

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN'S MILITARY MANUAL

Abraham Lincoln, as President of the United States, became Commander-in-Chief of the Union forces at the beginning of the Civil War. Even in the serious business of issuing orders there crept into his grim dispatches something of his peculiar way of putting things which seems foreign to our modern military terminology. Inasmuch as the compilation of messages which follow are directed largely to officers of the Army, it seems fitting that one paragraph from his writings mentioning the Navy should be used. These excerpts compose what we have chosen to call Lincoln's Military Manual.

"Nor must Uncle Sam's web-feet be forgotten. At all the watery margins they have been present. Not only on the deep sea, the broad bay, and the rapid river, but also up the narrow, muddy bayou, and wherever the ground was a little damp, they have been and made their tracks."

1861

Hon. Secretary of War: On this day Mrs. ——— called upon me. She is the wife of Major ——— of the regular army. She wants her husband made a brigadier-general. She is a saucy little woman and I think she will torment me until I have to do it.

Colonel Mulligan: If you haven't shot Barney D—— yet—Don't.

Hon. Secretary of War: Please have the Adjutant-General ascertain whether Second Lieutenant of Company D., 2nd infantry, Alexander E. Drake, is entitled to promotion. His wife thinks he is.

1862

General McClellan: The success of your army and the cause of the country are the same, and of course I only desire the good of the cause.

General Fremont: Much—perhaps all—depends upon the celerity with which you can execute it. Put the utmost speed upon it. Do not lose a minute.

Hon. Secretary of the Navy: I have just seen Lieut. Worden, who says the Monitor could be boarded and captured very easily . . . He is of decided opinion that she should not go skylarking up to Norfolk.

General McClellan: Shield's division has got so terribly out of shape, out at elbows, and out at toes, that it will require a long time to get it in again.

General McDowell: It is for you a question of legs. Put in all the speed you can.

General McClellan: If you can hold your present position, we shall have the enemy yet.

General McDowell: It seems the game is before you.

General McClellan: I have just read your dispatch about sore-tongued and fatigued horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the battle of Antietam that fatigues anything.

General Banks: This expanding and piling up of impedimenta has been, so far, almost our ruin, and will be our final ruin if it is not abandoned.

General McClellan: I say try; if we never try we shall never succeed.

1863

General Hooker: I would not take any risk of being entangled upon the river, like an ox jumped half over a fence and liable to be torn by dogs front and rear without a fair chance to gore one way or kick the other.

General Hooker: Only those generals who gain success can set up dictators. What I ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship.

General Hooker: Beware of rashness but with energy

and sleepless vigilance go forward to give us victories.

General Schofield: Let your military measures be strong enough to repel the invader and keep the peace, but not strong enough to harass and persecute the people.

General Hooker: If he stays where he is fret him and fret him.

General Hooker: We should continually harass and menace him . . . if he weakens himself then pitch into him.

General Schenck: He will be "gobbled up" if he remains if he is not already past salvation.

General Hooker: If the head of Lee's army is at Martinsburg and the tail of it on the plank road between Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville, the animal must be slim somewhere. Could you not break him?

General Milroy: You have constantly urged the idea that you were persecuted because you did not come from West Point and you repeat it in these letters. This, my dear general, is, I fear, the rock on which you have split.

General Rosecrans: I would not push you to any rashness but I am very anxious that you do your utmost short of rashness.

General Thomas: Forces now beyond Carlisle . . . will in my unprofessional opinion be quite as likely to capture the "man in the moon" as any part of Lee's army.

General Mead: Your golden opportunity is gone, and I am distressed immeasurably because of it.

General Howard: I believe that General Mead and his noble army had expended all the skill, and toil, and blood, up to the ripe harvest, and then let the crop go to waste.

General Mead: Do not lean a hair's breadth against your own feelings, or your judgment of the public service, on the idea of gratifying me.

General Rosecrans: And now be assured once more that I think of you in all kindness and confidence and that I am not watching you with an evil eye.

General Halleck: This rebellion can only eke out a short and feeble existence as an animal sometimes may with a thorn in its vitals.

General Rosecrans: I understand the main body of the enemy is very near you, so near that you could "board at home" so to speak and menace and attack him every day.

General Halleck: The honor will be his (General Mead's) if he succeeds and the blame may be mine if he fails.

Secretary of War: I personally wish Jacob Freese, of New Jersey, to be appointed colonel for a colored regiment, and this regardless of whether he can tell the exact shade of Julius Caesar's hair.

1864

General Thayer: General Steele who is master is to cut any knots which cannot be untied.

General Thomas: If persisted in it would fall dead within its own entangling details.

General Hunter: Are you able to take care of the enemy when he turns back upon you?

General Grant: Hold on with a bull-dog grip, and chew and choke as much as possible.

General Rosecrans: I wish you to do nothing merely for revenge but that what you may do may be solely done with reference to the security of the future.

General Pope: Please ascertain whether General Fisk's administration is as good as it might be, and answer me.

General Grant: General Sheridan says, "If the thing be pressed I think that Lee will surrender." Let the thing be pressed.

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