



# California Historical Society

## *Quarterly*

VOLUME XVI



NUMBER 3

SEPTEMBER 1937



## HENRY WAGER HALLECK

*Lincoln's Chief-of-Staff*

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DURING the War Between the States there were four major-generals of the United States Army, all of whom had been civil residents and home owners in California. They were John Charles Frémont, William Tecumseh Sherman, Henry Wager Halleck and Joseph Hooker.

Frémont, the "Pathfinder," and Sherman have not only left us their memoirs, but about their eventful lives volumes have been written. With Hooker and Halleck the case is far different. Their California careers have been neglected and it is only incidentally that their names come to the fore in the pages of the history of the War, although each earned for himself a picturesque sobriquet: Hooker, that of "Fighting Joe" and Halleck, that of "Old Brains."

At the end of the amazing decade of the fifties in California, one of the most distinguished citizens of San Francisco was Henry Wager Halleck, a man of culture, of practical affairs, and wealthy. He lived in his unpretentious home in the exclusive South Park district on Rincon Hill at the corner of Second and Folsom streets.

Halleck, born (January 16, 1815) and bred in Oneida County, New York, among the sturdy post-Revolutionary folk of the Mohawk Valley, was a descendant of Peter Hallock, who came to America in 1640. When he was ready for higher education, a generous relative, Henry Wager, sent him to Union College; and later he entered West Point Military Academy, from which he

was graduated in 1839, number three in a class of thirty-one. He remained at the Academy for two more years as assistant professor of engineering.<sup>1</sup>

The studious young lieutenant was then sent to Europe on a tour of observation, accompanying the entourage of Napoleon's beloved Field-Marshal Bertrand, who had been on a visit to America. After spending some time in study in France, he was granted the rare privilege of inspecting the fortifications. On his return, he was put to work on the defenses of New York harbor. His *Report on the Means of National Defense*, published by Congress, led to an invitation to deliver a series of lectures at the Lowell Institute of Boston on "The Elements of Military Art and Science." These lectures were published a year later by Lippincott and Company and were used as a textbook at West Point. The book was republished later in a revised edition for volunteer officers of the Civil War. This, briefly, is the preparatory background of Henry Wager Halleck for his subsequent career.<sup>2</sup>

Soon after the War with Mexico began early in 1846, he was ordered with a small group of young West Pointers to California to cooperate with the Navy. On the U. S. store-ship *Lexington*, were two close friends, Lieutenants William T. Sherman and E. O. C. Ord. While those two men used every opportunity to snare a deep-sea bird or fish, young Halleck of the Engineers contentedly continued his translation from the French of Baron Jomini's, *The Political and Military Life of Napoleon*.<sup>3</sup>

The officers came ashore at peaceful appearing Monterey in January, 1847, to find the quarrel between Commodore Stockton, General Kearny, and Lieutenant-Colonel Frémont in full swing. "Who the devil is Governor of California?" they wanted to know. When Commodore Shubrick replaced Commodore Stockton very soon afterward, Halleck became his aide-de-camp along the Mexican coast and for a very brief period was Lieutenant-Governor of Mazatlan.<sup>4</sup> After participating in a couple of unsanguinary battles with the Mexicans in Lower California in 1847, he was brevetted a captain. Upon his return to Monterey, General R. B. Mason, who had replaced General Kearny as Military Governor of California, made him his "Secretary of State" and Auditor of Revenues.

Halleck took hold of his duties with the correct competence expected of an officer so highly trained and educated. During the remainder of the War his duties were comparatively simple; but after the news of peace with Mexico reached California in August, 1848, they became difficult and exacting. The Mexican laws which were adequate for the Spanish-speaking people were unsuited for the land-hungry Americans who were pouring in. New and modified laws were necessary, and Halleck set about formulating such a system. He based his course of action on the principles laid down by the United States Supreme Court in regard to the occupation of Florida, which also had been acquired by treaty. He collected and examined all that he could find concerning laws and regulations governing the granting and

selling of public and mission lands and private property, and succeeded in compiling a translation and digest of the workable portion of the Mexican laws for the use of courts and justices.<sup>5</sup>

During this period, Captain Halleck, always the student, burrowed into the California archives. The result was a careful study of land titles, and the report he wrote for the Government at Washington was largely, if not entirely, responsible for the first United States Land Commission of 1851, which was sent to California to settle the tangle of title claims.<sup>6</sup>

Halleck was probably the first American to appreciate early California history; certainly he was the very first collector of Californiana. While in Monterey, he began to gather Spanish documents which eventually numbered several hundred, consisting of some 4,000 pages; originals and transcripts of originals—official reports of missions, explorations, Indian uprisings, governmental and political matters, taken from the heart of the records at Monterey. This acquisition, though a bit high-handed and, possibly, illegal, was historically fortunate. For if Edwin M. Stanton, agent for the Federal Archives Commission had not found them while on his mission to California in 1858, and had not deposited the documents in the Surveyor-General's office in San Francisco where they belonged, Hubert Howe Bancroft could not have had them copied and thus have preserved their contents. As it is, copies of Halleck's documents and transcripts are now secure in the Bancroft Library at the University of California—all that remains of the archives of territorial California, the originals having been lost in the San Francisco earthquake and fire in 1906.<sup>7</sup>

To meet the constantly increasing perplexities of government greatly augmented by the Gold Rush, meetings were held in San Francisco, Monterey, Sonoma and San Jose for the purpose of forming a Provisional Territorial Government. By spring of 1849, every kind and make of human being was headed for California. With them came General Bennet Riley to replace Governor Mason. Governor Riley promptly reappointed Halleck acting Secretary of State, and "sat down with him to study the situation," which was rapidly growing more serious. Congress had just failed, after a six months' struggle, to grant a territorial government, so General Riley issued a proclamation—the work largely of his able Secretary, it was said—in which it was proposed to set up temporary machinery of government and to call a general convention, on September 1, 1849, to form a state constitution.<sup>8</sup>

The proclamation was posted in all public places. Riley and his staff, on horseback, traveled the mining regions to explain the propositions contained in the proclamation. The business of constitution-making seemed something visionary to many and a matter of no importance to the indifferent.

When the Convention met in Monterey in September, Halleck was there as its secretary and, in a large measure, its brains. Because he had given

more studious thought to the subject than any other, he was under General Riley's instructions to help frame the new constitution. Halleck played a quietly important rôle in the birth throes of that historic document. Reverend Samuel H. Willey, member from Monterey, referred to Halleck as a "man of practical sense and balanced judgment"; he wrote that Halleck sat near the door of that upper room in Colton Hall, that nothing escaped his watchful eye and that, though he made few if any speeches, he was more responsible for the important articles in the constitution than any other man; that because of his unassuming, unobtrusive, and reasonable manner he aroused no antagonism. Rather he enjoyed the respect and confidence of the entire Convention and his name was one of the most prominent ones before the assembly for one of the United States senatorships that were won by "pathfinder" Frémont and politician Gwin. The Reverend Dr. Willey remembered also that when the Convention was over, the first man he heard spoken of "for the first Governor of the new State-to-be, was Secretary Halleck."<sup>9</sup>

Halleck, however, possessed no talent for either the romantic gesture or the art of politics. His personality was too indifferent, too coolly reserved and scholarly. Sheer respect was not enough with which to win elective public office. And for the same reason, perhaps, his important contribution to public service during the years from 1846 to 1849 is but little remembered in California. When General Riley was about to leave the West, he generously said on a public occasion, "My success in the affairs of California is owing to the efficient aid rendered me by Captain Halleck, the Secretary of State."<sup>10</sup>

Halleck remained as Secretary of State until he resigned during December of 1849. He knew that henceforth civil government in California would take on the usual partner, politics; and like his friend Lieutenant Sherman, Halleck had no liking for the thing they both had no talent for. In any case, his weather eye was open for a business career. With his knowledge of California land titles a valuable practical asset, he saw an opportunity. So did two San Francisco law partners. They combined their professional resources and for one month ran the following "business card" on the front page of the *Alta California*:

Halleck, Peachy and Billings, Attorneys and Solicitors, San Francisco. Office, the room at present occupied by Peachy and Billings, on the north side of Sacramento Street, between Kearny and Dupont Sts. Mr. Billings Commissioner for New York, Massachusetts and Connecticut. H. Wager Halleck, Arch'd Carey Peachy, Frederick Billings, January 1, 1850.<sup>11</sup>

This combination came to be the ablest legal firm on the Pacific Coast, unsurpassed even to this day. In addition to its general interests, it won the lion's share of land claim cases, handling over eight hundred of the fourteen hundred such cases on the court's dockets. An excellent description of the firm is that by Robert E. Cowan: "When I began, almost forty years ago,

to collect and study the sources of local history, naturally I found a more or less extensive, occasionally intimate, acquaintance with many prominent members of that earlier generation, sundry judges and lawyers amongst others. Many times have I heard that remarkable firm discussed, and without a dissenting vote. Halleck prepared the law points and wrote the briefs and rarely were they torn open in the courts. Peachy, a Virginian, handsome, polished and eloquent, invariably presented the arguments, and even in the forensic wealth of the bar of that day, there were very few who could surpass him. Billings, accomplished, affable, a graceful orator, equally at home in church, club, or bar-room, brought in the business."<sup>12</sup>

Within the year, they were guaranteeing land titles for such prominent men as Robert F. Stockton and G. W. Aspinwall,<sup>13</sup> and within three years after the firm announced itself to the public they built (in 1853) an imposing four-story office building that for years was the finest west of the Rockies.

Besides the 28 basement and first story stores, this immense pile contains 150 offices in its several floors,—all of which are furnished in gas, grates, &c. and with water in every hall, from an Artesian well in the court; all the openings are provided with substantial iron shutters; the brick walls are of great solidity, built on piles and carefully anchored and tied. . . . The whole edifice is a beautiful piece of Italian architecture, and has few rivals in the oldest settled countries.<sup>14</sup>

The building has been in constant use ever since. Much of the romance, good and bad, of early San Francisco was formed in and about it. Editor James King of William, for instance, shot down on the streets, was carried into the building; after a few suffering days there, his death once more aroused determined Vigilantes. Until the event of national Prohibition, it harbored in its corner, "The Bank Exchange," which for very many of its last years belonged to "Pisco John," who mixed his punches on the fringe of the Barbary Coast. The old structure escaped the earthquake and fire of 1906 and still stands, a busy business block, on Montgomery between Washington and Merchant streets, "modernized" but still eloquent of the past.

During the busy year of building the Montgomery Block, Halleck—unquestionably its construction engineer—remained on active duty in the army and was promoted from "brevet" rank to the regular grade of captain. He was active as an army inspector and engineer of lighthouses, as a member of a board of engineers on fortifications, and even as judge advocate. During this same year of 1853, Halleck was admitted to the bar, yet for three years he had been the senior member of a rapidly growing legal firm. Another curious matter: though he was rapidly enlarging his participation in private enterprise, he did not resign from the U. S. Army until August 1, 1854.

During the "fabulous '50's" in San Francisco, Halleck, in spite of a coolly reserved and none too friendly personality, grew into deserved prominence. He was a successful lawyer and business man and an author of scientific books and pamphlets. He was Director-General of the famous New Al-

maden (Quicksilver) Company, a director of the banking house of Parrott and Company, and President of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad to San Jose.<sup>15</sup> He was also a shrewd buyer of San Francisco real estate, and owner of the 30,000 acre Rancho Nicasio in Marin County.<sup>16</sup> His estate at his death showed a net value of \$474,773.00.<sup>17</sup>

Halleck was as culturally eminent as he was financially successful, during those climbing years. He had long since written a book, *Bitumen, Its Varieties and Uses*. He published a *Collection of Mining Laws of Spain and Mexico*, and translated *Dr. Fooz on the Law of Mines*. He wrote about seven-hundred pages of an intended History of California, and, as a hobby, indulged in the study of heraldry.<sup>18</sup> He was a member of the first board of directors of the Society of California Pioneers, and as early as 1853, with others, attempted to create through the state legislature, a Historical Society of the State of California.<sup>19</sup> He had had occasion to refuse an offer by Harvard University to fill its chair of professor of engineering. He also refused a seat on the bench of the Supreme Court of California, and later refused the opportunity, at least, to become a United States Senator.<sup>20</sup> Not the least of his achievements was his marriage (in 1855) to the granddaughter of Alexander Hamilton.<sup>21</sup> For all this, San Francisco named a little business street—sixteen feet wide and three blocks long—in his honor and later erected his statue in Golden Gate Park.<sup>22</sup>

Henry Wager Halleck was one of San Francisco's foremost and distinguished citizens and his law firm the outstandingly successful one for eleven eventful years.

Then, early in 1861, for reasons not clear, the closely knit firm of Halleck, Peachy and Billings was, by mutual agreement, very quietly dissolved. The firm's library was sold at auction on April 22,<sup>23</sup> three days before the news of the firing on Fort Sumter reached California. The reasons for the dissolution, therefore, were possibly, after all, merely a reflection of the acute misunderstanding between the North and the South—for Peachy was a Virginian.<sup>24</sup>

About a year before the war began, Governor Downey had appointed Halleck a brigadier-general (2nd Division) of the State Militia. Old General Scott, in a fret over the wholesale resignation of his West-Point-trained officers, looked with hope to the highly reputed Halleck. He easily persuaded President Lincoln to appoint him to high command. In August of 1861, four months after the fall of Sumter, Halleck received a commission of major-general in the regular army, and was summoned to Washington.

As soon as he could arrange his private affairs, including the completion of a 907-page book, considered very valuable at the time, on *International Law and Laws of War*,<sup>25</sup> Halleck left San Francisco (October 10) "on the S. S. *St. Louis* with his wife and child and two servants. A detachment of Pioneer California Guards will give him a salute of 13 guns on the Folsom

Street Wharf. California will lose one of her most patriotic and useful citizens."<sup>26</sup>

Reaching Washington a month later, he was immediately sent west to smooth out the military mess in Missouri, in which his fellow California pioneer, Major-General Frémont, had so completely entangled himself. The big job of reorganization was done with cool impartiality and without any fuss or newspaper trumpeting. One correspondent at this time referred to him as a "sallow-faced, quiet, observant gentleman, going about his business."<sup>27</sup> Another commented on his "very striking resemblance to some Methodist parson dressed in regimentals, a wide, stiff-brimmed black felt hat sticking on the back of his head."<sup>28</sup> The work of organization and administration was admittedly effective; yet he found time to write an article "On the Art of War," a brief analysis "for a popular understanding and for officers of militia and volunteers." It was published in the *Hand Book Almanac* for 1862.<sup>29</sup>

Halleck seemed to have made good. Out on the western front he took over what was left of Frémont's soldiers, reorganized and drilled them into the armies with which Grant and Sherman finally released Ole Man Mississippi, "to flow [in the words of Lincoln] unvexed to the sea." Then he wisely advised the President immediately to correct the military error of having three independent commands in the West. Lincoln saw the point and placed Halleck in command.

Lincoln and the North continued to think well of Halleck. In contrast with the East, things went well in the West, even though those things—such as the capture of Forts McHenry and Donelson—were actually done by subordinate generals. Of this period, General Sherman wrote that "General Halleck was a man of great capacity, of large acquirements, and at the time possessed the confidence of the country, and of most of the army. I held him in high estimation, and gave him credit for the combinations which had resulted in placing this magnificent army of a hundred thousand men, well equipped and provided, with a good base at Corinth from which he could move in any direction."<sup>30</sup> That was generous praise. The two were still old friends from California, but Sherman had also voiced his impatience by complaining that "Halleck moved on Corinth with pick and shovel."<sup>31</sup> After Grant's bloody "victory" at Shiloh, Halleck moved so cautiously on Corinth that it took a month to reach it, only to find that Beauregard's outnumbered army was gone. It was during this campaign that Halleck's soldiers began calling him "Old Brains."<sup>32</sup> Halleck knew his books, but the books did not tell him how to fight. He knew his military fundamentals but he could or would not translate them into practical results.

Lincoln soon came to realize all this in his anxious search for a fighter. He was disappointed in Halleck, yet continued to be impressed by him. Halleck was a book-knowledged, scientific soldier, and might be of great



value in an advisory position; and Lincoln needed scientific advice. When he was elected captain by a company of raw recruits for the Black Hawk War, Lincoln knew only how to "forward" and "halt" it. Actually he had certain qualities that would have made him a great general if he had had any military training. In July, 1862, after the Army of the West under Halleck had executed, at a snail's pace, a perfectly formed and perfectly guarded advance on Corinth, Lincoln grew as impatient as the subordinate generals were. He ordered Halleck to Washington, and placed him in the professorial chair of "general-in-chief" of all the armies.<sup>33</sup>

It seemed a wise decision. Its immediate happy effect was to give Grant, a subordinate general, his opportunity. Grant used it with effectiveness even as he, with an affected innocence, found ways of quietly side-stepping some of Halleck's apparently meddlesome orders as he fought his way on the long, hard road to Vicksburg. But the ultimate good result of Lincoln's act is not so clear; for, from this time on, the presence of Halleck in Washington seemed, to contemporaries and to later students, a drag on the progress of winning the War. And everybody in Washington came to see it, it was said, except Lincoln. Halleck, himself, soon came to think that, as he wrote his wife, he was "in a political hell."<sup>34</sup>

After he arrived in Washington, the old enmity between himself and Stanton over the title fight for the New Almaden Mine in California immediately bobbed up, which prejudiced both in their necessarily close official relations. A few days before Halleck arrived, Stanton had said to General McClellan that Halleck was "probably the greatest scoundrel and most barefaced villain in America," and that he had convicted Halleck of perjury in open court in the New Almaden quicksilver case in San Francisco (in 1858). When Halleck arrived, he went to General McClellan with practically the same accusations against Stanton.<sup>35</sup> Such was the feeling between the Secretary of War and the General-in-Chief of the Armies! Lincoln had to weave a wise course between such deep grudges, just as he had to find his difficult way through the maze of incompetence, selfish ambitions, jealousies, and political entrenchments of many of his high military and administrative officers.

To write the complete story of Halleck would be to write a nearly complete history of the Civil War, for his influence runs through the story's entire fabric. It irritated his contemporaries and is still confusing to students of the war. The seemingly strange part of that story lies in the fact that Lincoln retained him at his post when nearly every general (especially Hooker and later Sherman) bristled at the very mention of Halleck and when all of Lincoln's cabinet members and many members of Congress and others in Washington disliked him utterly.<sup>36</sup>

When General Burnside, after his disastrous failure at Fredericksburg, contemplated another move that caused Lincoln more worry, the President wrote to Halleck:

My dear Sir: General Burnside wishes to cross the Rappahannock with his army, but his grand division commanders all oppose the movement. If in such a difficulty as this you do not help you fail me precisely in the point for which I sought your assistance. You know what General Burnside's plan is, and it is my wish that you go with him to the ground, examine it as far as practicable, confer with the officers, getting their judgment and ascertaining their temper—in a word, gather all the elements for forming a judgment of your own, and then tell General Burnside that you do or that you do not approve his plan. Your military skill is useless to me if you will not do this.<sup>37</sup>

Halleck resented Lincoln's impatient letter, and asked that it be withdrawn. It was evident, he wrote, that he could not perform the duties of his office satisfactorily to the President and to himself. He then sent his resignation to Secretary of War Stanton. Rather than lose his military consultant, Lincoln not only refused the resignation but withdrew the letter.<sup>38</sup>

Even when Grant was finally shifted from the Mississippi Valley to the Potomac River to be made a lieutenant-general and to succeed Halleck as General-in-Chief of all the Armies, Lincoln held on to him by raising him to the anomalous position of "Chief-of-Staff,"<sup>39</sup> and kept him there in the face of all opposition.

The vote in Congress over the bill to revive the grade of lieutenant-general for Grant passed the House by 86 to 41. The 2 to 1 vote to supersede Halleck with a higher-ranking general was largely an expression of the general dissatisfaction. Correspondent Noah Brooks of California wrote, "I doubt if the most outspoken and malignant copperhead in Congress was so disliked, so railed against, and so reviled by the more radical members as this unfortunate general-in-chief."<sup>40</sup> Congressman Riddle, of Ohio, in a reference to the emotional gesture of Congress in prodigally scattering its vote of thanks to the leaders of the Army and Navy, wrote, sarcastically, "We thanked everybody, even Halleck—though I never knew what for."<sup>41</sup>

Secretary of the Navy Welles, in his diary, gave the reasons for Lincoln's retention of Halleck in his exalted place, ". . . the President said, and all the Cabinet concurred in the opinion, that Halleck—though intelligent and educated—would be an indifferent general in the field, that he shirked responsibility in his present position, that he, in short, is a moral coward, worth but little except as a critic and director of operations."<sup>42</sup> Lincoln felt the need of a critic and director of operations so he created, tentatively, such a position. Halleck was the first and last Chief-of-Staff for thirty-eight years. In 1903, the General Staff Act provided for the present military Chief-of-Staff to the President, thus endorsing Lincoln's idea.

To weigh the value of Major-General Halleck and his conduct in the War requires of the student an open mind, one free from prejudice. No one so far has thought it worth while. To the casual reader of the War's literature, his name leaves an unpleasant impression; in every book it is to be found, frequently and prominently, to explain military situations, but never with a word of praise for the man. Most writers in mentioning him add nothing personal; others, however, do not hesitate to express their sometimes even intemperate dislike.

Secretary of the Treasury Chase struck at both Lincoln and Halleck when he told Secretary Welles that "Halleck . . . was good for nothing and everybody knew it but the President."<sup>43</sup> Welles wrote in his diary during September, 1863, that:

Halleck originates nothing, anticipates nothing; takes no responsibility, plans nothing, suggests nothing, is good for nothing. His being at headquarters is a national misfortune. In this whole summer's campaign I have been unable to see, hear, or obtain evidence of power, or will, or talent, or originality on the part of General Halleck. He has suggested nothing, decided nothing, done nothing but scold and smoke and scratch his elbows. Is it possible the energies of the nation should be wasted by the incapacity of such a man?<sup>44</sup>

An example of the unfortunate impression of Halleck made on students of Lincoln's generals is that of Clarence Edward Macartney:

The strange thing is not that Lincoln should have chosen Halleck for commander-in-chief in the summer of 1862, for many of the best military minds and the sentiment of the people at large approved the choice. The strange thing is that after his incapacity had been so strikingly demonstrated Lincoln should have kept him in command and constantly deferred to his judgment. Originating nothing, taking no responsibility in times of danger or crisis, letting the burden rest on the shoulders of other men, afraid to make use of the powerful weapon that Lincoln had placed in his hands when he made him the supreme commander of the armies of the Union, Halleck is a contemptible, almost ridiculous figure. One would laugh at him, were it not for the fact that his incompetence was one of the chief factors in the repeated and tragic reverses which befell the Union armies. Selected by Lincoln and kept in power by Lincoln, Halleck did more injury to the cause of the North than any other man. "Good for nothing," as Chase put it, "and everybody knew it but Lincoln."<sup>45</sup>

Which, of course, was not wholly true. Halleck was probably the principal cause of Lincoln's contemporary reputation of being a poor chooser of men. But Halleck was much better than "good for nothing," and Lincoln knew it, even if everybody else did not. He was as well aware of Halleck's incapacities as he was of his capabilities, and doubtlessly considered him the very best man available for the particularly trying position for which he was intended. Generals that were better fighters than Halleck were sorely needed in the field.

One regrets that Halleck failed to write about himself and about President Lincoln, since he had both the time and the ability to do it. "When I ventured, one day," wrote Noah Brooks "to say to the President that Halleck was disliked because many people supposed that he was too timid and hesitating in his military conduct, Mr. Lincoln's face at once wore a sober, almost severe, expression as he said that he was Halleck's friend because nobody else was."<sup>46</sup> No general in the war was more pampered and tolerated by Lincoln than Halleck. No general saw more of Lincoln from the beginning to the end of Lincoln's four years in Washington than Halleck. He was one of the privileged few grouped about the dying President on that black emotional night when Stanton is reported to have said, "There lies the greatest executive the world has ever seen." Yet in all the vast literature of the War, Halleck, notable as an author, is never quoted as expressing a

reminiscence or a sentiment for or against or about Lincoln. Halleck left no memoirs nor was he ever asked to contribute to a printed memorial or published tribute to his chief.

The mystery in the story of General Halleck lies not so much in the fact that President Lincoln retained him in an exalted position, but rather it lies in the striking unlikeness of the General to his own former self. Halleck had been a brilliant theorist and an effectual man in practical affairs in California. Called into the war at the very useful age of 46, he became the "best hated" and most ineffectual high official in the army. In spite of his profound erudition in law, engineering and military science, he appears to all writers, and most contemporaries, to have been "a practical incompetent."<sup>47</sup> Why? Was it because of some mental or physical deterioration? Were the words "bloated, sallow-faced, watery-eyed, indolent, bewildered, uncertain, stupid, elbow-scratching, moral coward," unjustly applied because of his personal unpopularity? Or were those words descriptive? If this be so, then the suspicions of Attorney-General Bates may not have arisen from malicious gossip. "Today Isaac Newton told me, as a great secret, that General Halleck was a confirmed opium eater—as he is very credibly informed. That he is something bloated, and with watery-eyes, is apparent. But whether from brandy or opium I cannot tell."<sup>48</sup> This possibility, for good reasons, is highly improbable, and yet there remains the baffling contrast between Captain Henry Wager Halleck of San Francisco and Major-General Henry Halleck, A.M., LL.D. of Washington, D. C.

After the occupation of Richmond, Halleck was sent to that very difficult district on the James River, but, "If newspaper reports are to be relied upon his administration of affairs there did not give satisfaction."<sup>49</sup> After formal peace he was transferred to the Department of the Pacific where in his own words, he was happy to be back in his old home. San Francisco gave him no tumultuous welcome, but the harbor guns and a war vessel greeted his ship with a "thunderous salute" as it sailed through the Golden Gate, and General McDowell and Staff formally welcomed him at the Occidental Hotel.<sup>50</sup>

Four years later, in 1869, to make place for ailing General George Thomas, Halleck was transferred to the Department of the South. The *Alta California* predicted that he would resign rather than leave his beloved California. But Halleck said he would not resign until after he had worked out the difficult problem in the southern department.<sup>51</sup> The Associated Veterans of the Mexican War presented him with a "solid gold badge," and the *Alta* commented editorially on the marked ability with which he administered the affairs of his department, and that he was leaving California with "the confidence of the citizens" and the "cordial esteem of his subordinate officers."<sup>52</sup> Before three more years had passed, he suddenly died in Louisville, Kentucky, January 11, 1872, at the age of 57.<sup>53</sup> It was a real family tragedy for, though the

General had not known popular acclaim, he and his wife, Elizabeth Hamilton, had achieved domestic happiness.<sup>64</sup>

The reasons why the history of the War Between the States will always be of great interest are its deeply entangled origins, its great personalities, and that it was the last great war before the mechanization of the instruments of war, when generals rode in the saddle and flashed their swords. And throughout the maelstrom of that four-year drama, persists the amazing enigma of the profound, obtrusive, elbow-scratching, military adviser to President Lincoln. To say that Major-General Halleck is distinguished in the War's history only as Abraham Lincoln's most persistent blunder, is unfair to both. Rather, it can be safely said that a wise and very great man found him useful.

#### NOTES

1. Appleton's *Encyclopedia of American Biography*, New York, 1887, III, 48-51.
2. *Ibid*; *Dictionary of American Biography*, N. Y., 1928, VIII, 150-52.
3. *Memoirs of General William T. Sherman*, N. Y., 1891, I, 44; Lewis, Lloyd, *Sherman: Fighting Prophet*, N. Y., 1932, p. 75.
4. Lieutenant Wise states that "the last named appointment was ably filled by Lieut. Halleck, of U. S. Engineers, who, from his military and scientific knowledge, was of the greatest assistance to the expedition." Wise, Lieut. [Henry A.], *Los Gringos*, New York, 1849, p. 146.
5. *Translation and Digest of Such Portions of the Mexican Laws of March 20th and May 23d, 1837, as are Supposed to be Still in Force and Adapted to the Present Condition of California; with an Introduction and Notes*, by J. [H. W.] Halleck, *Attorney at Law*, and W. E. P. Hartnell, *Government Translator*, San Francisco: Printed at the Office of the Alta California, 1849. Wagner, Henry R., *California Imprints*, Berkeley, California, 1922, p. 19.
6. 31st Congress, 1st Session, Ho. of Rep., Ex. Doc. No. 17, Message of the President of the United States Transmitting information in answer to a resolution of the House of the 31st of December, 1849, on the subject of California and New Mexico, pp. 118-33; 10,000 copies of Halleck's report were printed, February 6, 1850.
7. Halleck Collection in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley; correspondence between Mr. Robert E. Cowan and Miss Anne Bancroft. Many Halleck documents were given to Mr. Cowan by Col. George W. Grannis, confidential secretary to the firm of Halleck, Peachy and Billings.
8. Willey, Rev. S. H., "Recollections of General Halleck," in *Overland Monthly*, Vol. IX, No. 1, July, 1872; 31st Cong., 1st Sess., H. R., Ex. Doc. No. 17, pp. 776-80. See also, Ellison, Joseph, "The Struggle for Civil Government in California, 1846-1850," Chapter III, in *California Historical Society Quarterly*, X, 129-64.
9. Willey, *op. cit.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Tri-weekly Alta California*, Jan. 14-Feb. 5, 1850.
12. Robert E. Cowan to Anne Bancroft, to both of whom the author is greatly indebted for their generous aid.
13. *Alta California*, Dec. 18, 1850.
14. Le Count & Strong's *San Francisco City Directory*, 1854, p. 190; see also, Shuck, Oscar T., *Representative and Leading Men of the Pacific*, S. F., 1870, pp. 375-83.
15. *San Francisco City Directory*, 1856; Shuck, *Representative Men*.
16. Plat on file in Public Survey Office, San Francisco.
17. *Alta California*, April 24, 1873.
18. Cowan, *op. cit.*

19. *Journal of the Fourth Session of the Legislature of the State of California*, Jan.-May, 1853, p. 104.

20. Willey, *op. cit.*

21. Halleck had become engaged to Elizabeth Hamilton while on a visit East in 1854 and they were married on April 11, 1855, in New York City. Letters in the Cowan Collection, Bancroft Library. Halleck was 16 years older than his wife.

22. Halleck Street, however, is mentioned in advertizements in the *Alta Californias* of 1850, so Halleck was honored by the city for his services to the State prior to that date.

23. *Alta California*, April 11-22, 1861. The library was advertized as the largest and finest on the Pacific Coast, amounting to 3,000 volumes.

24. Land title business, in which Halleck excelled, had been greatly decreased, making Halleck a less valuable member of the firm.

25. A copy is in the library of the University of California at Berkeley.

26. *Alta California*, Sept. 18, 1861.

27. "Penograph" of General Halleck, *Alta California*, May 29, 1862.

28. Biography in *Men of the Time*, Dime Series, Beadle and Co., Sept., 1862.

29. Knight, *Hand-Book Almanac for the Pacific States . . . for the year 1862*, S. F. 1862.

30. Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 282.

31. Nicolay, John George, and Hay, John, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, N. Y., 1890, V, 338.

32. *Dictionary of American Biography*, VIII, 150.

33. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, V, 356.

34. Letter dated Aug. 9, 1862; *Dict. of Amer. Biog.*, *loc. cit.*

35. *McClelland's Own Story*, N. Y., 1887, p. 137.

36. Noah Brooks, special correspondent of the *Sacramento Union*, wrote that "ill natured people were ready to suggest that the rebels might be guilty of petty larceny if they stole Halleck from his home in Georgetown Heights." *Washington in Lincoln's Time*, New York, 1895, p. 175. Brooks gives a fairly decent description of Halleck: his "figure was tall and well proportioned, though somewhat inclined to portliness. His face was exceedingly grave and saturnine, his complexion sallow and dark, and his habitual bearing was that of a man sure of himself and distrustful of everybody else. But in the privacy of his own house he could relax to geniality; he liked a good story, and could tell one with gusto. Halleck was a close student of human nature, and while his smoothly shaven face was a complete mask for his own emotions and thoughts, his large dark penetrating eyes looked through one with searching thoroughness." *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.

37. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VI, 215.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

39. War Department General Order No. 98, March 21, 1864.

40. Brooks, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-40.

41. Riddle, Albert Gallatin, *Recollections of War Times, 1860-1865*, N. Y., 1895, p. 128.

42. *The Diary of Gideon Welles*, Boston & N. Y., 1911, I, 180.

43. *Ibid.*, I, 448.

44. *Ibid.*, I, 373.

45. Macartney, Clarence Edward, *Lincoln and His Generals*, Boston, 1925, p. 202.

46. Brooks, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

47. The Washington public soon formed the habit of disliking General Halleck and thinking of him as dull and stupid, or worse. Gideon Welles, in his *Diary*, vents his irritations on Halleck constantly, but in a quieter mood writes that "Lincoln's . . . own convictions and conclusions are infinitely superior to Halleck's,—even in military operations more sensible and most correct always,—but yet he [Lincoln] says, 'It being strictly a military question, it is proper I should defer to Halleck, whom I have called here to counsel, advise, and direct in these matters, where he is an expert.' I question whether he should be considered an expert. I look upon Halleck as a pretty

good scholarly critic of other men's deeds and acts, but as incapable of originating or directing military operations." *Diary*, I, 364.

That was the generally accepted opinion of Halleck, so Lincoln, on the defensive, constantly sought to excuse and build him up. In the author's mind there is a growing suspicion that Halleck knowingly, or possibly even unknowingly, was President Lincoln's scapegoat. His position was one of responsibility without authority and a peculiarly trying one for a man of Halleck's ungenial personality. A better understanding of General Halleck may help explain many obscure spots in the history of the Civil War. He needs an unprejudiced deep student of that War. Only very recently there has come, from the East, the promise of such a biographical study.

48. *The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866*, Washington, D. C., 1933, p. 293. Isaac Newton, appointed first U. S. Commissioner of Agriculture by Lincoln in 1862, was father of the Department of Agriculture, the Weather Bureau, and the Meteorological Service. *Dict. of Amer. Biog.*, XIII, 472-73. Hay fever explains, partly at least, the "watery eyes" that Bates, Welles, and others commented on. In a letter to General Sherman (Sept. 16, 1864) he wrote, "I have been suffering from my annual attack of 'coryza' or hay cold. It affects my eyes so much that I can scarcely see to write." Sherman, *Memoirs*, II, 116. Apparently, Halleck was handicapped also by some chronic organic source of ill health. He lived only seven years after the War, dying of "congestion of the brain, following a prolonged disorder of the liver." *Army and Navy Journal*, Jan. 13, 1872, p. 352.

49. *Alta California*, Aug. 26, 1865.

50. *Ibid.* A member of General Halleck's staff who arrived with him was Lieut. Col. R. M. Scott, son of the Rev. Dr. Scott of San Francisco whose effigy was burned because of his southern sympathies. The *Alta* did not fail to comment on the fact.

51. *Ibid.*, March 18, 1869.

52. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1869.

53. General and Mrs. Halleck and their 26-year-old son are buried in Green Wood Cemetery, Brooklyn, N. Y. Letter from W. E. Marsh, Elmwood, Conn.

54. *Encyclopedia Amer. Biog.*, *loc. cit.* Dates and other biographical data without references in this list can be found in the *Encyclopedia* and the *Dictionary of American Biography*, Shuck's *Representative Men of the Pacific*, *The California Scrap Book*, and the *Army and Navy Journal*, Jan. 13, 1872.