The opening chapters of "The Military Genius of Abraham Lincoln, An Essay" by Brigadier General Colin R. Ballard (Oxford University Press, American Branch, 35 West 32nd St., New York City), are so good, so replete with understanding, that with the completion of these chapters the reader may be imagined as saying, "Here at last is an English military writer who is going to treat the American Civil War in a way that so far none of his countrymen has succeeded in doing." The volume is called an essay, but it is an essay extending to 241 pages. For all the merits of General Ballard's essay, and it has a number of merits, the reader's expectation will not be fully realized by the progress of the narrative, for the reason that succeeding chapters develop that form of apotheosis which attributes to the individual the virtues of the many, said by D'Amicis to be abhorred by the Dutch, and in these chapters that process is accompanied by the use of unequal weights and balances said by General Henry J. Hunt, chief of Artillery of the Army of the Potomac, to be abhorred by God Almighty but loved by the populace.

General Ballard applies to Lincoln the title of the High Command, a term made familiar by the World War, commends him for the exercise of this command in the appointment of Grant as Commander of all the Union Armies, but suggests that Lincoln erred when with Grant's appointment he abandoned military control. But Halleck's message to Grant after Early's raid in 1864 to the effect that Washington had been left unprotected and had narrowly escaped capture,
that reenforcements would no longer be sent to Grant but would be retained for the capitol's protection, if read in connection with Lincoln’s warning to Grant of March 3, 1865 to have no conference with Lee unless for the capitulation of Lee’s Army or on some minor or purely military matter, and with Lincoln’s implied protest sent to Grant against such useless slaughter as at Cold Harbor, will not be found to sustain the idea of complete abdication of military control by the President. He had given to Grant a superiority of force such as no previous opponent of Lee had, and he had found that with large preponderance of numbers, Grant, with every disposition to do, and with as great a disregard of life sacrifice as the World War showed, could not by direct assaults or entrenched positions as at Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor, accomplish what Lincoln had expected Meade to do with a force little larger than Lee’s at an entrenched position on the Potomac. The President at last had learned, and Grant had learned by the failure with enormous losses along the bloody route from the Wilderness to Petersburg, from Lee’s failure of his assaults upon McClellan at Malvern Hill and upon Meade at Gettysburg and from Burnside’s disastrous attacks at Fredericksburg, that neither the Army of Northern Virginia nor the Army of the Potomac could succeed in driving the opponent from a chosen and usually entrenched position by direct assaults. What the President had slowly learned from events, military writers like General Ballard have refused to accept from the records of those events. Lincoln held his hand and patiently waited for superior numbers and time to attain the inevitable end, the one certain method seen clearly enough by Union Generals long before.

To support his claim of Lincoln’s military genius General Ballard has found it necessary to say that the President’s scorn was aroused by any suspicion that
he made military appointments for political reasons, that he was right when he recalled McClellan’s Army from its position on the James River and in withholding McDowell’s corps previously and again in supplanting McClellan with Burnside after the battle of Antietam, that the statements and conclusions of the unsent letter from Lincoln to Meade after Gettysburg were correct, to smooth down as far as possible General Grant’s use of alcoholic drinks, to maintain that there was no political influence back of Grant’s appointment to the command of all the Armies, to assert that it was the Emancipation Proclamation that “spiked the British guns” and in various other directions to support and amplify his process of conferring upon the individual the virtues of the many. Lincoln himself expressed clear-sighted appreciation of the actual situation when he said, “If the military commanders in the field cannot be successful, not only the Secretary of War, but myself—for the time being master of them both—cannot but be failures.” That is a truth so obvious that it should be well within the range of present day vision, but many a modern historian has missed its significance.

Abraham Lincoln was a long headed politician with experience in conventions, in the legislature, in Congress, on the stump, measuring his wits with other shrewd politicians long before the Civil War came with his assumption of the Presidential office. He had that political element the War Democrats to win to his supports, and with this object he made a number of political appointments to high positions in the Army, some of these appointees being grossly incompetent, one of them, General Sickles, imperilling the Union at Gettysburg by disobedience of orders and the lack of the military capacity needed in a corps commander. The selection of Hooker as commander of the Army of the Potomac was largely decided by political
influences when it was well known to intelligent officers in that army that so important a command was beyond Hooker’s capacity. General Ballard when disclaiming political methods for Lincoln avoids recording that in spite of McClellan’s well-grounded objections to selecting corps commanders before there had been opportunity to test available officers, Lincoln forced upon McClellan as corps commanders three of the soldiers who as division commanders had voted against McClellan’s coast route towards Richmond. The plan had been submitted to twelve generals of division. Eight of them approved it; four opposed it and from these four the President selected three corps commanders. That they were perhaps as good soldiers as most of the other nine does not make these appointments less of a kind of manœuvre made familiar by American politics. It may be added that none of these appointees of the President lasted throughout the war.

It should be noted also that the President later complained to McClellan that the General did not consult with the reluctantly accepted corps commanders thus chosen by the President but confined his discussions to Fitz-John Porter. Furthermore, Lincoln signed the dismissal of Porter from the Army with its severe penalties, an act reversed by a subsequent Board of Inquiry and President with the approval of General Grant, an episode which showed that Lincoln accepted the statements of McClellan’s northern opponents, and was not himself any more familiar with what had occurred at the second battle of Bull Run than he was as to the position at Hagerstown and the uselessness of the 20,000 reenforcements on which he based what he himself called his “hobby,” his unwarranted hope that Lee’s army could be captured or destroyed in an impregnable position by Meade’s army in little better condition than Lee’s. A lawyer, a logician, a master of English, Abraham Lincoln was an adept in dispos-
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ing on paper of a military situation without due regard to that other kind of logic which takes account of selected and entrenched positions, of dirt roads, of the weather, of many physical obstacles which Army commanders had to contend with. Lincoln's military messages and writings are replete with geometrical demonstrations which would be unanswerable and convincing if determining physical factors be omitted. But the enemy, bad roads, unpassable streams, absence of supplies are matters that in warfare cannot be reasoned out of existence.

After Antietam, when there was an epidemic of "hoof and mouth" disease among the army horses, Lincoln wanted to know of McClellan what his horses had done to wear them out. It was true enough that lately they had done little, but the argument that because they had done little they could therefore do much, failed to fit the situation. As regards the absence of necessary army supplies, at this time, shoes for the men, shoes for the horses, we have the irrefutable evidence of General Meade that horse shoes asked for his command weeks before had not come, and he had been compelled to pay for the shoeing of all the horses in his command out of his own pocket.

Lincoln's logic applied to the elements of a principle, a legal proposition or a legislative act was as sure footed as any familiar chemical analysis, partly because when thus applied it was applied to things established—to the past. In his last volume the historian McMaster comments on the folly of predicting the future. In Lincoln's famous "House Divided Against Itself" speech occurs the familiar application of Lincoln's logic to the future:

"Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the states—old as well as new, North as well as South."

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That speech was made June 16, 1858, only five years before Meade’s victory at Gettysburg assured the preservation of the Constitution and the abolishment of African slavery. The extinction of slavery is to be traced back to the rebellion of the Southern states and this remote cause and the determining factor, the latter being the logic of the sword, were both outside of the Lincoln syllogism. The advocates of slavery were not bent on pushing it forward until it became lawful in all the states. The opponents of slavery outside of the Abolitionists did not set out to abolish slavery but to defeat rebellion, to preserve the union. Mr. Lincoln himself would have preserved the union with slavery or without it and the war was half way to the end before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. It is not to be inferred that the “crisis” referred to in the Lincoln speech was a battle crisis. The extinction of slavery was the illogical outcome of the effort to preserve it by rebellion, the outcome of the mightier logic by the sword. When the Southern states resorted to rebellion to preserve an economic foundation of slave labor they substituted a different issue, namely the dissolution or preservation of the union and the raising of that issue was the death knell of African slavery in the Southern states.

The President stoutly maintained that Lee’s army should be defeated where it stood, and not driven or manoeuvred back to Richmond. Not long before Grant’s appointment as Lieutenant General, Lincoln said he would not permit any General to adopt a plan to move on Richmond. Clausewitz, whose writings on war the British soldier, General F. N. Maude called “a deep and philosophical analysis,” and whose work, so Maude declared, “has been the ultimate foundation on which every drill regulation in Europe (except the British) has been reared,” justifies the military critic in judging a military campaign in part by the result.
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If President Lincoln's "High Command," its insistence upon the overland campaigns against Lee, its long persisted refusal to permit the abandonment of the Orange and Alexandria railroad as a line of supply, its failures in direct assaults in the Wilderness, Spottsylvania and Cold Harbor, is estimated by the results, the dogged battling may be accorded such commendation as is due to courage, to persistence and to its appreciation that while the North could afford the losses involved, the South could not, but that the guidance manifested "military genius" cannot be claimed for it whatever other notable qualities it displayed. There is also the unescapable "result" that after all the battling with its enormous losses in officers and men, Grant at last arrived at McClellan's position of 1862, and crossing the James River set about cutting the railroads leading to Richmond from the south and southwest as McClellan had proposed to do two years before. General Meade wrote to his wife November 22, 1862, having previously told how inadequate the single track railroad between Alexandria and Orange was to supply the army compelled from Washington to use this line of communications:

"All this comes from taking the wrong line of operations, the James River being the true and only practicable line of approach to Richmond. But I have always maintained that Richmond need not and should not be attacked at all: that the proper mode to reduce it is to take possession of the great lines of railroad leading to it from the South and Southwest, cut these and stop any supplies going there, and their army will be compelled to evacuate it and meet us on ground we can select for ourselves. The blind infatuation of the authorities at Washington, sustained, I regret to say, by Halleck, who as a soldier ought to know better, will not permit the proper course to be adopted, and we shall have to take the consequences."

General Ballard's list of authors consulted is a short one, nineteen all told, and among these are several books which have little standing as dependable authorities. Once more it seems necessary to call the attention of British writers to General Humphreys's "Vir-
Virginia Campaigns” and “From Gettysburg to the Rapidan,” essential volumes of the first rank as authorities, but seeming to be unknown to many of England’s soldiers who write about the Civil War.

A number of the many judgments arrived at by General Ballard have been reached sometimes in opposition to important opposing evidence and sometimes without any evidence whatever pro or con, as with his opinion that if McClellan had not been relieved of his command he would not have attacked Lee after the two armies were again in Virginia following Antietam, and when Lee’s forces were separated by the mountains. The spectator who stands today on the east side of Antietam Creek, and who then traversing the line occupied by McClellan’s army, looks across the stream to the heights occupied by Lee, and assaulted by McClellan on the bloodiest single day of battle during the whole war, is not likely to accept General Ballard’s notion that McClellan was lacking in courage. He may have had other faults. He may have given too much personal attention to detail. His remarkable ability as an organizer, strengthened by his pre-war experience in railroad management and by the vast undertaking suddenly thrown upon him in 1861 and again after Pope’s defeat, may have obscured his perspective as to short cuts to an immediate objective. He may have lacked that disregard for aught else than his personal ends shown by Sheridan at Five Forks, and have been prevented thus from relieving Burnside of his command at Antietam, even if he had the power to do so, but he did not lack courage. His unmilitary position astride the Chickahominy in the spring of 1862 had been solely due to the “High Command.” From Gaines’s Mill to the James River he gave Lee as “good as he got,” and at the end of the movement, at Malvern Hill, defeated him as he did at Antietam in the autumn of the same year. Both McClellan and Lee were learn-
ing the art of command in the Peninsular Campaign. Neither had an organized army. Such organization is not arrived at until the green subordinates commanding corps and divisions who are shown to be incompetent are weeded out. In the Army of the Potomac this perfection of organization was not attained, owing to the controlling power at Washington until the winter after Gettysburg when Meade abolished two of the infantry corps organizations remaining with the army after the Eleventh and Twelfth corps had been taken from him and sent to help Grant win the battles about Chattanooga. By this consolidation three corps comprised the infantry force of Meade’s army. General Francis A. Walker wrote that Meade had three able corps commanders in Hancock, Sedgwick and Warren, but did not know where to find a fourth. A corps command had proved to be too much for Sykes, Newton, French and Sickles. General Meade wrote that he had hard work to retain Sedgwick of whose character General Lee spoke admiringly. Lee rebuked some of his young officers who had complained because Southern girls danced with Sedgwick’s aides-de-camp by saying that he knew General Sedgwick well, and knew that he would not have upon his staff an officer with whom it would be improper for a lady to dance. The opposition of the High Command to Sedgwick had two causes, both of a politico-personal nature, one being that this faithful, capable soldier had come down from McClellan’s time, the other being to help Hooker in his attempt to shift the responsibility for the Chancellorsville disaster from his own shoulders, where it exclusively belonged, to Sedgwick’s. In addition, Sedgwick, like Reynolds had refused to consider taking command of the army, as long as the interference from Washington prevailed, a criticism not likely to be forgotten.

From his limited number of authorities consulted
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General Ballard did not learn that the possible seizure of the Confederate Emissaries to Europe, Mason and Slidell, travelling on an English vessel had been discussed by the English authorities with the conclusion that in accordance with British custom and the British view of international law the Emissaries could be taken from the boat or the boat with them be taken to an American port. Nor did he learn that Lincoln’s call for the three months men was due not to short-sightedness, but to the existence of a law of many years standing under which, and in compliance with which, the call was made. He gives to the American minister at the Court of St. James, Charles Francis Adams, and not to Meade’s victory at Gettysburg and Grant’s capture of Vicksburg, the credit for preventing British intervention. But able as Mr. Adams was, keen as was the American Consul, Dudley in running down the evidence of British aid to the Confederacy in the building of cruisers for the South, evidence and protests would have amounted to little if the Union disasters of Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville had been followed by Meade’s defeat at Gettysburg. With an official British umpire, with sympathy and commercial interests working in favor of the South, it would have been in baseball parlance a case of “three strikes and out” for the North.

In a preceding article I have referred to the reluctance of a number of Southern, British and certain military authors of the North, who have engaged in upholding the claims of several Northern generals, to recognize the true causes of Lee’s disaster at Gettysburg. Several Southern generals have been franker. General D. H. Hill wrote, “Meade was one of the most dreaded of our foes.” General E. P. Alexander wrote, “The war showed no finer exhibition of tactical skill than was displayed by Meade at Gettysburg.” But perhaps I may be pardoned for quoting from a letter
written to me a score of years ago by a British army officer. This letter showed how exclusive was the British viewpoint when he said he had never before looked at the Gettysburg campaign from the Northern side.

When General Ballard reaches the Gettysburg campaign he adopts in spite of all the intervening evidence to the contrary the view temporarily held by President Lincoln that Meade had a chance to rout and perhaps capture Lee’s army in its Hagerstown position. Ballard says that Meade had a better chance then than ever presented itself to the North either before or afterwards. He makes a point of Meade’s 20,000 reinforcements. They are his main basis for such an assertion. He seems not aware that these supposed reinforcements were mostly the rawest of raw militia, called from civil life for the emergency. The commander of their advance General “Baldy” Smith, an able officer with much previous experience in the East and West, upon whom General Grant placed so high an estimate that later he seems to have contemplated for a time putting him in command of the Army of the Potomac, reported these troops to be so lacking in discipline and nearly everything making an effective force that while he could move them along a road in a straight line, he could do nothing more with them. Most of the 20,000 militia under the command of the veteran General Couch, of which force Smith’s 3,000 were the advance, were of the same quality. General Meade was informed of this at the time and looked for and received no such reinforcements as Lincoln in 1863 regarded, and as General Ballard in 1927 still regards, as ensuring a successful assault on Lee’s naturally strong and entrenched position at Hagerstown.

General Andrew A. Humphreys, chief of staff of the Army of the Potomac from July 1863 until late in
1864, then commander of the second corps until Lee’s surrender, whose important services in bringing about that event along with those of General Wright, commander of the sixth corps, were smoke screened at the headquarters of the Lieutenant General in behalf of General Sheridan, even to the extent of suppressing dispatches, was in addition to being a fine commander of troops, a trained scientist. It was Humphreys’ development of observations made by Meade when a topographical engineer that led to the Eads jetties at the mouth of the Mississippi River. While the Civil War was going on Humphreys was in correspondence with Lyell of England, and was elected an honorary member of scientific societies in several countries of continental Europe. After the war he was chief engineer of the United States Army until his death. In his book “From Gettysburg to the Rapidan” he calmly wrote that the notion held in certain quarters in favor of an assault at Hagerstown was probably modified by subsequent events. That is, he was suggesting to Meade’s critics the application of the method justified by Clausewitz, a consideration of the question by the unvarying results of such an assault whether attempted by Lee at Malvern Hill in 1862 and at Gettysburg in 1863 or by Grant in the Wilderness, at Spottsylvania, Cold Harbor and Petersburg in 1864. Mr. Lincoln’s first opinion as expressed in his unsent letter to Meade was promptly modified in his letter to General Howard of July 21, 1863, in which he referred to his earlier belief in the possibility of the destruction of Lee’s army as possibly “a hobby,” and added: “A few days having passed I am now profoundly grateful for what was done, . . . General Meade has my confidence as a brave and skillful soldier and a true man.” No historical writer with a due regard for “equal weights and balances” would give to the President’s unsent letter the force of one duly forwarded and one
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not set aside almost immediately by Lincoln himself in his subsequent letter to General Howard. But General Ballard and other writers have adopted, without the obvious reservation called for, the first letter and have paid no attention to the President's modification of his "hobby." General Ballard says that in front of Lee's Hagerstown position "Meade had 60,000 veterans and 20,000 fresh men had joined him. Lee could scarcely have more than 40,000." I have already shown that Ballard's "20,000 fresh men," the militia which had also helped to raise Lincoln's unwarranted hope, comprised the emergency troops of Couch's command never sent to the front because the experienced commander of their advance, General "Baldy" Smith, said they were so green that they could only be marched on a straight line along a road, and protested to Meade against any attempt to use them in battle. The project for Meade would have been, without the help of his best corps commanders Reynolds and Hancock, the one killed the other wounded, to make across a wide valley against entrenched heights a direct assault against Lee. No flank movement on the presented battlefield was possible. It was a complete exchange of positions for those held by the opposing armies at Gettysburg, except that Lee's now was much stronger than Meade's along Cemetery Ridge had been and that Lee at Gettysburg had the opportunity for a flank movement, advocated by Longstreet, rejected by Lee, and declared by Meade to be sound military sense.

But are General Ballard's statistics outside of the 20,000 paper reinforcements correct? No modern writer and no previous one has been so well qualified as General Humphreys to consider the relative forces of Meade and Lee. He had spent a life in the use of higher mathematics. As a division commander he marched to, and fought at, Gettysburg. As chief of staff he rode on the parallel march after Lee's retreat.
As chief of engineers with headquarters at Washington after the war he had opportunity to study the war records. Participating in those long and swift marches of the Army of the Potomac, in midsummer heat, from Virginia to Gettysburg, he had personal knowledge of the wastage in men by sickness and exhaustion. Before Gettysburg Lee's troops had been resting or moving by easy stages, Meade's were rushed to the field, the infantry corps marching at the rate of from 20 to 35 miles a day. In General Humphrey's large collection of papers relating to the Civil War, now in the library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, is a statement, made in his own handwriting in 1877, that the officers and men on the ground in Meade's Army at Gettysburg did not exceed 70,000. At another time he wrote that Meade did not have time to count his army. To the Comte de Paris Humphreys wrote that Lee's army "present for duty" numbered 68,352, that Lee's enlisted men present for duty, sick, on extra duty and in arrest numbered 81,870 and that with the officers Lee's grand aggregate comprised 88,754. Humphreys's scientific and important war experience, including admirable service in several episodes of the Gettysburg battle, qualify him as a higher authority than Colonel Livermore whose estimates for both armies given in the 1900 edition of his "Numbers and Losses" are higher than those of General Humphreys. Livermore placed Meade's losses at 23,049 and Lee's at 26,752. Deducting these losses from the fighting aggregates of the two armies and adding to Meade's army the 7,000 of French's troops which were not at Gettysburg but joined later, Meade's superiority of force in front of Lee's Hagerstown position would be 12,351, a difference sufficiently accurate for the purpose of comparing the probable result of a direct assault and the failure of Grant's 100,000 against Lee's 60,000 in the Wilderness, the vain hurling of
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60,000 at Spottsylvania, of 108,000 at Cold Harbor and of 64,000 against the Confederates' 42,000 at Petersburg in June, 1864.

Lincoln’s admonition to Grant expressing the hope that a new movement against Lee would not involve great sacrifice of life showed that the President’s view as to the efficacy of direct assaults on position selected and entrenched by the enemy had undergone still further modification. General Grant so far modified his own view and practice as to telegraph Meade that fortifications came near to holding themselves and that one infantryman every six feet was sufficient. The lesson had been learned at last by the Lieutenant General and the President. It has to be ignored by the military writer who at this late day maintains, in spite of the opposing opinion of the ablest soldiers of the Army of the Potomac at the time and of any student of military campaigns who will go over the ground, that Meade should have butted his head against Lee’s previously chosen and entrenched position at Hagerstown in order to repeat Lee’s mistakes at Malvern Hill and Gettysburg and to anticipate the union holocausts in Virginia in the next year ventured upon with the support of the “High Command” by Lieutenant General Grant, who upon first encountering such fighting as he said he had never before seen, threw himself upon his couch in a temporary convulsion of disappointment.

In minor matters some of General Ballard’s comments are not the product of Lincoln’s order of logic. The President’s early restriction of McClellan’s command to the Army of the Potomac is justified by the assertion that it would be absurd to suppose that a general, face to face with the enemy in the Peninsula could give proper attention to the whole theatre of war. But that is precisely what was involved in the appointment of Grant to the command of all the
armies and his presence with the Army of the Potomac. If the justification given for limitation of McClellan’s command is sound it must apply with equal force to the case of Grant, but the author does not apply it. As a matter of fact the inference to be drawn from Grant’s outline of his plans given in his memoirs as to the effect of his general oversight is not borne out by occurrences. There were days of delay in communicating with different operating forces. General Hunt, the chief of artillery of the Army of the Potomac, wrote that better results would have been obtained by Meade against Lee if left untrammeled by Washington and given the force that Grant was given. Military capacity in the “High Command” at Washington, upon Lee’s movement to the Susquehanna would have seized the opportunity to assemble promptly from the trained forces idly posted at nearby points, a force as large as Lee’s, and have thrown them across Lee’s line of retreat. With Meade in pursuit and such a force in Lee’s front the invaders would have been between the jaws of a mighty nut cracker far more formidable than that Hooker found himself between at Chancellorsville. There was the opportunity to disrupt or capture Lee’s army. It wasn’t attempted. It wasn’t even thought of, and because it was not, and because exaggerated hopes were based upon an impossibility any claim of military genius for the Washington “High Command” will continue to be viewed with skepticism.

Like other British writers the author is not unwilling to turn a stone in Lee’s behalf as when he declares that as between McClellan and Lee on the fields of Peninsular battles honors were fairly divided, the defeat of Porter at Gaines’s Mill being balanced by McClellan’s victory at Malvern Hill. Now the Union force at Gaines’s Mill, separated by the Chickahominy from the bulk of McClellan’s army and in that position
because the President had promised it should be joined by McDowell's corps from Fredericksburg, was in round numbers 37,000 and against it were thrown 57,000 Confederates. The Union losses were less than 7,000, the Confederates lost in killed and wounded 8,700, and Fitz-John Porter effected a safe retirement to the Army. At Malvern Hill Lee's assaults were made with 14 brigades and in these and in the supporting troops which came under a heavy concentrated artillery fire the losses were 5,355. McClellan's losses were 3,214. Throughout the course of the Peninsular battles the Confederate General D. H. Hill wrote that the Southern army always attacked just where their enemy wished them to. But as this same Confederate said that McClellan was the greatest of all American organizers of an army and made a masterly retirement, possibly General Ballard would think these views unduly favored the North. However that may be, to arrive at his balancing conclusion there must be overlooked the defeat of the Confederates at Mechanicsville, where 16,356 Confederates with a loss in killed and wounded of 1,484 vainly assaulted 15,631 Union troops among whom the losses were only 361.

The extent of the author's misinterpretation of Meade's position as commander of the Army of the Potomac in Grant's presence may be shown by comparing his assertion that Meade was really the chief of staff in the field with the final report of Grant himself and with occurrences demonstrating that this position was one of much greater responsibility than an American chief of staff has ever held. The project for the initial movement across the Rapidan in May 1864 was prepared by General Humphreys, the actual chief of staff. Grant himself had no competent staff. Its chief, General Rawlins, was not a trained soldier, but Grant's personal adviser, and according to General James H. Wilson, than whom no one was better informed,
Grant’s protector, constantly on the watch to ward off temptations to Grant to relapse into his drinking habit. It is only just to add that Colonel Meade of General Meade’s staff, sharing the feeling of so many of the higher officers of the Army that Grant’s acts had not accorded with his abundant words of praise given to General Meade, nevertheless said to the present writer that he had carried despatches and messages to Grant at all hours of the day and night, and never had seen the slightest evidence that the Lieutenant General had been indulging in alcohol. In early life Grant was threatened with tuberculosis and he died of cancer. Between the two diseases medical writers have thought there was a relationship, and it may be that an unsound physical organization found support in alcohol. The frankest discussion by a military writer of Rawlins’s watchfulness over Grant in this respect may be found in “Under the Old Flag,” by General James H. Wilson, whose close association with the Lieutenant General in the West and East gave opportunity for complete knowledge of the facts.

At the crossing of the Rapidan Grant remained in the rear to expedite the movement of Burnside’s corps not yet made part of the Army of the Potomac. In Grant’s absence, it was Meade with the advance who when it was discovered that the enemy had appeared on the Orange pike, ordered Warren to attack at once with his whole force, suspended the movement of the Army, and halted Hancock short of Todd’s Tavern, and having thus opened the battle, sent word to Grant back at the river saying, “If Lee is disposed to fight this side of Mine Run, he shall be accommodated.” Moltke as chief of staff, with a nominal head in the person of the King, commanded an Army, but no American chief of staff ever exercised such a command. Meade was the commander of the Army, not its chief of staff, who was Humphreys. In his report after the
end of the war Grant wrote: “My instructions for the Army were all through him (Meade) and were general in their nature, leaving all the details and the execution to him.” Grant himself was not of methodical habits. He carried important documents in his coat pocket. He was deficient in the organizing ability exhibited in so marked a way by McClellan. With the Army of the Potomac he had an instrument perfected by other men and upon this the finest of the Northern armies, he laid a heavy hand, disrupting it by means altogether outside of losses in battle. On two notable occasions he took personal command of the Army, one at the North Anna where he divided his forces by the river into three parts, when unluckily for the South General Lee was too ill to seize the opportunity before the Northern troops retired. The other was at Petersburg when Grant forgot to tell either Meade or Hancock that the latter was to assist in Smith’s attempt to capture the city. The morning following the comparative failure of Smith’s attack Grant retired from the front to City Point and sent word to Meade to take the steamer for Petersburg and assume command in person as soon as possible of the troops of Hancock, Smith, Warren and Burnside. During three days Meade was in independent command of the army, the telegraphic communication with Grant back at City Point being interrupted. In the meantime Confederate troops were reaching Petersburg and the entrenchments were strengthened. The opportunity to capture the place was lost by Grant’s forgetfulness to inform either Meade or Hancock of what was intended, and Meade’s repeated assaults failed with a loss of 10,500 men. He attributed the absence of success to the enormous losses of officers, the weariness of the troops and the lessening of morale caused by the previous attacks on entrenchments along the route from the Wilderness to Petersburg.
Reverting to the author’s statement of earlier movements there is found a reference to Spottsylvania limited to Colonel Upton’s unsuccessful assault with twelve regiments, an ignoring of the more important and more successful attacks that followed with far larger forces when Hancock captured 4,000 prisoners, a Major General, a Brigadier General, 30 colors and 18 cannon. A few days later the Secretary of War sent Meade a telegram of hearty congratulations and following this Grant telegraphed to the War Department: “General Meade has more than met my most sanguine expectations. He and Sherman are the fittest officers for large commands I have come in contact with.” Toward the close of the war Colonel Theodore Lyman wrote at the army headquarters: “Meade can handle an army of 100,000 men and do it easily. His management has been a wonder. He has done more fighting than Sherman and Sheridan together.”

General Ballard excuses the absence of Sheridan’s cavalry at Spottsylvania on the ground that it was of little use in the Wilderness. But the army was moving from the Wilderness. Shortly after Spottsylvania the Confederate Cavalryman Rosser, in Sheridan’s absence made a raid to Grant’s rear, threatening the communications and rescued all the Confederate prisoners at the Fifth Corps Hospital who could walk and captured all Union hospital attendants who were without hospital badges. The author’s eulogy of Sheridan’s Valley campaign of 1864 of course is made without knowledge of the exposures made recently by Colonel DuPont, chief of artillery of General Crook’s forces. In that campaign the generalship was distinctly with the Confederate leader, Early. He places the capture of Fort Fisher in February 1865 whereas it was in January, and there are other minor errors in the book.

General Ballard has drawn a number of comparisons
between events in the Civil War and those in the World War. Perhaps the most striking of such contrasts is one that he does not make. With the abandonment of the Petersburg lines Lee’s army became to a considerable extent a rabble. The men dropped out of the ranks. Arms and munitions were abandoned. The army disintegrated, leaving only a fighting remnant. The Confederates had fought well for four years. The South has continued to take pride that it successfully resisted through those years an enemy, according to the Southern claim, with armies three times stronger. The forces of the Allies, drawn from all parts of the world and including the natives of Asia and Africa had a much greater preponderance over the armies of the Central European powers than the North had over the South in the Civil War. Each war lasted for four years. But differing from the retreat of Lee, the retirement of the Germans in 1918 according to a Swiss military observer at the time and according to the recently expressed view of an officer of the British army was a marvel of achievement, the latter adding, “and history must say so.” Lee’s retreat from Petersburg was no longer the movement of an army. The men threw away arms and packs and disappeared. Such opportunities of escape as were offered were destroyed as when rations for the troops were missent, and waiting for them Lee made a fatal delay. There was mismanagement at the head, disruption in the ranks and no “marvel of achievement.”