Royal United Services Institution. Journal

Publication details, including instructions for
authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rusi19>

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Published online: 11 Sep 2009.

To cite this article: Captain E. F. Trew p.s.c., R.M.L.I. (1914) Lee's Invasion of Maryland; The Sharpsburg Campaign, Royal United Services Institution. Journal, 58:435, 595-604, DOI: [10.1080/03071841409420109](https://doi.org/10.1080/03071841409420109)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03071841409420109>

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LEE'S INVASION OF MARYLAND ; THE SHARPSBURG CAMPAIGN.

By CAPTAIN E. F. TREW, *p.s.c.*, R.M.L.I.

ON September 2nd, 1862, the position of the Federals in the eastern theatre of war was as follows :—

(a) The main army, under McClellan, was at Alexandria and Washington, where it was reorganizing after its defeat in the campaign of the second battle of Bull Run.

(b) 3,000 infantry and artillery were at Winchester.

(c) 3,000 cavalry at Martinsburg.

(d) 8,000 infantry and artillery at Harper's Ferry.

The Confederate main army was about Chantilly. Lee's plan was to move his whole force to the north side of the Potomac and carry on the war in the enemy's country. His idea was that a single victory gained on northern soil would bring about the end of the war, and an acknowledgment of the independence of the Southern States. With this end in view he proposed to disregard the Federal detachments at Winchester, Martinsburg and Harper's Ferry; for he imagined that as soon as his advance threatened to cut them off from their main army, they would be withdrawn.

In pursuance of Lee's plan the Confederates marched through Leesburg, and on September 7th reached Frederick. Meanwhile, the Federal Army had concentrated west of Washington. Owing to the efficient service of Stuart's cavalry, McClellan was in doubt concerning the plans of the Confederates. He did not know whether the whole or only part of Lee's army had crossed the Potomac or whether Lee intended to invade Pennsylvania or to move towards Washington. At length McClellan decided to move against the Confederate force reported to be at Frederick.

Contrary to Lee's expectations the hostile detachment at Harper's Ferry was not withdrawn. This meant that the Confederate line of communications, which ran through Shepherdstown up the Valley of the Shenandoah, would be exposed to the attack of 8,000 men. To meet this situation the following courses were open to Lee :—

(a) Detach a force to mask the hostile troops at Harper's Ferry.

(b) Attack the hostile troops at Harper's Ferry with the whole or with a part of his force.

Lee chose the latter course and determined to divide his army into two parts. One part under Jackson was to move against Harper's Ferry, while the other was to engage the attention of the main Federal Army by threatening an invasion of Pennsylvania. The details of Lee's plan were as follows:—

(a) Longstreet with the train was to march on Hagerstown as if threatening an invasion of Pennsylvania.

(b) Jackson was to recross the Potomac in the neighbourhood of Sharpsburg and move on Harper's Ferry from the south-west.

(c) McLaws was to take possession of the Maryland Heights and attack Harper's Ferry from the north-east.

(d) Walker was to take possession of the Loudoun Heights and attack Harper's Ferry from the south-east.

GENERAL PLAN OF THEATRE OF OPERATIONS.

(e) D. H. Hill's division and Stuart's cavalry were to form the rearguard and cover the movements of the whole army.

Lee's plan for the attack on Harper's Ferry worked perfectly. Jackson marched from Frederick via Middletown, Williamsport, and Martinsburg and arrived at Halltown on the 13th. Meanwhile, McLaws had taken possession of the

Maryland Heights and Walker the Loudoun Heights, and thus Harper's Ferry was shut in on all sides. On the 13th also McClellan obtained information of the plans of the Confederates by means of a copy of Lee's orders picked up in Frederick. One Federal division advanced towards the South Mountains that evening; the remainder of the army spent the night about Frederick.

On the 14th Jackson took command of the Confederate forces round Harper's Ferry. Jackson's plan was to attack Harper's Ferry simultaneously from all sides, and most careful arrangements were made to bring this about. The action commenced with an artillery duel, and it was not until the Federal artillery had been subdued by the converging fire of the guns of McLaws, Walker and Jackson that the infantry advanced to the attack. No assault, however, took place, for the Federals

PLAN OF ENGAGEMENT AT HARPER'S FERRY.

surrendered before Jackson's infantry reached the intrenchments. The decision was gained practically by artillery alone. The peculiar conditions under which the battle was fought rendered this possible. Under ordinary conditions the object of artillery in the attack is to assist the forward movement of the infantry; but at Harper's Ferry the Federals were entrapped before the battle began, and there was no escape from the cross, enfilade and reverse fire of the Confederate guns.

While the above events were taking place at Harper's Ferry, McClellan had advanced and attacked D. H. Hill and Stuart in the passes of the South Mountain. Lee ordered Longstreet back from Hagerstown to their assistance; but when night fell one of the passes was in the hands of the Federals.

On the 15th Lee fell back to a position on the right bank of the Antietam Creek near Sharpsburg, and ordered Jackson, McLaws and Walker to rejoin him there. Lee still hoped to fight a decisive battle on Federal territory, and his plan was to hold the Federals in check with the commands of D. H. Hill, Longstreet and Stuart, until he could be rejoined by the Confederate detachments sent against Harper's Ferry; it was then his intention to deliver a counter-stroke as soon as opportunity offered.

For the execution of this plan the Confederates could not count on more than 40,000 men, while the Federals had 90,000. But the Confederates were superior in other ways, for they had gained victory after victory and had "better skill, better organization, and above all a firmer determination in all ranks to conquer" than their opponents, and these are the qualifications which form the chief factors of success.—Field Service Regulations, Sec. 99 (1).

On the 16th Jackson and Walker joined Lee at Sharpsburg. Meanwhile, the advanced troops of the Federals had reached the left bank of the Antietam. McClellan, however, was content with spending the day in reconnoitring.

The following is a description of the position occupied by Lee :—

(a) The general line was on a ridge running between the Hagerstown—Sharpsburg Road and the Antietam Creek. The position extended from the Nicodemus Run on the left to a spur overlooking Burnside Bridge on the right; a distance of three miles. This position can be divided easily into two parts: a wooded area from Nicodemus Run to Dunkard Church and an open area from Dunkard Church to the spur overlooking Burnside Bridge.

(b) The wooded area comprised the East, West, North and Poffenberger Woods. The Confederate line in this area ran in front of the West Wood. Opposite lay the East, North and Poffenberger Woods, which gave a covered approach to an enemy to within 500 yards of the position. The open spaces between the woods consisted of meadows and cornfields separated by stone walls, with here and there small buildings and farms. There was a position suitable for several batteries on a hill north of Nicodemus Run, from where cross fire could be delivered against an enemy attacking the front of the position.

The ground in this area was unsuitable for the mounted action of cavalry.

(c) The open area consisted of open slopes broken here and there by long ravines. It contained several positions suitable for artillery and was suitable for the mounted action of cavalry.

(d) The Antietam formed a considerable obstacle. It was 60 feet wide and unfordable except at Snavelly. There were

four bridges over the stream, none of which the Confederates had had time to destroy. Three of them were exposed to fire from the Confederate position; the fourth, at Pry's Mill, was covered from view and fire.

(e) In case of retreat the Potomac would have to be crossed. This river was 200 yards wide. There were no bridges, only a few deep fords, but one of which was practicable for wagons. The distance of this river from the position varied from two and a half miles in rear of the right to one mile in rear of the left.

(f) There was a ridge on the left bank of the Antietam forming a suitable position for the whole of McClellan's artillery.

Lee had at hand 25,500 men and 134 guns for the occupation of this position. His dispositions were as follows:—

(a) Longstreet commanded the right section from Burnside Bridge to Dunkard Church inclusive. His troops comprised the divisions of D. R. Jones, Evans, and D. H. Hill, with Walker's division in local reserve. Most of the Confederate artillery was allotted to this section.

(b) Jackson commanded the left section from Dunkard Church, exclusive, to Nicodemus Run. The troops under him consisted of the divisions of Jones and Ewell, with Hood's division in local reserve.

(c) Stuart, with FitzHugh Lee's brigade and some guns, was placed between West Wood and the Potomac in order to protect the left flank.

(d) Munford, with two regiments of cavalry and a battery, was placed at the Antietam Iron Works to hold the bridge and keep open communication with the Confederate troops, amounting to 14,500 men and 60 guns, who were marching on Sharpsburg from Harper's Ferry.

At 5 a.m. on the 17th the Federals advanced to the attack of Lee's position. The battle consisted of a series of piecemeal attacks tried in succession against the Confederate left, centre and right. Briefly, these attacks were as follows:—

(a) The first attack was made by the 1st Corps of 14,800 men under Hooker. Hooker formed up his troops under cover of the North Woods, and supported by artillery attacked the Confederates occupying the front Dunkard Church—Nicodemus Run. This attack was repulsed at 7.30 a.m.

(b) The second attack was made by the XIIth Corps of 8,500 men under Mansfield. It was delivered against the Confederate left. Some of the Federals got as far as the West Wood, but there their advance came to a standstill.

(c) The third attack was made at 10 a.m. by the IInd Corps and a part of the VIth against the front Piper House—Dunkard Church—West Wood. This attack was at first repulsed by a Confederate counter-attack, but the Confederates went on too far and were attacked in turn when in disorder. The whole

Confederate left and centre was then forced back to the West Wood and the Sharpsburg—Hagerstown Road; but there the Federal advance came to a standstill.

(d) The fourth attack was delivered in the afternoon by Burnside with the IXth Corps of 13,000 men against the Confederate right. Burnside drove back the Confederates and got as far as their main position on the ridge when he was attacked in flank and repulsed by A. P. Hill, who had just arrived with 5,000 men from Harper's Ferry. This ended the Federal attacks for the day.

The failure of the Federals to defeat half their number of Confederates can be ascribed chiefly to the total mismanagement of the whole affair on the part of McClellan and his staff. Field Service Regulations, Sec. 102 (3) gives the following two ways of seeking success in battle:—

(a) By means of a converging movement of separated forces so timed as to strike the enemy's front and flank or flanks simultaneously, few if any reserves being retained in hand by the Commander-in-Chief.

(b) A part of the force only may be employed in a preparatory action while the commander keeps a large reserve in his own hands with which eventually to force the decision.

McClellan adopted neither method. He took no advantage of his superior numbers at all; for when the first three attacks were being delivered against the Confederate left no attempt was made to pin the rest of the Confederate Army to the ground so as to prevent reinforcements being sent to the threatened part. Not only was there no concentration of effort, but part of the Federal Army—Porter's Corps and a part of the VIth Corps—was not employed at all. Our Field Service Regulations, Sec. 106 (1) lays down as a principle that for decisive success every man, horse and gun must co-operate. It is a principle that the Federal leaders at this stage of the war never grasped; but it was understood by Lee and Jackson, and to that fact they owe a great deal of their success.

ARTILLERY.—The Federals employed their artillery in two main groups as follows:—

(a) About 170 guns were massed on the ridge on the left bank of the Antietam. These for the most part fought an artillery duel with the Confederate batteries on the opposite ridge and silenced them. But they also assisted the advance of their own infantry across the open space between the woods by means of cross fire delivered against the Confederate infantry.

(b) About 90 guns were placed along the edge of North Wood. These were also employed in assisting the infantry attack across the open space between the woods.

By the above arrangement a converging fire was brought against the Confederate left. This artillery fire was very effective as long as the Confederates were in the open, but once they

were driven back to the shelter of the West Wood they appear to have suffered little loss from the hostile guns.

CAVALRY.—The Federal cavalry, numbering 4,000, were not employed at all. As already stated the country north of Dunkard Church was not suitable for the mounted action of cavalry; but they might have been employed very usefully against the Confederate right or in delaying the advance of the

PLAN OF BATTLE OF SHARPSBURG.

Confederate detachments from Harper's Ferry. The last Federal attack would probably have succeeded if A. P. Hill's 5,000 men had been prevented from reaching the battlefield when they did.

THE CONFEDERATE TACTICS.—When McClellan commenced his attack on the morning of the 17th, there were still 14,500 Confederates absent from the battlefield. The methods employed by the Confederates in meeting the various Federal attacks were as follows:—

(a) Jackson met the first attack by engaging the enemy along his whole front, forcing him to use up his reserves by

means of local counter attacks. At the same time he detached Early to join Stuart in making a counter-attack against the Federal right flank. Stuart employed his cavalry dismounted and enfiladed the enemy with his guns. This counter-attack succeeded and Hooker's corps was repulsed. Stuart's enfilade fire was most effective; it is a good example of the plan recommended in Field Service Regulations, Sec. 109 (2).

(b) Before the second Federal attack commenced Jackson recalled Early and reinforced his line with Hood, who up to then had formed the local reserve. Even with the whole of his reserves in the firing line Jackson was barely able to hold his own. Stuart, however, again acted against the flank of the attacking enemy, and at 9 a.m. the Federal advance came to a standstill.

(c) So far very few of Longstreet's troops had taken part in the fighting. Lee therefore withdrew 10,000 men from Longstreet and placed them at the disposal of Jackson. These troops included McLaw's division, which had just arrived from Harper's Ferry. Jackson used them partly to reinforce his main line and partly to join Stuart in making a fresh counter-attack against the Federal right. When the Federals advanced against the Confederate position for the third time, Stuart, by moving under cover of the woods, surprised the Federal right flank. The Federals were severely repulsed and only saved from destruction by the arrival of fresh reinforcements. The counter-attack was, however, pushed too far, and becoming disorganized was in its turn attacked by the Federal reserves. The whole of the Confederate left and centre was then pushed back as far as the West Wood and the Sharpsburg—Hagerstown Road; but by this time all the available reserves of the Federals had been used up and their attack came to a standstill.

(d) After the repulse of the third attack, Lee determined to make a counter-stroke against the Federal right. The general idea was to hold the Federals with Longstreet's force while Jackson carried out the counter-stroke. Jackson's plan was to reinforce Stuart with infantry and guns. Stuart was then to move round and attack the enemy's right while the remainder of Jackson's force attacked his in front. The preliminary reconnaissance, however, discovered that the Federal corps, that had been defeated earlier in the day, had been reorganized and so placed that it was impossible for a Confederate turning movement to pass between them and the Potomac. The Confederate plan was in consequence given up. While the above was taking place Longstreet was barely able to hold his own against Burnside. The arrival of A. P. Hill from Harper's Ferry, however, turned the scale in favour of the Confederates and Burnside was repulsed. This event ended the battle.

Lee's plan for winning a decisive victory north of the Potomac had failed. He was severely handicapped by not

having all his troops up at the beginning of the battle, nevertheless, thanks to the superior tactics of his troops, he had worsted double his numbers, and his army was once more united. The points to which Lee owes his success in this battle may be summarized as follows:—

(a) The complete co-operation between all parts of the Confederate Army.

(b) The constant delivery of well-timed vigorous local counter-attacks, which forced the enemy to use up his reserves and prevented him from massing superior forces against any particular portion of the Confederate line.

(c) The employment of the cavalry. Stuart was always ready to co-operate with the rest of the army. The nature of the ground prevented cavalry mounted action; but he made use of his mobility to get into the most favourable position for the use of fire action.

Some other points brought out by the Confederate tactics are as follows:—

(a) The employment of the artillery. During the first three Federal attacks the Confederate artillery, posted to the south of Dunkard Church, engaged the mass of the Federal batteries posted on the left bank of the Antietam Creek. The Confederate guns were inferior in numbers, calibre and range power, and were worsted to such an extent that they were unable to be used effectively later on against the attacking infantry. In cases of this kind our Field Artillery Training, Sec. 158 (3) recommends that the artillery of the attack must not be ignored, but instead of endeavouring to destroy the hostile batteries by an overwhelming concentration of fire, the object of the defence will be to neutralize their fire with as few batteries as possible, so as to free as many as possible to fire on the attacking infantry.

(b) The disadvantage of want of space in rear of a position. The counter-attack which was to have been delivered against the Federal right during the last phase of the battle had to be given up because it was found there was no room to work round between the Potomac and the Federal corps which had formed up north of the West Wood.

On the next day, the 18th, Lee's Army evacuated its position and retreated across the Potomac. The Federals made no attempt to interfere with the first stages of the retirement, but later in the day attacked the rearguard and captured some guns. Lee's Army had become somewhat scattered and demoralized by this time. Jackson saw that the Confederates were in no condition to meet a resolute advance of the Federals, and at once decided to assume the offensive. He therefore sent back Hill's division, which quickly drove back the leading Federal troops to the north side of the Potomac. The best way to delay an enemy is to attack him. Jackson realized this and his

action here is an illustration of the principle laid down in Field Service Regulations (Sec. 114), which states that a delaying force fulfils its rôle in a most effective manner by attacking the enemy's advanced troops and by pushing them back on the main body. There was no other attempt at pursuit on the part of the Federals, and this incident closed the Sharpsburg campaign.

In many ways the battle of Sharpsburg is similar to the battle of Woerth, fought on August 6th, 1870. Some of the points of similarity are as follows:—

(a) At Woerth the French occupied a ridge at the foot of which ran the Sauerbach, corresponding to the Antietam at Sharpsburg. The northern part of the ridge was wooded, the southern more open. On the opposite side of the stream there was another ridge, which offered a suitable position for the whole of the superior artillery of the Germans.

(b) The French had 46,000 against 100,000 Germans. The Confederates had 40,000 against 90,000 Federals.

(c) At Woerth the first phase of the battle consisted of isolated and disjointed attacks delivered by the advanced guards of the Vth and XIth Prussian and IInd Bavarian Corps against the French position. There was no concentration of effort, with the result that all were repulsed in the same way that the Federal isolated attacks were repulsed at Sharpsburg.

(d) The French artillery fought a duel with the superior artillery of the enemy. In this the French artillery was worsted to such an extent that later on in the day they were unable to oppose the advance of the German infantry with effect. The artillery duel at Sharpsburg had exactly the same results.

(e) The French right occupied open ground; their left wooded ground, and their right was defeated first. Similarly at Sharpsburg the last Federal attack delivered against the open area tried the Confederates more severely than the previous attacks against the wooded area. The cause in both cases was the same, that is the difficulty experienced in providing effective artillery support for the attackers once the defenders had retired to the shelter of the woods.

(f) The Germans, like the Federals, made no use of their cavalry. They were not at hand to take advantage of any opportunity created by the other arms and consequently were not prepared for the pursuit.

The result of the battle of Woerth was, however, quite different from that of Sharpsburg, for when the Crown Prince attacked in front and on both flanks. The advantage of superior All the corps were ordered forward, and the French were attacked in front and on both flanks. The advantage of superior forces thus made itself felt, and the French were defeated.