian Imperial Guard who managed to capture the only French regimental eagle of the day from the 4th Line Regiment. However, a French counterattack drove the Russians back under the hooves of French horses and the thunder of their artillery and musketry. Russian Field Marshal Kutuzov was wounded, and the Russian Army suffered 25,000 casualties. Seven years later, it would be Napoleon who suffered at Russian hands when the French leader foolishly invaded Russia, handing them a great victory which would be practically mythologized two centuries later.



Russian military history is a mix of back-and-forth victory and defeat. Both are generally blood-soaked and point to the historical strengths and weaknesses of Russia as a military power. Time and again these factors have helped or hindered the nation in its struggles to defend itself, expand its borders and control, or take part in wars alone or in a coalition.

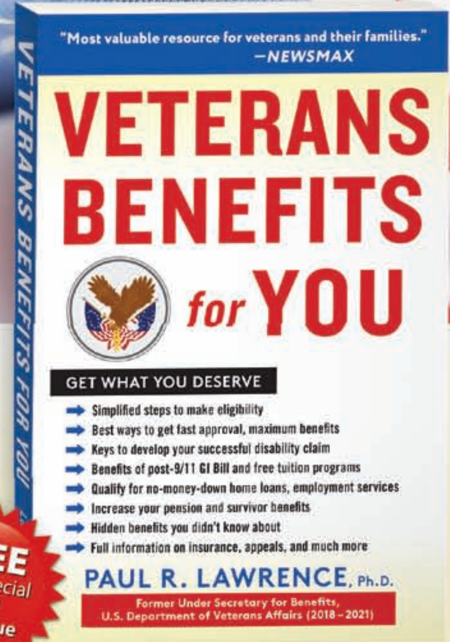
Militarily, Russia has often struggled to modernize its forces to keep them competitive. In centuries past Russia's czars knew they needed to modernize and industrialize their society, but doing so would bring new ideas and dissatisfaction with the status quo of peasants and serfs. It also strengthened a new middle class which wanted its own rights and privileges. Manpower was often recruited by force or threat and corruption drained the wealth needed to effectively create better forces. This has hampered Russia's forces many times in history.

Simultaneously, Russian troops are known to be brave and hardy, able to continue functioning even under great hardship. Due partly to its size and the strength of its people, Russia as a nation is also able to endure defeat and difficulty and remain fighting. It possesses a sort of latent strength which is not apparent through studying lists of units and knowing the quantity of its weapons. The Russians know how to exhaust an invader and strike back afterward.

To accomplish this, Russian leaders have always had to sit heavily on the backs of their people.

"Feat of Cavalry Regiment at the battle of Austerlitz in 1805," by Russian Imperial artist Bogdan Willewalde (1884). At the Battle of Austerlitz, the Russian horse Guard charged the French 4th Line regiment in the open, capturing its eagle, though Napoleon Bonaparte and his Grande Armée would win the battle.

— ADVERTISEMENT —



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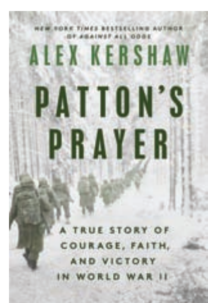
This leads to the duality of the threats it faces. With no real geographical strongpoints, Russia must guard against external threats; the Mongols, the French, and the Nazis, to name a few. This is why they always seek to expand their borders or create buffer states, keeping threats at a distance to allow them time to mobilize. Simultaneously, Russian leaders must guard against threats from within as their oppressive measures create rebellions, over time including the Cossacks, the communists and the Chechens.

Forged in War: A Military History of Russia from its Beginnings to Today (Mark Galeotti, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2024, 368 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $35.00, hardcover) is an open and clear look at Russia's military past from the Rus peoples of the 9th Century CE to the current war in Ukraine. The book presents an unvarnished look at Russian history, good and bad, past and present.

The author is an acknowledged expert on Russia who strives to present a clear picture of that nation, its actions and its motivations. He is so successful at doing so the current Russian government has banned him from entering the country. For example, while the Russians present themselves as longtime protectors of Europe from eastern threats, the author points out the Russians were actually Mongol vassals for two centuries and currently have no problem employing Islamic Chechens in Ukraine. While such an assertion can easily devolve into arguments over politics and religion, the author stands clear of that, presenting facts and leaving the reader to make their own conclusion. That is the book's strength, to strip away myth and propaganda and present reality, which is rarely pristine or easy to consider.



Patton's Prayer: A True Story of Courage, Faith and Victory in World War II (Alex Kershaw, Dutton Press, New York NY, 2024, 348 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $32.00, hardcover)

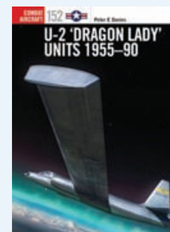
The German Ardennes Offensive threatened the Allied lines in December 1944. While it was a crisis, the situation also presented an opportunity. An effective American counterattack could destroy Germany's last reserves in the West, if only the weather would cooperate. General George S. Patton's Third Army was placed to deal that killer blow if it could pivot and change its direction of advance straight into the German flank, again assuming decent weather. By modern standards Patton was a bit odd. Mercurial, profane, a believer in reincarnation, he was also quick to action, decisive and a devout Christian. In a moment when much depended on something he could not control, Patton asked his chaplain, James H. O'Neill, to create a prayer for good weather. O'Neill dutifully complied, and 250,000 cards bearing the prayer and Patton's signature went out to his troops.

The author tells this story through the experiences of paratroopers, tank crews and the odd general or staff officer. This latest book continues in the traditions of his previous works with gritty realism, descriptive prose and a focus on the

SHORT BURSTS

The Melting Point: High Command and War in the 21st Century (Gen. Kenneth McKenzie Jr., USMC Ret., Naval Institute Press, 2024, $34.95, hardcover). The author commanded US Central Command during some of its difficult battles against the so-called Islamic State and tensions with Iran. It is an interesting and engaging memoir.

The First Aircraft Carrier: USS Langley and the Dawn of US Naval Aviation (David F. Winkler, Naval Institute Press, 2024, $29.95, hardcover). Built as an experiment, USS Langley set the stage for the US Navy's expanded carrier force in World War II and beyond. Many of the techniques the crew developed for air operations are still in use today.



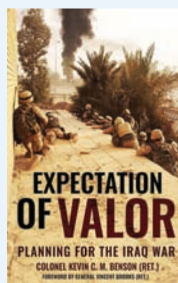
U-2 'Dragon Lady' Units 1955-90 (Peter E. Davies, Osprey Publishing, 2024, $25, softcover). The CIA gave the U-2 its 'Dragon Lady' code name, using it for surveillance missions during the Cold War. This book examines its career.

The American Revolution 1774-83 (Daniel Marston, Osprey Publishing, 2024, $20, softcover). This updated edition of the publisher's Essential Histories series looks at the war from its military and political angles.

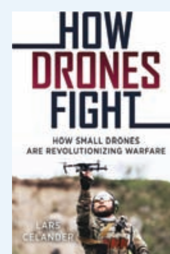
Midway-Class Aircraft Carriers 1945-92 (Mark Stille, Osprey Publishing, 2024, $20, softcover). The Midway class entered service just after World War II but remained until the Gulf War. Their crews maintained sortie rates matching the larger super carriers.

Steel Lobsters: Crown, Commonwealth, and the Last Knights in England (Myke Cole, Osprey Publishing, 2024, $32, hardcover). This is a biography of Sir Arthur Hesilrige and his Regiment of Cuirassiers, nicknamed the 'Lobsters' for their use of plate armor. As gunpowder weapons rose to primacy, this unit was the last of English knights.

The Pirate Menace: Uncovering the Golden Age of Piracy (Angus Konstam, Osprey Publishing, 2024, $32, hardcover). Piracy enjoyed a brief period of ascendancy in the 1700s. The author recounts this period in fascinating detail.



Expectation of Valor: Planning for the Iraq War (Col. Kevin Benson (ret.), Casemate Publishers, 2024, $34.95, hardcover). The author reveals the great amount of planning that went into preparation for the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Much of this planning was ignored by decision makers, leading to problems later.



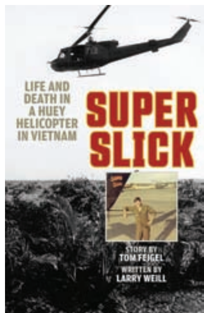
How Drones Fight: How Small Drones are Revolutionizing Warfare (Lars Celander, Casemate Publishers, 2024, $24.95, softcover). Recent conflicts show the rising importance of drones in reconnaissance and strike missions. The author examines this trend and where it may be leading.

human experience in the world's largest conflict. The author excels at taking the disparate stories of different soldiers serving during the Battle of the Bulge and weaving them together into a coherent, readable and page-turning narrative.

The War for Ukraine: Strategy and Adaptation Under Fire (Mick Ryan, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2024, 346 pp., maps, notes, bibliography, index, $34.95, hardcover)

The war in Ukraine is a mix of the old and new. Both sides fight with a combination of weapons that date back to the Soviet Union and which were created after the war began and are still being refined. Since the war began in February 2022 it has gone through phases of offensive and defensive for both sides. The war's character changed as innovations and unforeseen developments forced adaptation. The Ukraine War has revealed the two most important factors in determining victory or defeat: the soundness of its overall strategy and the ability to rapidly adjust to unpredictable circumstances.

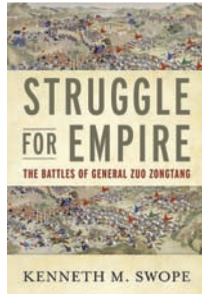
The author is a retired major general of the Australian Army and has written widely on modern warfare in general and the Ukraine War in particular. This book examines the basis of both combatant nation's strategies and how they are only the starting point for how a country will change and evolve its actions as new situations arise. It also examines the importance of the human factor and leadership in the conduct of modern warfare.



Super Slick: Life and Death in a Huey Helicopter in Vietnam (Tom Feigel and Larry Weill, Stackpole Books, Essex CT, 2024, 288 pp., maps, photographs, $29.95, hardcover)

Within a year of graduating high school, Tom Fiegel received his draft notice. Entering the army, he was soon assigned to aviation. He arrived in Vietnam in 1970 and joined a helicopter ground crew maintaining thirty UH-1s in the 336th Assault Helicopter Company. One day, he volunteered for a flight mission to go out and repair a damaged aircraft. Tom became a crew chief on a transport helicopter soon after. Afterward came a new assignment on an armed Huey called Super Slick, performing more dangerous missions.

This memoir puts the reader in the crew compartment of a Huey helicopter in Vietnam. The descriptions of missions are engaging, giving an authentic impression of life in a Vietnam era aviation unit. War compels a young soldier to grow up fast, and this book reveals the life of a 20-year-old manning a machine gun while skimming the treetops of South Vietnam.



Struggle for Empire: The Battles of General Zuo Zongtang (Kenneth M. Swope, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 2024, 417 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $42.95, hardcover)

Zuo Zongtang (1812-1885) rose from rural poverty and obscurity in Hunan Province to become a powerful Han Chinese official in a nation controlled by the Manchu. He studied military history and understood the military aspect of geography and knew China had to modernize to survive. Toward that end he constructed arsenals for ordnance production and built China's first modern naval yard. Zuo also proved himself as a general, leading troops during the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s and 60s. He played a major part in ending the conflict. Later he led troops in suppressing the Nian Rebellion in 1868 and the Duncan Revolt in the 1870s.

This military leader is a national hero in China, but few have heard of him in the West. This book is a detailed study of Zuo Zongtang which succeeds in informing the reader about this dynamic and skilled general. It covers both his battlefield exploits as well as his efforts to make China technologically competitive with its foreign adversaries.

The Gunner and the Grunt: Two Boston Boys in Vietnam with the First Cavalry Division Airmobile (Michael L. Kelly and Peter Burbank, Casemate Books, Havertown PA, 2024, 196 pp., photographs, appendices, $34.95, hardcover)

Michael Kelly, the Gunner, flew fire support missions in a UH1 helicopter. Peter Burbank, the Grunt, served as an infantryman, relying on the support those helicopters could give him in battle. Both were in the 1st Cavalry Division, which at that time was doing something new in warfare: carrying soldiers into battle aboard helicopters in large numbers for the first time. Both men came from Boston but saw the war from the perspective of their assigned roles. Burbank patrolled the jungles and took part in search and destroy missions. Kelley flew overhead, providing machine gun and rocket fire for the infantry. Unlike the foot soldiers, Kelley got to ride, but his ride was a big, inviting target. Both faced North Vietnamese Army troops and Viet Cong guerrillas, striving to survive their time in Vietnam.

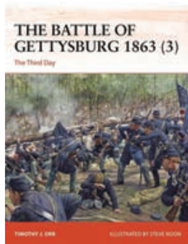
This co-written memoir follows the two authors as they enter the army, go through training and go to war. It provides a fascinating look at two men doing very different but very intertwined jobs in a combat zone. As the Vietnam era veterans are aging, we are fortunate that many of them are recording their experiences for subsequent generations. This book earns its place among them.

Mission Iran: Special Forces Berlin and Operation Eagle Claw JTF 1-79 (James Stejskal, Casemate Publishing, Havertown PA, 2024, 153 pp., photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $24.95, softcover)

After American Embassy personnel in Tehran were taken hostage in 1979, the US military organized a rescue mission known as Operation Eagle Claw. This mission failed due to several factors, including planning errors and a lack of experience in joint operations. What is not widely understood is the part played by the US Army's Special Forces detachment based in West Berlin. As this unit was essentially behind Soviet lines, over time it developed extensive covert operations and counter-terrorism skills, beyond those normally expected of a Special Forces unit. The Detachment sent four operatives into Iran, where they conducted reconnaissance of the sites where Americans were being held and prepared to assist the rescue mission when it arrived. More members of the unit were with the rescue force. When the mission failed, the team in Tehran had to escape the city without outside help.

This unknown tale of the Cold War is brought to light in this new book. The author served in the Berlin Detachment and writes with authority and clarity on the subject. The book is a quick and entertaining read, yet full of factual information on the operation from several points of view. It takes a complex story and makes it easy to follow. Two color photo inserts add materially to the text.

The Battle of Gettysburg 1863 (3): The Third Day (Timothy J. Orr, Osprey Publishing, Oxford



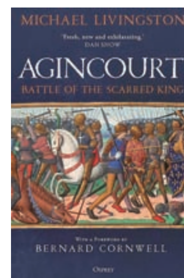
UK, 2024, 96 pp., maps, photographs, bibliography, index, $25, softcover)

The Battle of Gettysburg is one of the most pivotal and important battles in the American Civil War and in American military history. The third day of the battle, July 3, 1863, proved the most decisive and important. The day saw hard fighting at Culp's Hill, where many historians argue the battle was decided. It also saw actions at East and South Cavalry Fields, as they are known today. Pickett's Charge is the best-known fight of the day, preceded by a lengthy artillery duel involving hundreds of cannon and concluded with over 60 percent losses to the Confederate force. After that attack was broken, a Union counterattack ended the battle.

This new book completes the author's trilogy on Gettysburg in a concise but detailed and well-illustrated account. Numerous primary statements from private soldiers reveal how hard the battle was on them and their determination to stand their ground. The book also includes summaries of the cost of the campaign in human lives and suffering, along with the strategic consequences.

Agincourt: Battle of the Scarred King (Michael Livingston, Osprey Publishing, Oxford UK, 2024, 320 pp., maps, photographs, notes, bibliography, index, $30, hardcover)

The English invasion of France in 1415 seized the French port of Harfleur, but only after a long siege. Afterward the English Army, weakened by sickness, seemed incapable of further offensive



action. Against the advice of his senior officers, Henry decided to march his army across Normandy to the port of Calais. The French assembled an army larger than the British force and shadowed them as they marched. Finally, the French blocked the English route and forced Henry to stand and fight. The resulting Battle of Agincourt ended in a decisive English victory, with the French suffering heavy casualties and forced to sue for peace.

The story of Agincourt is well known, but the author uses an existing copy of the original French battle plan to aid in a new interpretation of the battle. He also challenges the commonly accepted location of the action. The book attempts to pro-

GAMES

TWO CLASSIC SHOOT 'EM UPS WITH MILITARY THEMES RETURN FOR MORE IN DIFFERENT WAYS.

By Joseph Luster

AERO FIGHTERS

Genre: Shoot 'em up • Platform: Various • Publisher: SUCCESS Corporation • Available: TBD

Known in Japan as *Sonic Wings*, the *Aero Fighters* series first kicked off way back in 1992. The original entry started out as an arcade game before making its way to the Super Nintendo Entertainment System, and now SUCCESS Corporation has its eyes set on a revival.

Upon its initial announcement—which was made during Hamster Corporation's 502nd Arcade Archives Super Volley '91 Special broadcast—the exact details of that revival were pretty slim. Another presentation followed on November 8, with the second being held at Shinjuku, Tokyo's EXBAR TOKYO venue. SUCCESS took the opportunity to reveal more about the new project, which will mark the first for the *Aero Fighters* series in 27 years.

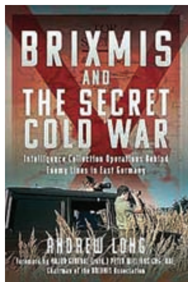
A lot can happen in the better part of nearly three decades, but if the new *Aero Fighters* plays its cards right it will aim for that very specific type of nostalgia that classic shoot 'em up fans crave. It's an interesting series in that, from the beginning, it went out of its way to stand out from a relatively crowded genre. It introduced a large cast of characters, which wasn't the norm for shoot 'em ups, with each pair representing one of four featured nations.

Participating nations with fictional representatives included the United States, Japan, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Each had their own Player 1 and Player 2 characters, with Blaster Keaton and Keith Bishop representing the U.S.A. with the Boeing F/A-18 Hornet and Grumman F-14 Tomcat, respectively. Japan had Hien with the Mitsubishi FSX and Mao Mao with the Mitsubishi F-15 Eagle, while Sweden had Kohful the Viking with the Saab AJ-37 Viggen and Tee-Bee 10 with the Saab JAS 39 Gripen. Rounding out the selection was the UK with Villiam Syd Pride and the McDonnell Douglas AV-8 Harrier II and Lord River N. White with the Panavia Tornado IDS.

If some of the names didn't give it away, this isn't exactly a trip through history, but that also wasn't the point. *Aero Fighters* is pure arcade action, and the original 1992 release proved highly popular upon its debut in Japanese game centers. The Super Nintendo version left something to be desired in the tech department, but it still paved the way for sequels like *Aero Fighters 2* (1994), *Aero Fighters 3* (1995), *Sonic Wings Special* (1996), and *Aero Fighters Assault* (1997). The latter—which Paradigm Entertainment developed and Vic Tokai and Video System published for Nintendo 64—would be the first ever 3D entry in the series.

How much of that collective DNA will make its way to the new *Aero Fighters* remains to be seen, but we're more than happy to jump back into the cockpit of this classic when it heads back to screens around the world.

vide a new understanding of Agincourt which will be of interest to students of the battle.



BRIXMIS and the Secret Cold War Intelligence Collection Operations Behind Enemy Lines in East Germany (Andrew Long, Pen and Sword Military, South Yorkshire UK, 2024, 244 pp., maps, photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, $49.95, hardcover)

The British Commander in Chief Mission to the Soviet Forces in Germany, abbreviated as BRIXMIS, resulted from a little-known agreement allowing liaison missions where British observers could move freely in the Soviet/East German Zone. It evolved into a sophisticated intelligence collection operation, with British operatives observing Warsaw Pact troops and equipment. Tours by these highly trained officers went out every day from 1946 to 1990. Along the way they played cat-and-mouse games with East German police and Soviet counterintelligence agents while working with French and American counterparts. Despite the danger, these agents worked tirelessly to gain vital information needed by NATO.

The Cold War's only real battles were fought through proxies but struggles such as those described in this book took place for decades. This fascinating new book combines research using declassified documents and former members of the mission. It reveals the complexities and realities of the Cold War along with the strain and risks experienced by those who served. ■

UNDER DEFEAT

Genre: Shoot 'em up • Platform: PC, PS4, PS5, Xbox Series • Publisher: Arctic Hazard • Available: December 5, 2024

Arcade shoot 'em ups were a dime a dozen back in the day, but developer G.rev did things a little differently. Originally released in 2005, *Under Defeat* put players in control of a heavily-armed helicopter, flying and blasting through the skies from a semi-isometric viewpoint. It could be disorienting at times, and the controls took getting used to, but putting the time and effort into *Under Defeat* yielded some keen rewards.

Now *Under Defeat* is getting a welcome comeback on modern platforms, including PlayStation 4, PlayStation 5, Nintendo Switch, and PC via Steam. Publishers Clear River Games and City Connection brought the faithful port with some nice bells and whistles to consoles and PC in early December, timing the worldwide release day and date with the Japanese launch.

All-out war has erupted in this alternate history timeline, giving players a chance to take on their enemies in a chopper with firepower to spare. There are three modes in total, including Arcade Mode, which aims to replicate the original experience right down to the 4:3 aspect ratio. There's also New Order mode, which adapts the game to modern screens with a 16:9 aspect ratio. Meanwhile, New Order Mode+ introduces a bunch of new features, including a WARNING GAUGE that adds a new risk-reward mechanic to both assist and challenge players.

Takehiro Eda and Zerodiv Fukushima Factory supervised the new release of *Under Defeat*, ensuring a quality port. If you're looking for something a little different with a still-classic feel, this one is worth your time. ■

WEAPONS

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operator if the train had passed north yet, Ellsworth told Forker to tap out "yes." Forker did as he was ordered, and in a few minutes the train was surrounded by Morgan's gray-clad troops south of a trestle that the raiders had set afire. In an exchange of gunfire, one Union soldier was killed. The surviving 30 passengers and a dozen soldiers were ordered to disembark and line up beside the tracks. They were relieved of hats, boots, money, and jewelry. Raiders also broke into the express company's safe to remove money. Morgan, dressed in a roundabout jacket, gray trousers, and cavalry boots, and wearing no insignia of rank, chatted with the women passengers. They persuaded him to allow the train to return south to Elizabethtown. One woman praised General Morgan, calling him "a gentleman," unaware that she was speaking to the general in person.

Another Confederate telegraph spy was C.S. Gaston, who successfully tapped into a Union line while using a location disguised as a logging camp. There he was fortunate to get into the wire connecting Grant's headquarters in Virginia to President Lincoln, who recognized the telegraph's great value in enabling him to personally direct his Federal commanders in the field.

During a two-month tap, the Rebels were unable to decipher any of the Union's coded messages. But Gaston found the uncoded ones helpful. One reported that a large quantity of beef was scheduled for landing at Coggins Point on a particular day to supply Union troops. This information was passed on to Rebel cavalry commander Wade Hampton. The South Carolinian used it to capture the entire food shipment, much to the later benefit of hungry Confederate troops.

As valuable as the telegraph was to knowledgeable persons North and South, the new technical device was largely unknown to common soldiers. One was a Texan in the Confederate Army who came across an abandoned receiving unit while wandering through a deserted railroad station in the Western theater late in the war. The receiver was loudly and rapidly clicking, an operator sending a message from farther down the railroad line.

The Texas soldier had never seen such a crazy-looking and clacking device before and imagined it as some sort of infernal weapon. Wanting to save his friends despite the presumed risk to his own safety, he quickly used his heavy boots to smash the clattering instrument.

He then rushed to his comrades with the good news. "Boys, they is trying to blow us up," he declared. "I seen the triggers a-working, but I busted 'em." ■

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up some sleepers, which they either burned or threw on the rails to delay their pursuers, who were growing in number and speed.

At Kingston, the *General* was delayed an hour on a sidetrack waiting for several southbound freight trains. There would be delays at other stations and soon, the raiders could hear what was now the *Texas*, gaining on them. They tried to slow it by releasing two of the *General*'s boxcars, but Fuller slowed enough to safely catch the cars. They set the last boxcar on fire on the bridge over the Oostanaula River, but wet from the rain, it didn't ignite the structure or slow their pursuers. Fuller was so close now that they couldn't stop for wood, water, or to try to damage more track. The wood-burning *General* ran out of fuel just north of Ringgold, Georgia, less than 20 miles from Chattanooga. Andrews and his men, who scattered into the wilderness, were all captured within two weeks.

Parrott, along with Private Samuel Roberston, were captured the same day they left the train and taken to Ringgold, according to Pittinger. Parrott, being the youngest and presumably the easiest to break, was stripped naked and held over a rock by four Confederates while two others pointed revolvers at him threatening to shoot him if he resisted. A lieutenant whipped him with a rawhide, pausing three times to lift him up and ask if he was ready to confess. Parrott continued to refuse and the lashing was discontinued after more than 100 strokes. He was offered no medical attention and remained scarred for life.

The captured "engine thieves" were then taken by rail to Marietta where, Pittinger wrote in *Capturing a Locomotive*, a "heavy guard of six hundred cadets was placed around us for the purpose of keeping down the mob." A company of Confederate soldiers had left Big Shanty to lynch them, "but were overtaken by their officers when about half-way to Marietta and dissuaded from so rash an act, the officers arguing that we were soldiers, and it would not do for them to thus violate the rules of war, and also assuring them that we would be properly dealt with, and, in due time, executed. They thus succeeded in turning them back to camp." It was there they discovered that Porter and Hawkins had also been captured.

The raiders were soon taken to Chattanooga where, after the capture of Wilson and Wood, all 22 of them were placed in "the hole," a 13-foot square pit accessible only by a trap door in the floor. Near the end of May, Pittenger and 11 of the men were sent to Knoxville for trial. A week after their departure, Andrews was sentenced to death in Chattanooga. Both he and Private John Wollam managed to escape from the prison, though both were caught. After his escape, Andrews was shackled and a scaffold was erected for his hanging. Fear of an advance on the city by Mitchel from Huntsville caused them to move the hanging to Atlanta.

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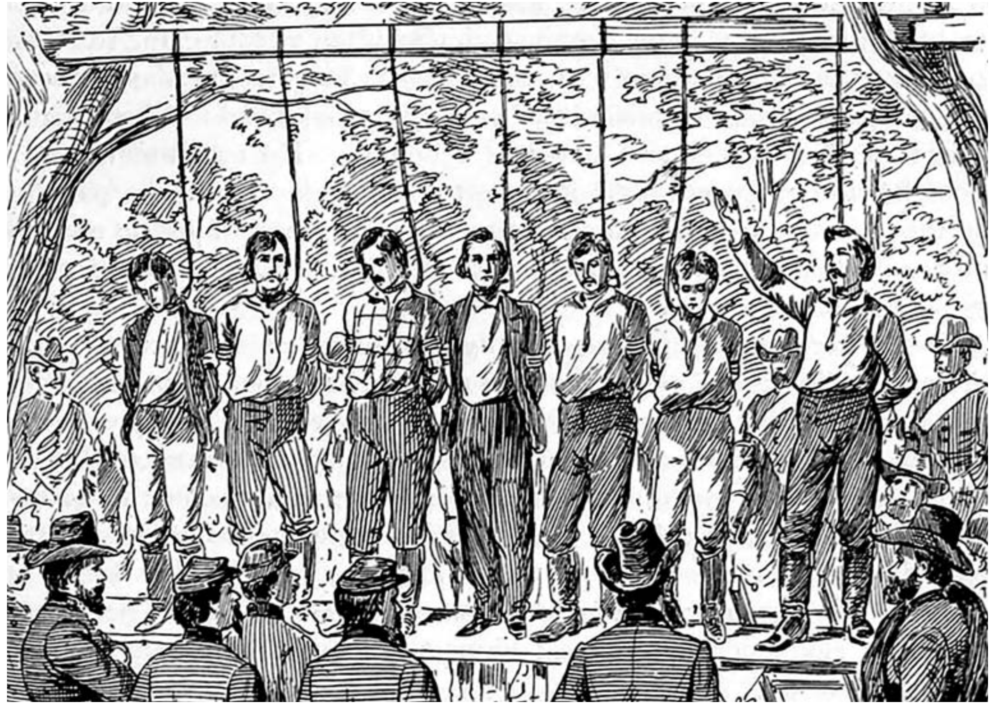
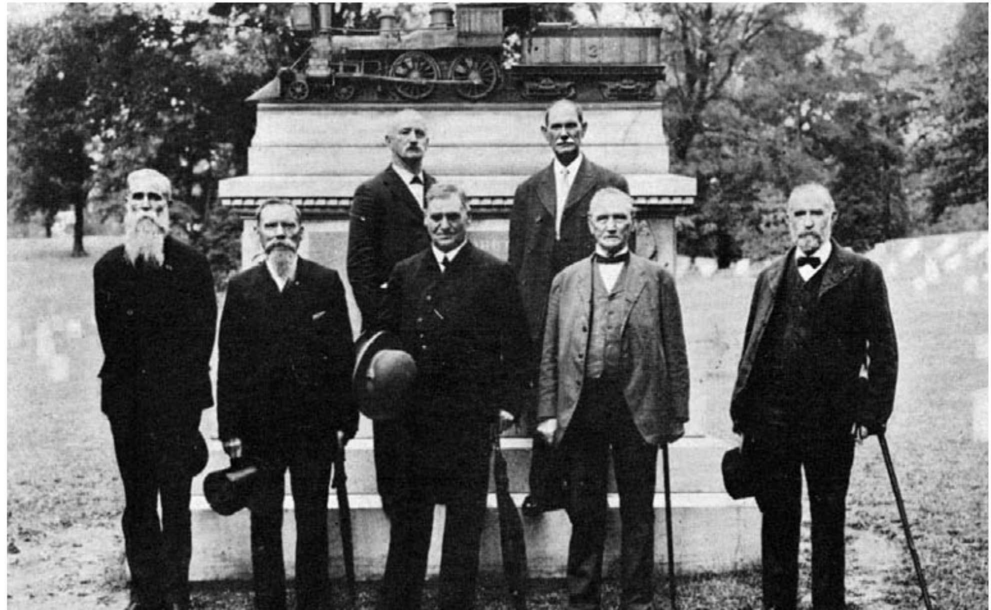


Chattanooga National Cemetery



TOP: Six Union soldiers and a civilian were hanged in Atlanta on June 18, 1862, for their participation in "The Great Locomotive Chase." James Andrews, who planned and led the raid, had been hanged on June 7. BOTTOM: Surviving members of Andrews' Raid in 1908—from left, Daniel A. Dorsey, John R. Porter, Jacob Parrott, William J. Knight, William Bensinger, John A. Wilson, Wilson W. Brown—in front of the monument built by the state of Ohio in 1890 at the Chattanooga National Cemetery.

Pittenger and his group would later read of the June 7 execution of Andrews in Knoxville newspapers. Mitchel did send Brig. Gen. James Negley with a small division on an expedition to Chattanooga that bombarded the city on June 7-8. That action, coupled with Brig. Gen. George W. Morgan's capture of the Cumberland Gap that same month, prompted the relocation of the rest of the raiders to Atlanta, but not before seven of them had been tried, convicted and sentenced to death. When Wollman was recaptured in late June, he was taken directly to Atlanta.

After a little more than a week in Atlanta, the seven raiders sentenced to death in Knoxville—Sgt. Maj. Marion A. Ross, Sgt. John M. Scott, Sgt. Samuel Slavens, Priv. Samuel Robertson, Priv. Charles P. Shadrach, Priv. George D. Wilson, civilian William Campbell—were hanged on June 18, 1862. They were buried in an unmarked grave, then moved to the Chattanooga National Cemetery in 1866,

In Atlanta the prisoners read newspapers discarded by the guards, then smuggled to them by African-American servants. About the raid, the *Commonwealth* (1861-1862) wrote that it was "either one of the most daring robberies or maddest pranks that has ever fallen under our notice… this was certainly one of the most bold and reckless feats of the war, and had they succeeded in their designs would have been of incalculable injury to our cause." In the South, it was Fuller and the railroad employees who were the heroes. The Andrews Raiders were "Lincoln's Spies, Thieves, and Bridge-Burners," according to *The Augusta Chronicle*. The *Southern Confederacy of Atlanta* (1859-1865) called it "the deepest laid scheme and on the grandest scale that ever emanated from the brains of any number of Yankees combined."

Two letters from the Confederate Secretary of War to Colonel George W. Lee, provost-marshal of Atlanta, forced the remaining Andrews men to take action. The first letter asked why all of the raiders had not been hanged and the second ordered that it be done. On October 16 the men attempted an escape, overpowering the jailer and some of the guards. A few never made it out of the prison yard. Some, like Parrott and Reddick, were recaptured inside the prison walls and by the following day, six were back in their cells. Eight had managed to escape, eventually making their way to Union lines—Priv. Wilson W. Brown, Corp. Daniel A. Dorsey, Corp. Martin J. Hawkins, Priv. William J. Knight, Priv. John R. Porter, Priv. John Wollman, and Priv. Mark Wood.

The six remaining raiders—Priv. William Bensinger, Priv. Robert Buffum, Sgt. Elihu H. Mason, Priv. Jacob Parrott, Corp. William Pittenger, and Corp. William H.H. Reddick— were sent to Richmond, arriving on December 7, 1862. According to Pittinger, the letter that sent them there read in part that "ten disloyal Tennesseeans, four prisoners of war, and six engine-thieves, were hereby forwarded to Richmond by order of Gen. Beauregard."

The six would spend the next three months in Castle Thunder—a converted tobacco warehouse used primarily for civilian prisoners, including captured Union spies, political prisoners and those charged with treason. Many of its inmates were sentenced to death and the guards there had a reputation for brutality.

By January 1863, dysentery and smallpox were prevalent as the 1,400-capacity prison now housed 3,000 men and women. The raiders spent December and January in a stall some 8 feet x 16 feet. They had no fire and the barred windows were open to the air. Pittenger recalled that, "As the darkness and coldness of night drew on, we were compelled to pace the floor, trying to keep warm; and when sleep became a necessity, we would pile down in a huddle, as pigs sometimes do, and spread over us the thin protection of our two bits of carpet. Thus we would lie until too cold to remain longer and then arise and resume our walk."

In February, the raiders petitioned to be moved to a room on the lower floor with a wood stove and 100 other other Union soldiers waiting to be exchanged. Finally, they boarded the truce-boat on the James River on March 18, 1863. They continued upriver to Washington, where they gave depositions and then received the first Congressional Medals of Honor. The first of the six was presented to Parrott. The men were also given $100, promised back pay and compensation for the weapons taken from them. They were all promoted to first lieutenant and given furlough to visit their homes.

The U.S. military's highest award for valor had just been authorized by Congress in December of 1861, initially for the Department of the Navy. A couple of months later, it was authorized for the U.S. Army as well. The medal is now bestowed on any member of the armed forces who has "performed a personal act of valor above and beyond the call of duty in action against an enemy force." More than 3,500 Medals of Honor have been awarded since 1863, with Union veterans of the Civil War receiving 1,522. Among America's other conflicts, veterans of World War I received 126 and 471 were awarded for World War II. To date there have been 19 individuals who have been honored twice.

The Great Locomotive Chase caught the public imagination at the time, especially in the northern states where the "train thieves" were hailed as heroes. Over the last century and a half, there have been reenactments, festivals (Adairsville, Georgia), many books, songs and a couple of films—Buster Keaton's silent *The General* (1926) and Disney's *The Great Locomotive Chase* (1956) starring Fess Parker who had gained fame as Davy Crockett in a Disney miniseries of the same name.

But the raid had no military effect. The cut telegraph lines and pried rails were quickly repaired and the heavy rain prevented any bridges from catching fire. General Mitchel's forces did capture Huntsville, Alabama, on April 11 but did not move on to Chattanooga. It would take until November 25, 1863, for Union forces under General Grant to take the city, setting the stage for Sherman's infamous "March to the Sea." ■

SOLDIERS

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10 years. These passages reveal him as a complex individual who moved ceaselessly in many directions and for many purposes. He recorded his business and political dealings, his extramarital affairs, his dealings with friends and colleagues, his jealousies, insecurities, health problems and the many events of his stormy relationship with his beautiful wife Elizabeth, who died at 33. His concerns were endless, but he never let them long deflect him from his passionate devotion to advancing England's maritime ascendancy.

When Pepys had started working with the navy in 1660 it consisted of just 30 battleships totaling about 25,000 tons and mounting 1,730 guns. When he stepped down 31 years later, the fleet consisted of 59 battleships weighing a combined 66,000 tons and carrying 4,492 guns. It all took place due to his administrative virtues of order, discipline, industry and honest competence. It was the first time these crucial virtues had guided England's navy, and the service has never been without them since as Pepys established an ongoing tradition of excellence. At his retirement ceremony an Oxford University professor extolled his priceless virtues:

"To your praises the whole ocean bears witness. Truly, sir, you have encompassed Britain with wooden walls."

He spent his last years in honorable retirement. A childless widower, he occupied himself fending off ongoing, spiteful, jealousy-spawned attacks by his political foes, amassing a huge library he eventually bequeathed to Magdalene College, corresponding with Europe's greatest artists and scholars, writing and publishing his autobiography: *Memoirs Relating to the State of the Royal Navy of England for Ten Years Determined December 1688*, and researching a comprehensive history of the Royal Navy from its birth, but dying before he could complete it.

On May 26, 1703, he died at the Clapham home of his lifelong friend and former servant William Hewer. Another old buddy, John Evelyn, wrote of him:

"He was universally belov'd, hospitable, generous, learned in many things, skilled in music, a very greate cherisher of learned men of whom he had the conversation."

It was a flattering but incomplete epitaph, for it failed to mention his almost single-handed creation and permanent establishment of perhaps the greatest military naval tradition of any nation. In future conflicts the Royal Navy would be an irresistible force, halting the powers of tyranny as they sought world domination. International liberty and justice owe him their salvation. ■

CROOK'S DEVILS

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would never rejoin Hayes or the 23rd Ohio; his military career was over.

The new Confederate position was Early's last ditch and his men knew it. From the new line, a stout fire of musketry and artillery was kept up against the bluecoats 400 yards away. Immediately behind the 23rd's line, Comly hugged the ground on the crest of a slight elevation, together with Lt. Col. Benjamin Coates, who now commanded Hayes' 2nd Brigade. Comly remembered, "A continual shower of bullets pelted the ground all around, until it did not seem possible to live a moment there."

At this point, two "old veterans" of the 23rd Ohio succumbed to the temptation to loot the bodies of several dead and wounded soldiers barely 20 feet in front of the regiment. The two men stood up under the heavy fire and walked "as cool as mules" in front of the main line, looking for, as Comly termed it, "unconsidered trifles." The two men had evidently been doing this all through the battle as one had "a well filled knapsack on his back." To present as small a target as possible, the two looters walked sideways to the Rebel line. As Comly and Coates watched, a Confederate artillery shell struck the looter's "well filled knapsack" and sent its contents flying. "Neither of the men was hurt a particle, but the man whose plunder was so unceremoniously squandered, scrambled up from where he had fallen, perfectly beside himself with rage." In full view of the Confederates, the man "jumped up and down, shrieking and shaking his fist at the enemy and swearing a perfect stream of the most horrible oaths I have ever heard." The men of the 23rd Ohio "all laughed at first, but the swearing seemed to strike them as unsuitable at the time and they began yelling at [the looter]." Comly finally ordered the man back into ranks, where he "quieted down."

Soon after, as bullets continued to shower around them, Comly saw Coates "working himself slowly around on his stomach like a pivot" until his head faced away from the Confederate line and his feet toward the enemy. Comly asked if he was wounded, to which Coates replied in the negative and continued, "I'll tell you what it is, Colonel. I'm a doctor, I've studied anatomy some; I know the vital parts are at the upper end of the body; and it strikes me that the other end is the proper one to present to the enemy while we wait here under such a confounded fire as this." The two officers then "burst out laughing, as it seemed excrutiatingly [sic] funny."

One Confederate artillery battery, positioned in plain sight without cover, seemed to have the particular range of the 23rd Ohio. Comly ordered the 23rd's Lieutenant McBride to take some members of his company, which was armed with 0.71-caliber Saxony rifles with a range of 1,200 yards, to the top of a nearby knoll to kill off some of the battery's horses. McBride and his men "crept up [the knoll] like Indians, covering themselves by the inequalities in the ground." Comly recalled, "At the very first shot a horse dropped. Almost as soon, another [animal] was dropped. A panic seemed to seize the artillery, and they commenced to hurriedly limber up." The swift departure of their supporting guns unnerved the Confederate infantry.

As soon as the battery departed, Comly recalled, "Our whole line then rose with a tremendous yell, and the men all rushed pell mell for the [Confederate] breastworks." One of the Confederates on the receiving end of the VIII Corps' charge admired, "They advanced in splendid order."

Comly continued, "And then, without stopping to fire another shot, the enemy ran, in utter confusion." Led by McBride's company of sharpshooters, the 23rd Ohio scooped up approximately 200 prisoners in the charge.

Then came the coup de grâce, as Torbert's cavalry, with the division of the flamboyant George Custer in the lead, swooped down upon the fleeing Confederates in a thundering mounted charge. The breaking of the lines of Gordon and Wharton by the VIII Corps was like opening the floodgates of a dam as, one by one, the units in Early's line collapsed and the panic-stricken Rebels fled through the streets of Winchester and south down the Valley Pike.

A friend of Comly's who was in Custer's cavalry reined in next to him and, flushed with victory, "stooped down over his horse's neck and threw his arms around me and kissed me, shouting, as if he was out of his head, 'Isn't it glorious!'" The Confederate stampede ended the battle. Hayes aligned his division and marched it into the streets of Winchester—it was the first Union unit to enter the town. In a column of fours, the 23rd Ohio entered Winchester from the east and marched to the center of town, where they turned south and tramped down the Valley Turnpike. Hayes placed them into camp along the pike just south of the town as darkness fell.

The 23rd Ohio paid a high price for its valor that day, losing 67 men (nine killed, 40 wounded, and 18 missing). Going in with a much smaller number than the other Federal corps, Crook's command suffered approximately 800 casualties, while total losses for Sheridan's entire army amounted to 5,000 men; Early's hard-pressed Confederates lost 3,700 men, of whom over 2,000 were prisoners. It was the first time in the war that Early's men—Stonewall Jackson's old command—had been put to ignominious flight. ■

HURTGEN

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tasked to support U.S. operations in the Hürtgen Forest, but as the battle continued into late October and early November, rains and then snow set in, making flying a near impossibility. When they could fly, the terrain was hard to see. Moreover, the constant pounding of artillery from both sides made landmarks difficult to spot from the air. Simply, through no fault of their own, the much-vaunted American air arm did not function well in support of combat operations. Ground commanders had perhaps expected too much from the IX TAC.

By mid-November, combat in the mud, snow, cold and chewed-up terrain began to produce serious challenges for the Americans. Physical problems had always been present in the cold and damp of the forest, but by November, unit commanders began to show severe signs of strain, and many had to be relieved of their commands, from company level up. Individual replacements sent for the bloodied units were very quickly killed or wounded in higher percentages than in other units committed outside the Hürtgenwald. To put this into perspective, the 4th infantry Division went into combat on November 16, and by the last week of the month it had lost 6,000 troops—4,000 in battle and an alarming 2,000 to trench foot, pneumonia and combat fatigue. The Hürtgenwald was literally consuming U.S. combat divisions.

In mid-November, Allied intelligence finally realized that the Germans had pulled themselves together, but they never did fully comprehend the German order of battle. Attacks from the air, mainly carried out by the Royal Air Force against the Roer dams, merited very little. All in all, the Hürtgen Forest operation was a dismal failure.

The surprise German Ardennes offensive, starting on December 16, ended the first and major phase of the Hürtgen Forest operation. For all the reasons cited above, the offensive thrust into the dark woods was a battle which, as Gavin later stated, "should not have been fought." Based on a poor intelligence picture of the enemy and the terrain, the United States believed in a quick victory of the types experienced in July and August. The error resulted in a campaign that failed, and produced very heavy losses of life and blood.

Heroism was accepted as nothing less than duty in the Hürtgen Forest, but the question still remains: Was the attack on the forest necessary in the first place? It is ironic that of all the Americans killed in the Death Factory, only one is really recalled today: Private Eddie D. Slovik, 3689415, Detroit, Michigan, February 18, 1920–January 31, 1945, the only American shot for desertion in World War II. ■

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