VIRGINIA EPISCOPAL SCHOOL
LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA

THE HEADMASTER'S
STUDY

THE FULL STATURE OF MANHOOD

Oct. 8, 1955

The Librarian
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Dear Mrs. Dickerson:

At a meeting of the Sphex Club held last evening, there was transmitted to us an informal request that, whenever practicable, the papers read before the Club be made available to your Library. In accordance with this request, I am handing you the paper which I read at this meeting, entitled GEORGE GORDON MEADE. There may be a bit of irony here, in that the first paper to come to you from the Club under your request deals with a Northern aspect of the War Bewteen the States.

I apologize for the condition of the manuscript but I have no copy save the one which I used last evening. There are in it many trivial errors in typing, errors which I did not bother to correct because I thought that I would be the only one to see them. And, since I was for the most part composing directly to my typewriter, there are some interlineations.

With these apologies and explanations, I am glad to turn the manuscript over to you. I should like this letter to remain in the binder, since it will explain to the reader the reasons for the unseemly condition of the paper.

Sincerely yours,

Geo. L. Barton, Jr.

B/s

Across the lovely valley which lies between two low ridges and extends southerly ~~westerly~~ from the Pennsylvania town of Gettysburg, two figures in bronze gaze at each other. Each is mounted, and his horse rests upon a lofty pedestal of stone. There they sit upon their steeds, ~~like silent~~ the mute and motionless guardians of a bit of land purchased with the blood of so many men, a bit of land upon which the destinies of a great nation were settled. ~~One of these represents a man whose character and achievements were such that~~ Ninety-two years ago last July the two men represented by these statues faced each other across this same valley. After three days of bitter fighting by the armies which they commanded, one of these men left the field of battle and, having failed to gain his objective, exclaimed to his fellow officers "It is all my fault, it is all my fault." The other, victorious, followed him ~~but~~, in the Vergilian phrase, sed longo intervallo. The former, sometimes described and decried as a rebel and a traitor, has so enshrined himself in the hearts of his countrymen that even a quarter of a century ago a shad-bellied Massachusetts Yankee could and did write a biography and entitle it "Lee the American." * The other has drifted into an oblivion from which he has not been rescued even by the fact that one of our larger and more important military posts is known as "Fort George G. Meade." The Roman Sallust somewhere remarks that history is often a fickle muse, enlarging the reputations of some men and lessening those of others more from caprice than from sound judgment. Surely in this case there must be some deeper reason than mere caprice, and it is my hope tonight to look into the human side of a man who could stand for a moment upon the very threshold of greatness and yet be unable to cross that threshold and take his place in the hall of the truly great.

* But this paper was written before I had read Jamaliel Bradford's ~~pa~~ essay on Meade in his "Portraits of Union Leaders."

FLB

George Gordon Meade was born in Cadiz, Spain, on the last day of December, 1815. His greatgrandfather had been an Irish Roman Ctholic immigrant to our country and the family had always resided in Philadelphia. At times the family was wealthy but in 1801, Meade's grandfather became bankrupt and his son was appointed assignee. In the course of administering his father's rather extensive affairs, the son had to visit Spain; he propsered there and remained there some seventeen years, apparently in affluence. It was during this period, of course, that George Gordon Meade was born. The father became involved in lawsuits and spent two years in a Spanish prison, - rather undeservedly, as far as I can learn, - and he was eventually released upon strong representations from our minister to Spain. He and his family returned to this country in somewhat straightened circumstances. There were ten children in the family, the last two being born after the return to the United States; George Meade was the 8th child and the second son.

The infant George Meade had been baptized in the Roman Catholic parish of Nuestra Senora del Rosario. His mother and his grandmother were both members of the Church of England and did not follow their husbands into the Roman Catholic Church. At some point in his life George Meade was confirmed into the Episcopal Church. His biographies, at least those to which I have had access, say very little about his religious life, but we learn from his own letters that he invited the Episcopal Bishop Whipple of Minnestota to celebrate Holy Communion at the Headquarters of the Army of the Potomac on EasterSunday, 1864, and, to go back still further, George Meade and Margaretta Sergeant were married in an Episcopal Church. One of Margaretta Sergeant's sisters married Henry A. Wise, Governor of Virginia 1856-1860 and Meade was apparently very fond of Mr. Wise.

Meade went to several schools, including one conducted for a time by Salmon P. Chase. As he approached college age, the family fortunes being then at a low ebb, he turned his eyes toward West Point and, after one unsuccessful attempt, he obtained an appointment and entered the Academy in 1831, two years after his future Gettysburg opponent had been graduated.

one sister married Thos. Hager of Charleston, S.C.

Beyond this one reference, there is a strange silence about Meade's brother and his ~~other~~ sisters. I find no mention of them in any of the biographical material to which I have had access. ~~Exxxx~~ I cannot help wondering whether dissension in religion and in national affairs lies beneath some of this silence. Some years ago, when I was residing in Niagara Falls, New York, I came to know the Reverend Francis Louis Meade, one of the ~~V~~incentian Fathers at Niagara University, and one of those abler characters who sometimes rise above the narrow confines of their Church. In one of our informal con~~e~~versations he told me that he was a greatnephew of General Meade, and then added with a smile "I wonder if you know that General Meade had a brother who was one of your clergy. He was rector of the Church in Charles Town,* West Virginia, and was a Southern sympathizer." It seems quite possible to me that biographers may have preferred to pass over in silence such family dissensions.

* or Charlestown, I do not remember which.

Young Meade was sent to several schools, including one that was conducted for a time bySalmon P. Chase. As he approached college age, the family fortunes being at a low ebb, he turned his eyes toward West Point and, after one unseccussful attempt, he obtained an appointment and entered the Academy in 1831, two years after his future Gettysburg opponent had been graduated. His career at West Point was not a distinguished one; he cared little for the course of study and ~~soon~~ more long determined to resign from the service as soon after graduation as he could properly do so. His was graduated in June, 1835, 8 standing 19 in a class of 56. He spent his graduation leave working as a civil engineer for the Long Island Railroad and then went on active duty in Southern Florida. From there,he was ordered to the Watertown Arsenal on ordnance duty and, late in 1836, along with many others who could see but little future in army life, he resigned his commission. After several years of railroad work, he was made first assistant engineer on a survey of the Mississippi Delta. He had evidently acquired some liking for engineering

for the rest of his career up to 1861 was spent almost entirely in such work. The boundary between the U. S. and Texas and then the northeastern boundary both gave him opportunities as a civilian assistant engineer, and in 1842 he applied for and received his commission as a 2nd lieutenant in the Topographical Engineers of the Regular Army. His classmates, of course, who had remained in the Army, were now captains. After more boundary work, he was assigned to lighthouse construction and was engaged in that when war summoned him to the Mexican border in 1846. He participated in two battles and then, because there were more topographical engineers than were needed, he was returned to Philadelphia and his lighthouses and maps of reefs. The following year saw him in Florida on similar tasks. The Seminole War of 1849 and 1850 gave him another taste of troop command but he was then sent back to his lighthouses once more. In 1856, a captain now, he was ordered to Detroit on the Geodetic Survey of the Great Lakes; his first report was of such value that the Government placed him in charge of the Northern Lake Surveys from 1857 to 1861.

When the Civil War began, Meade was made a brigadier general of volunteers, probably through the influenceof Governor Curtin of Pennsylvania, and was placed in command of one of the Pennsylnavia brigades. His first field duty was at Tennalytown, in the notherrn corner of the District of Columbia, in the defenses of Washington. In March 1862 he and his command were transferred to McDowell's army and after the evacuation of Manaasas they went into the department of the Shenandoah. In June 1862 his brigade was ordred to the Peninsula under McClellan and took part in the battles of Gaines's Mill, Mechanicsville and Glendale (Frayser's Farm). At Glendale he received the wound which was destined to annoy him the rest of his life and which may have contributed to his comparatively early death (57).

Forty-two days later, a remarkably short time for recoevery from such a wound, he rejoined his command and participated in the second battle of Bull Run. At South Mountain in September he was temporarily in command of a Division and handled it skillfully. At Antietam a few days later he gave a good account of himself and, when General Hooker had to be carried off the field, General Meade was placed in temporary command of the I Corps for the rest of the battle. Under McClellan he followed Lee to the neighborhood of Fredericksburg and there received command of Reynold's Division, the latter having become a Corps Commander. On December 25th, just after the disastrous battle of Fredericksburg he was given the permanent command of the V Corps. At the battle of Chancellorsville May 2-4, 1863, Meade's V Corps was not much used but gave a good account of itself when Hooker did use it. Some think that Meade's insight into this battle and the advice which he gave Hooker caused Generals Couch and Reynolds to recommend Meade to Washington as the next Commander of the Army of the Potomac.

The V Corps of course moved northward with the rest of the Army of the Potomac in June 1863, roughly parallelling the march of the Army of Northern Virginia. Meade spent the night of June 27th/28th in Frederick, Maryland. Before day-light the morning of the 28th he was awakened by a special messengar from Washington announcing Hooker's removal from the command of the Army and his own appointment to that command. Within forty-eight hours his troops and General Lee's had established contact at Gettysburg, approximately half way between the two points which Lee and Meade had respectively selected, each for himself as his preferred battle ground. The outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg is too well known to delay us here. Lee accomplished his withdrawal to his native state without molestation from Meade and soon the two armies were again facing each other across the Rappahannock, Rapidan Rivers in what is known as the Rapidan Campaign. The chief skirmish of this campaign came at its end in what is known as The Mine Run Operation. The whole movement reflected little credit

on Meade. On March 12, 1864, Ulysses S. Grant was promoted to Lt. General and placed in command of all Union Forces. Almost at once he decided to accompany the main Federal Army in Virginia and from that time on both Grant and Meade found themselves in an anomalous situation. Despite the many difficulties encountered -- Meade's high-strung and sometimes petulant nature did not always help the situation -- Meade continued to command the Army of the Potomac until its deactivitation after the close of the War. He was of course at Appomattox and was one of those responsible for the proper maintenance of the truce when it came near being broken by the blustering and offensive rudeness of Custer and the ensuing justifiable profanity of Longstreet.

At the close of the War he first commanded the Military Division of the Atlantic and then the Department of the East with headquarters at Philadelphia. On January 2, 1868 he was transferred to Atlanta, Georgia, in command of the Third Military District of the Department of the South, where he served fifteen months. The work in the South was very trying because of the almost impossible task of administering the unjust and vindictive reconstruction laws. C. M. Thompson, writing on Reconstruction in ~~George~~ Georgia in the year 1915 said that Meade's uncompromising attitude and sense of fairness were able to make tolerable an most difficult situation. John B. Gordon in his reminiscenses, gives a personal incident of Meade's attempts to be fair and just. The brief remainder of his life Meade spent in Philadelphia as Commissioner of Fairmount Park. He died of pneumonia in Philadelphia on November 6, 1872, nearly two months before reaching the age of 57.

So much for the bare facts of his life. When we seek to go further and deeper, when we try to determine what sort of a character and personality composed a man who died more than eighty years ago, our sources of information are limited, the data upon which we can establish a judgment are narrowed. One can trust only so far the written records of his friends and associates, for they are prone to fall into one of two categoraies, - eulogists and critics - and the latter can be just as untrustworthy as the ~~first~~ former. But a man's decisions, and his intimate letters when a kindly fate has preserved them, give us reliable clues to his character and temperament and I am going to ask you to consider with me a few of the decisions which the man Meade had to make in times of stress and some passages from the many letters which he addressed to his wife both from the Mexican border and from the battelfields of 1861-1865. But I shall begin with a quotation from one of his contemporaries, a man so well known to us in memory that we can instantly decline to class him either as critic or eulogist.

The news that the Army of the Potomac had crossed to the north side of the Potomac River and that General Meade had replaced "Fightin' Joe" Hooker reached ~~Lee~~ General Lee at the same time. These two important pieces of information were brought to Lee by a shadowy figure named Harrison, a civilian scout in whom Longstreet seems to have had considerable faith. Certainly this time his information proved correct and accurate. Lee, apparently thinking out loud, said in effect that the Union command had been strengthened by the replacement of Meade for Hooker but that any advantage which might accrue from this would be offset by the difficulties confronting any commander who has to assume his new post on the eve of an impending battle. Then Lee added - and I quote from the Official Records - "Meade will ~~make no mistakes~~ commit no blunder in front ~~of me~~, and if I make ~~any~~ one, he will be ~~quick~~ haste to take advantage of ~~them~~ it." (Freeman, Lee III. 64) Thus the engineer in Lee spoke of the engineer in Meade.

When 2nd Lieutenant George Meade started under orders for the Mexican border in August, 1845, he wrote the first of a long series of letters to his wife. The first is dated from Washington City, D. C., August 15, 1845, and early in these letters he requested his wife to preserve them, since they might some day be of assistance to him in summarizing his activities and even in making official reports. These letters have been published in toto, except for those more intimate portions which one may expect to find in correspondence between man and wife. Occasionally, in the published portions, a name is suppressed for no given reason, but this is rare. Unfortunately, no letters written in time of peace are published. Perhaps few were written, since Mrs. Meade was usually able to accompany her husband to his stations. The two lived in Detroit for nearly five years. It would be interesting to have access to letters written in the early months of 1861.

The letters written from the Mexican border need not delay us long. They have in them much of human interest, but not too much that serves our purpose tonight. The journey from Washington to the Depot at St. Joseph's Island, Texas, took Meade through Cincinnati, Louisville, and New Orleans and required 27 days and, I fear, would prove a trifle tedious to an Army officer of today. The journey was uneventful, although just as he arrived at St. Joseph's, a steamboat chartered by the Government blew up. It is not related that a negro sat on the saftey valve but Meade did write his wife reassuringly that the steamer which replaced it had been carefully inspected and she need have no fears for his safety. Meade's service on the border seems to have been chiefly in topographical reconnaisance and some of his letters are accompnaied by excellent sketches. He participated in two battles and, of course, these were the subject of rather long letters. Three times while on the border he had opportunities to be ordered home. The first two he declined. The third offer came just as hostilities were concluded and he took advatnage of it. He reached Washington April 21, 1847.

In 1861, Meade was commissioned a brigadier of volunteers on August 31, with orders to report to General McClellan, then in command of the forcaes about Washington. He was placed in command of the 2nd brigade of McCall's Division. Mrs. Meade and their son, Sergeant, were with him for several days and his first letter to Mrs. Meade is dated Sept. 22, 1861. He thus missed any chance to participate in the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run, he would have called it) and his first letters are somewhat commonplace comments upon the country and the alarms caused by the enemy. But on October 12 he wrote his wife a more thoughtful letter, in the course of which he said: "The whole question turns upon the ~~bravery~~ behavior of our men. . . . You will doubtless be anxious to know what is my private opinion of our force, and I would not hesitate to tell you if I had a decided opinion. Much, as I have alwsy told you, will depend on the turn events take. If we are successful in the beginning in repelling the attack. I think they can be kept up to the work; but if by any accident fortune is against us in the commencement, I fear they will become demoralized. They do not any of them, officres or men , seem to have the least idea of the solemn duty they have imposed upon themselves in becoming soldiers. Soldiers they are not in any sense of the word. Brave men they may be, and I trust in God ~~xxy~~ will prove themselves; but at this very moment, when we have every reason to believe by tomorrow's dawn our lives may be imperilled, if not taken from us, I doubt if any of the numerous living beings around me realize in the slightest degree what they may have to meet. For myself, I await calmly the decree of an over-ruling Providence. I am here from a sense of duty, because I could not with honor be away, and whatever befalls me, those of my blood who sruvive me can say, I trust, that I did my duty."

A month later (Nov. 17) he wrote: "People who think the war is about to close, because we have achieved one signal success (Battle of Port Royal, S. C. Nov. 7, 1861) are very short-sighted. I agree with you in thinking it has only just begun. Think of Percy Drayton firing into a fort commanded by his

own brother! Is not this enough to make one heartsick? We hear the news of the capture of Messrs. Mason and Slidell. I hope their being taken out of British mail packet will not bring us into trouble with John Bull. If it is true that he is disposed to quarrel with us, this gives him a very pretty chance to begin."

Meade's feelings toward the South were never vindictive. In February, 1862, he wrote:" . . . the character of the war is such, that though I undoubtedly desire success, yet I do not feel we can or should triumph and boast as we would over a foreign foe. If we ever expect to be reunited, we should remember this fact and deport ourselves more like the afflicted parent who is compelled to chastise his erring child, and who performs the duty with a sad heart. " Perhaps this same sentiment prevailed in Meade's mind when he was a military governor in the South.

Only a few days before, he had written his wife that he did not think that France and England would recognize the Confederacy " . . unless we should fail in the next six months to make any further progress in suppressing the revolution than we have as yet done. I cannot believe that eight millions of people, however great their spirit and individual gallantry may be, can hold at bay twenty millions, unless the latter are dastards and ignoramuses. If our men will fight, as men ought to do who prtened to be soldiers, and our resources are properly managed and directed, we must whip them so badly and distress them so much that they will be compelled to accept terms of peace dictated by us, provided we ask nothing of them but what we have a right to do, viz., to return to their allegiance under the old Constitution, and agree that the will of the majority shall govern. Here, however, is our great danger, and it lies in the efforts that the ultras are making to give a character to the war which will forbid any hope of the Southerners ever yielding as long as there is any power of resistenace left in them."

The passage which I have just read gives one a good insight into Meade's

opinion and sentiment about the conflict in which he was engaged. Other passages could be quoted to support this view. Meade's letters continue with varied comments upon the countryside, upon army politics (in which he disclaims any interest?), upon the fortunes of war. On rare occasions he lapses into slang - an almost unheard of thing in the letters of a gentlemen of those days - for, from his camp opposite Fredericksburg he wrote on April 30, 1862, "The people that are living around here are all pretty strongly 'Sesech,' The men are away, and the women are as rude as their fears will permit them to be."

Nevertheless, the shoe sometimes pinches and one may be a bit surprised at Meade's choice of words in a letter written just after he and his brigade had been transferred to the Peninsula. Writing from his camp at the railroad crossing of the Chickahominy River on June 14, 1862, he said in part: "We reached the (celebrated) White House this morning and found great excitement existing, from the fact that the enemy had the audacity to show themselves along the line of the railroad, and finding two of our vessels in the Pamunky River, beyond the reach of any defense, they seized them, murdered the crews and burned them. This foray was accomplished, as far as I can ascertain, by some sixty or seventy mounted men, who made this bold and audacious move, having pretty certain information that being so far to the rear, we were perfectly secure and hence unguarded." There is more in the letter about the disorganization which followed. Meade might have been more careful of his language and of his thoughts - especially he might have avoided the use of the word "murdered" had he realized that his outfit had been but one of the many victims of Jeb Stuart's daring ride around McClellan's army, and that a certain John S. Mosby was one of his companions. It was only a few days after this that Meade was wounded.

When Meade rejoined his command, he was very much depressed at what he considered the gross mismanagement of military affairs in the North. On August 24 he wrote "I am sorry to say, from the manner in which matters have been mismanaged, that their (the South's) chances of success are quite good."

A week later, writing from Centerville, he added "We have been obliged to fall back from the Old Bull Run Battlefied, where we fought. (2nd B. R.) The enemy are superior in number and flushed with their success. We are in a critical position, but I trust will get out of it. This result is no more than might have been known by anyone who looked upon things in their proper light."

A little later, on September 18, 1862, he wrote from the Battlefield of Sharpsburg (Antietam to us): "When General Hooker was wounded, General McClellan placed me in command of the army corps, over General Rickett's head, who ranked me. This selection is a great compliment, and answers all my wishes in regard to my desire to have my services appreciated. . . I go into action today as the commander of an army corps. If I survive my two stars are secure, and if I fall, you will have my reputation to live on. "

Several letters of this period contain long references to Hooker; Meade's opinion of Hooker is well expressed by the following brief passage: "He is a very good soldier, capital general for an army corps, but I am not prepared to say as to his abilities for carrying on a campaign and commanding a large army. I should fear his judgment and prudence, as he is apt to think that the only thing to be done is to pitch in and fight." Later in the same letter, Meade is severely critical of McClellan for his failure to pursue the Confederates after Antietam.

Burnside succeeded McClellan in command of the army and soon gave way to Hooker. With Hooker 's appointment, Mrs. Meade apparently began to fear that her husband might soon be called upon to succeed him in command of the Army of the Potomac, for Meade wrote on January 28, 1863:" Your anxiety lest I be placed in command of the army causes me to smile. . . when I look back on the good fortune which has thus afr attended my career, I cannot believe so sudden a change for the worse can occur as would happen if I were placed in

command. I think therefore we may for the present dismiss our fears on that score." But the subject crops up repeatedly in these letters of the next few months. He became more and more critical of Hooker and, through some political manouvering in which Meade claims to have had no share, the two men became really enemies. Meade's comments upon Hooker at Chancellorsville are of especial interest in view of the light in which military critics have long looked upon Lee's brilliance in that battle. Meade wrote (May 20, 1863): "The battle of Chancellorsville was a miserable failure, in which Hooker disappointed me greatly. His plan was admirably designed, and in the early part of it, entrusted to others, was well executed; but after he had assembled his army on the other side near Chancellorsville, instead of striking at once vigourously and instantly, before the enemy, who were surprised, could concentrate, he ~~delayed~~ delayed; gave them 36 hours to bring up and dispose their troops . . . failed to take advantage of their error in dividing and separating their forces. . . " And now from Chancellorsville to Gettysburg.

Meade's letters of June, 1863, show that he had little idea of what was in General Lee's mind. His V Corps was moving north; there are letters dated from Manassas, from Gum Springs, and several from Aldie. In one of these, dated June 25, less than 72 hours before he was called upon to assume command of the Army, he answers at length his wife's fears that he might soon be appointed to that position. He had scarcely finished the letter when orders arrived directing that he move his Corps to Frederick City, Maryland. And there, early in the morning of June 28, he became commander of the Army of the Potomac. Meade's next letters to his wife were written after the Battle of Gettysburg. In one dated July 8, he wrote "I never claimed a victory, though I stated that Lee was defeated in his efforts to destroy my army. " ~~But even this letter and one written July 10 give evidences of that uncertainty and lack of informed determination which apparently kept Meade from following up the advantages which he had gained on that Battlefied. From that point on,~~

I digress a moment for one or two comments upon Meade at Gettysburg. It is well known, of course, that neither Lee nor Meade had planned to fight at that little crossroads town; each commander had, therefore, to direct the battle as the exigencies of the occasion might demand. Meade is sometimes highly praised for the dispositionof his forces on Cemetery Ridge and its adjoining hillocks. In my opinion, such praise is largely unmerited. The Confederate forces, after having routed the Blue army west of Gettysburg the evening of July 1st, literal ly drove them to the impregnable fishhook and then left them there unmolested to consolidate and strengthen their position as their other army corps came up in natural order. And as for such dispositions as were made the evening and night of July 1st, credit for them must go largely to Major General Hancock, whom Meade had wisely placed in command after General Reynold's death until he himself reached the field a little after midnight. The essential part of the fishhook had been established when Meade arrived on the scene of action.

Again, I am one of those who feel that Meade missed a great opportunity when he failed to make anything more than a cautious, halfhearted move against Lee on July 4th or 5th. It would appear that the old habit of caution was still strong at Federal headquarters and that there was also the McClellan heritage of overestimating the size of any army that was fighting under Robert E. Lee. So Meade, ignoring the signs that he was in the presence of a badly crippled enemy,contented himself with sending forward warily his one unfought corps (Sedgwick's VI). "If the rebels wanted to go back to Virginia, it seemed like a good idea to wish them Godspeed and let them go." (Bruce Catton, Glory Road p. 345.)

So in his letter of July 8, in which Meade wrote that he did not claim a victory, and again in a letter written July 10th, Meade gives evidences of that uncertainty which apparently kept him from following up the advantages which he had gained on the Gettysburg Battlefield. From that point on - - - -

to 16

(The material on the sheets numbered ~~13~~ 14 and ~~14~~ 15 was inserted in this paper on May 21, 1959, when it was read before the Lynchburg Chapter of the Civil War Roundtable.)

there is an air of defensiveness in the correspondence, the figure of a man keeping his arm up to ward off an expected blow. This attitude carries over into his subsequebt operations; Dec. 2, 1863 he wrote his wife a long letter defending the somewhat clumsy Mine Run operation. His long wrangles and controversies with some of his Gettysburg generals, especially with Doubleday and Sickles, do not alwasy redound to Meade's credit; there is too often in them that same air of defensiveness. His testimony before the Congressional Committee appointed to investigate the Battle of Gettysburg and subsequent movements often has the same color. He once had a newspaper reporter placarded and drummed out ofcamp for maligning him; the reporter had written that Meade had in the Battle of the Wilderness urged Grant to retreat across the Rapidan, but that Grant had firmly resisted his intercessions and thus had saved the country. The Battle of the Crater led to serious difficulties between Meade and Burnside, the former finally preferring charges against Burnside and asking that he be relieved of duty with the Army of the Potomac. By August Meade was at odds with Grant because he felt that Sheridan had received an assignment which he felt that he(Meade) should have received.

There is much recrimination in the letters which Meade wrote home during the winter of 64-65 but I think that we need not follow him too closely as he and his army, under General Grant, worked their way from Petersburg to Appomattox. When the end finally came on April 9, Meade had been sick for ten days, suffering from what he called bilious or malarial catarrh, but he remained on active duty. On April 10 he wrote "I have been today in the rebel camp; saw Lee, Longstreet, and many others, among them Mr. Wise. They were all affable and cordial, and uniformly said that, if any conciliatory policy was extended to the South, peace would be made at once. Mr. Wise looked old and feeble, said he was very sick, and had not a mouhtful to eat. I secured him the privilege of an ambulance to go home in, and on my return to camp immediately dispatched (our son) George with an ambulance load of provisions

to him. He enquired very affectionately after yourself, your mother and all the family." This passage I read solely for its human interest, remembering that Mrs. Meade and the 2nd Mrs. Wise (now dead) were sisters. The next passage I quote for a different reason. It is dated from Burksville (sic) Va. April 12, 1865. "Your indignation at the exaggerated praise given to certain officers, and the ignoring of others, is quite natural. Still, I do not see how this evil is to be remedied, so long as our people and press are constituted as they now are. I have the consciousness that I have fully performed my duty, and have done my full share of the brilliant work just completed; but if the press is determined to ignore this, and the people are determined, after four years' experience of press lying, to believe what the newspapers say, I don't see there is anything for us except to submit and be resigned. Grant I do not consider so criminal; it is partyly ignorance and partly selfishness which prevents his being aware of the effects of his acts. With Sheridan it is not so. His determination to absorb the credit of everything done is so manifest as to have attracted the attention of the whole army, and the truth will in time be known. His conduct towards me has been beneath contempt, and will most assuredly react against him in the minds of all just and fair-minded persons."

I set out upon this venture into biography with rather a light heart, I suspect, and now that it is time for me to sum up, I fear my heart is not quite so light. What sort of a figure have I brought out of the past, almost wholly from his own letters and official documents? I would fain be fair, yet no more than fair.

Of the character of this tall, spare man with hawklike nose and penetrating eyes, I think that there can be no question. Nowhere in the biographical material to which I have had access and nowhere in his intimate letters can I find a single reference which would tend to impeach his innate uprightness and honesty. And I think he was a gentleman, far more of a gentleman than

many of his associates in the Union army. His words and his acts speak for him. And surely it was a gentleman who in 1869, when John B. Gordon had been insulted at a public banquet by a sniveling carpetbagger, rose instantly and with glass held high exclaimed "I am proud to drink to the health of my former gallant foe and present good freind, John Gordon." Of his intellectual ability there can be no question. His work as an engineer both in the army and in civil life was of a high order. As an army officer, he jumped from comparatively low rank and, first as a brigade commander and then as a division r corps comdr. commander, handled his troops remarkably well. One cannot question his personal courage, for it was tested often under fire. But when he is suddenly advanced to the command of a whole army, he seems for a moment to stand; then he falters, and in retrospect one sees the rest of his life as a downward curve in the graph of history. Perhaps lack of adequate experience is a factor. But as one reads his letters, one cannot escape the feeling that here was a certain smugness, a certain feeling of self-satisfaction, accompanied, as it so often is, by a distrust of self in crises; here he was a petulance and an inablity to get along with men whose views differed from his; here was a will which, always appearing strong, failed to stand alone in a moment of decision.

The Battle of Gettysburg presented Meade with the great opportunity of his life. What would have been the result if he had pursued Lee instantly and vigourously, no one can say but, as one looks upon the rest of Meade's life through the perspective of nearly a century, one feels that at this moment there was something missing in the man. Call it by any name you will, he lacked that power of decision which is characteristic of great men. The door of opportunity opened to him and he stood for a moment upon the threshold of greatness but his lack of decisive power prevented George Gordon Meade from stepping over that threshold to take his place among the truly great.