

# “FIGHTING JOE” HOOKER

By MILTON H. SHUTES

“FIGHTING JOE” HOOKER is a name that brings to mind vague recollections of some United States military hero. To the Grand Army of the Republic and its contemporaries, it was the designation of a popular commander of the great Army of the Potomac. The sobriquet, “Fighting Joe,” was originated by a newspaper correspondent and was despised by Hooker himself because it sounded too much like “fighting fool,” which he swore he was not. Its inspiration was the courage, determination, and fighting spirit that Brigadier General Hooker displayed at Williamsburg near Richmond on May 5, 1862, when his corps bore the brunt of the battle, and during which he continued to direct his artillery after he was thrown in the mud by his dying horse during a torrent of rain and bullets. “Who ish dat general mit a white horse and a red face?” exclaimed a German-American officer, “He cares nottin’ for bullets.”<sup>1</sup>

Joseph Hooker, of Sonoma, California, came to be a great division commander and one of the outstanding personalities of the War Between the States.

He was born in Hadley, Massachusetts, on November 13, 1814. His grandfather was Captain Joseph Hooker, who served in the Revolutionary War. He went to Hopkins Academy in Hadley and then to West Point Military Academy, from which he was graduated with William T. Sherman in 1837. Hooker ranked number 29 in his class, Sherman number 9, and Halleck, number 3. After service in the Seminole War in Florida, and along the Canadian border, he was returned to West Point as Adjutant of the Academy. In the Mexican War, he showed his talents under Generals Winfield S. Scott, Zachary Taylor and Persifor F. Smith. After the Battle of Monterey, he was breveted a captain; after that of National Bridge, a major; and after Chapultepec, a lieutenant colonel. He also soldiered with devastating effect among the señoritas of Mexico City, by whom he was known as “El Capitan Hermoso.”<sup>2</sup> In fact he was considered the best looking officer in the United States Army—tall, well-physiqued, and handsome of face, with wavy dark bronze hair, pink cheeks, compelling blue eyes, a frank, affable demeanor, and a vigorous, vivid manner of speech—a magnificent young Mars, ready to drink, love, or fight.

At the conclusion of the Mexican War, Hooker remained with General Smith as his adjutant and, with Major E. R. S. Canby and Captain H. R. W. Heath, accompanied him across the Isthmus to ship at Panama City for California. With a swarm of excited 49’ers they boarded the new S. S. *Cali-*



**"FIGHTING JOE" HOOKER**

From a photograph made in San Francisco in 1872, in the possession of  
Mr. J. P. Serres, the present owner of the Hooker Ranch.

*fornia*<sup>3</sup> which was on its maiden voyage from New York to San Francisco—the first American steamship on the Pacific Ocean. Colonel Hooker disembarked at San Diego, ordered there as a member of a federal commission, chaired by John B. Weller, to fix the border line between Mexico and California.<sup>4</sup> Four months later, he boarded the new S. S. *Panama*, also on its maiden voyage around the Horn—the third of those three famous new side-wheelers of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. On it, he met such famous argonauts as Hall McAllister, William M. Gwin, F. F. Low, and Mrs. John C. Frémont. The steamer reached San Francisco on June 4, 1849.<sup>5</sup>

Hooker immediately rejoined General Smith at Sonoma, where the early American settlers had attempted the formation of a California republic and raised the famous Bear Flag. Here he lived in a house on the southwest corner of the plaza.<sup>6</sup> On the far side of the plaza and across from the Mission San Francisco de Solano was the Blue Wing Tavern where whiskey and poker lured the fun-starved trapper and rancher.<sup>7</sup> It was a place frequently colored by the visits of that black prince of California banditry, Joaquin Murieta. Facing the plaza was the great domicile of General M. G. Vallejo where boarded Lieutenant George Stoneman—later a famous cavalry commander and still later a governor of California.

Army life in California, however, did not thrill Colonel Hooker any more than it did Lieutenants Sherman and Grant. Even the Indians showed scarcely any fight. In a letter to General Riley, Lieutenant Colonel Hooker recommended, concerning a proposed expedition against the Indians at Clear Lake, that citizens should not be permitted to bring captive Indians back as prisoners, for by so doing, this would be used as a pretext to make "servants" of them on their ranchos.<sup>8</sup> Hooker thought that the Indians were more in need of protection than were the settlers.

Soon after Colonel Hooker arrived in Sonoma, he fell, as did Jack London, under the spell of the "Valley of the Moon." With the thought of retirement from the Army in mind, he acquired, in 1851, the title to 550 fertile acres about three miles to the westward of Sonoma. He succeeded also in securing a two-year's leave of absence from the Army.<sup>9</sup> The settlers in Sonoma and in other valleys nearby dreamed of a pleasanter El Dorado than that to be found along the rivers flowing from the Sierra. They saw themselves as Southern planters of California, possessors of large holdings worked by cheap Chinese and Indian labor. Hooker built a snug little house on his farm, of finished lumber that came 'round the Horn, and planted some ten acres in grapes near the site of the Hooker Oaks Service Station on the highway from Sonoma to Santa Rosa.<sup>10</sup>

On February 21, 1853, Hooker resigned his commission in the Army. By training, temperament, and lack of domestic responsibilities he was exactly fitted for army life. His resignation seems to have been a mistake, for he proceeded to fail as a planter, business man, and politician.

The Sonoma planters, as they preferred to call themselves, were unskilled in the art of viticulture and their wine proved unpalatable. Hooker tried to grow potatoes, but potatoes did better at Bodega on the coast. His one recorded business venture ended in the courts. With the help of his military connections, he received a contract from the Army to furnish cord-wood for the arsenal at Benicia and for the Presidio at San Francisco—at \$15 a cord. He managed to scow 585 cords down the creek to the Bay. Hooker furnished the scow and contracted to pay one Peter Albertson \$3,000 to make the deliveries. But Peter and vigorous Joe did not get along. Because Peter received only \$1,800, he attached Hooker's fourteen yoke of oxen. The court compelled Hooker to pay Peter \$802 more, allowing him \$398, however, for damage to the scow that resulted from Peter's alleged carelessness. Even so there was room for a nice profit.<sup>11</sup>

On one more occasion Hooker was brought into court. This time it was a little matter of a gambling debt. He had signed over a note for \$485 to a fellow bon-vivant who passed it on to a third party. Hooker refused to acknowledge the note, and the judge sustained his contention that the transferred note was non-negotiable and therefore uncollectible in court.<sup>12</sup>

By 1853, the markets were glutted, the prices of produce dropped, and the cost of labor rose.<sup>13</sup> Hooker decided to sell out. First, as required by the Federal Land Commission, the title to his rancho must be confirmed. He filed claim on March 2, 1853, to his portion of the Lazaro Peña Agua Caliente grant in Sonoma township. He gave an option to purchase his farm to a valley settler, but later George E. Watriss of San Francisco, who liked the springs, fine trees, and wild game on the place, desired it. Hooker agreed to meet him in San Francisco at the office of John Parrott, the banker, on the last day of his neighbor's option. He held his watch in hand until the option expired at noon, then turned to Mr. Watriss and said, "It's twelve o'clock, my word has been fulfilled, the place is yours."<sup>14</sup> Mr. Watriss took over the farm and its three liens, each bearing two per cent monthly interest, and built a substantial stone home on it.<sup>15</sup> By some arrangement Hooker continued to occupy the cottage he had built.

During the same year (1853) he was elected county road overseer.<sup>16</sup> This introduced him into local politics, in which he succeeded only in playing a prominent part in what is said to be one of the fondest traditions of Sonoma County—the kidnaping of the county seat from the town of Sonoma and removing it to Santa Rosa. The affair was intimately involved in the race for the office of State assemblyman between Hooker and Lindsay Carson (brother of Kit Carson) on the Democratic ticket, and Judge Robert Hopkins and James M. Bennett, of Bennett Valley, on the Settlers ticket. The latter was a short-lived party based on the peculiarly trying disputes over land titles, but at the time it was a strong one. Hooker was popular, and the campaign which involved the county seat issue grew very bitter. The elec-

tion of September 7, 1853, resulted in a tie. In the second election, held on October 29, Hooker and Carson—through the importation of voters, it was charged—lost the race by thirteen votes. On March 28, 1854, a bill to transfer the county seat to Santa Rosa was passed by the State Legislature. After considerable delay through the serving of injunctions against the transfer, a few impatient Santa Rosans made a very swift and stealthy transfer of the county records during a dark midnight hour.<sup>17</sup>

Hooker continued to live on the farm near Sonoma until 1858, when he was appointed superintendent of military roads in Oregon. He built the road from Scottsburg to Cañon City and farther south, which for a long time was known as the Hooker road.<sup>18</sup> A year later (1859-1861) he was made a colonel in the California militia,<sup>19</sup> in which Henry W. Halleck was a brigadier general. Because of this, it was thought, began the robust animosity each had for the other. Hooker was long remembered as the handsome plumed commander of an encampment of militia at the State Fair at Sacramento.<sup>20</sup>

In 1860, came the nomination and election of the Lincoln-Hamlin ticket and threats of war. The war talk was of more interest to Democrat Hooker than was the Republican victory. By spring he had gathered a regiment of volunteers and drilled them until he learned that California regiments were not to be accepted for enlistment in the East. Then he offered his personal services, but Lieutenant General Scott, "Old Fuss and Feathers," had not forgotten an unguarded criticism of himself by Hooker in Mexico.<sup>21</sup> Hooker's petitions were ignored. The restive Californian decided to see to the matter himself. Because he lacked sufficient funds for the trip to Washington, \$1,000 was given him by one or more of his blue-chip tavern friends.<sup>22</sup>

When Hooker arrived in San Francisco, he received a formal invitation from his fellow officers of the State Militia to a dinner in his honor (May 20, 1861) at the American Exchange. The invitation was signed by Brigadier General H. W. Halleck and others. But Colonel Hooker was very busy preparing to sail the next day. In a cordially worded note, he begged to be excused, as he needed every moment for preparation. "I go," he wrote them, "with a will and a purpose to prove my faith in and devotion to, the Union, and to find a place, however humble. . . ." <sup>23</sup>

Joseph Hooker was never humble; possibly he really meant to be so in that hour of emotion. When he reached Washington, there was no commission, "however humble," for him, nor was there one in prospect. Like Grant he went begging. He even got his credentials before President Lincoln, who wrote the following notation to General J. K. F. Mansfield then in command in Washington: "The enclosed papers of Colonel Joseph Hooker speak for themselves. He desires to have command of a regiment. Ought he to have it, and can it be done and how? Please consult General Scott, and say if he and you would like Colonel Hooker to have a command." <sup>24</sup>

But Lieutenant General Scott, of course, did not "like" Colonel Hooker to have a command. After repeated failures, Hooker faced the prospect of a humiliating return to California. In desperation he went with a friend to the White House, where everyone seemed to take his troubles "to the President"—ostensibly just a friendly sort of call before he started homeward.

President Lincoln seemed always to be glad to see a Californian. The President apparently took a quick liking to Hooker, for he was built on the pattern of Lincoln's swashbuckling friend, Ward Lamon—big, rosy cheeked, vivid, assertive, intelligent and full of self-confidence—a handsome D'Artagnan. He and Lamon were almost everything that Lincoln was not, and for that reason were unconsciously attractive to him. The readers of the California papers later enjoyed in the "Letter from St. Louis," the story of what is commonly related as Hooker's first meeting with President Lincoln.

Hooker was eyewitness to the public show of the battle of Bull Run in July. A few days later, he made his call on President Lincoln and was introduced as "Captain." It was his last opportunity.

Mr. President, I am not Captain Hooker, but I once was Lieutenant Colonel Hooker in the regular Army. I was lately a farmer in California, but since the Rebellion broke out I have been here trying to get into the service, and I find that I am not wanted. I am about to return home, but before going I was anxious to pay my respects to you, and to express my wishes for your personal welfare and success in quelling this Rebellion. And I want to say one word more. I was at Bull Run the other day, Mr. President, and it is no vanity in me to say that I am a damned sight better general than any you had on that field.<sup>25</sup>

Very soon after, Hooker was made a colonel of volunteers and proceeded with such efficiency in organizing a very large regiment of raw New England troops stationed at Bladenburg, Maryland, that by September he was made a brigadier general, and his commission antedated to May 17, 1861.<sup>26</sup>

Commenting later on that meeting, Lincoln said that "his eye was steady and clear—his manner not half so confident as his words, . . . he had the air of a man of sense and intelligence, who thoroughly believed in himself. I was impressed. . . . In every position in which he has been put, General Hooker has equaled the expectations which his self-confidence excited."<sup>27</sup> Though this was said before the battle of Chancellorsville (May, 1863), Lincoln had good reason to place confidence in Hooker, for he became one of the very best assault leaders in the whole Army. He was what Lincoln liked—an impetuous attacker and a desperate fighter.

Clarence E. Macartney has suggested that "there must have been something in common between these two men, recognized by the acute Lincoln at the very first encounter, for Lincoln was more intimate with Hooker, talked with him more, than with any other commander of the Army of the Potomac."<sup>28</sup> And Gideon Welles, Lincoln's Secretary of the Navy, wrote that "the President . . . has a personal liking for Hooker and clings to him when

others give way”; also that “the President has been partial to Hooker in all this time. . . .”<sup>29</sup>

In the Army of the Potomac Hooker fought intelligently and courageously through one campaign after another under McClellan, Pope, and Burnside, until January, 1863, when he himself was placed in command of the Army of the Potomac to face Lee and Jackson. There was considerable division of opinion about placing him in so responsible a position. Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury, was a powerful backer, and others were likewise urging Hooker as the man to succeed Burnside. Grant and Sherman were still busy at Vicksburg and not yet recognized for their real abilities. Halleck, of course, was opposed to Hooker, and others hesitated to offer a favorable opinion of him. They recalled the battle on the Peninsula at Williamsburg when Hooker’s enthusiasm had mounted to rashness; he was accused of withholding honest support to Burnside in the ghastly failure at Fredericksburg; and he had just rashly criticized the President himself, suggesting that what the country sorely and immediately needed was a dictator.

Lincoln, however, saw the good in Hooker and hopefully placed him in command. With all his faults he might be just the man; McClellan was a great organizer but not an enthusiastic fighter, while Hooker was both. Still, Lincoln was a bit uneasy and not unmindful of Hooker’s criticism of himself. He wrote his new commander a remarkable letter that has been frequently quoted in books on Lincoln and is now famous as characteristically Lincoln-like and very revealing both of himself and of Hooker. It is a clear and frank statement of opinion, commending Hooker for his virtues, but letting him know that his faults were recognized and that he feared rashness as the greatest of them.

General: I have placed you at the head of the Army of the Potomac. Of course I have done this upon what appear to me sufficient reasons, and yet I think it is best for you to know that there are some things in regard to which I am not quite satisfied with you. I believe you to be a brave and skilful soldier, which, of course, I like. I also believe you do not mix politics with your profession, in which you are right. You have confidence in yourself, which is a valuable if not an indispensable quality. You are ambitious, which, within reasonable bounds, does good rather than harm; but I think that during General Burnside’s command of the Army you have taken counsel of your ambition and thwarted him as much as you could, in which you did a great wrong to the country and to a most meritorious and honorable brother officer. I have heard, in such a way as to believe it, of your recently saying that both the army and the government needed a dictator. Of course, it was not for this, but in spite of this, that I have given you the command. Only those generals who gain successes can set up as dictators. What I now ask of you is military success, and I will risk the dictatorship. The government will support you to the utmost of its ability, which is neither more nor less than it has done and will do for all its commanders. I much fear that the spirit which you have aided to infuse into the army, of criticizing their commander and withholding confidence from him, will now turn upon you. I shall assist you as far as I can to put it down. Neither you nor Napoleon, if he were alive again, could get

any good out an army while such a spirit prevails in it. And now beware of rashness. Beware of rashness, but with energy and sleepless vigilance go forward and give us victories.<sup>30</sup>

That letter doubtlessly deepened the pink in Hooker's cheeks. Yet he reacted just as Lincoln hoped he would. Hooker's first comment was, "He talks to me like a father." He then swore that he would never answer that letter until he had given Lincoln a great victory or could address him from Richmond.<sup>31</sup> The letter was never answered, of course; but at the time, it stirred and steadied him.

With his elevation to the command of the Army of the Potomac, Hooker immediately set about reorganizing Burnside's beaten, dispirited army. He first put a stop to desertion and its causes by instituting a new system of furloughs; he adopted a system of distinctive badges for the different corps so they could be easily recognized; and he abolished the nuisance of the Grand Divisions.<sup>32</sup> In his administrative work, he used a forceful manner of speech and writing and was given to epigrammatic sentences such as, "No one will consider the duties of the day as ended until the duties that it brings have been discharged." But the best piece of reorganization showed itself in the cavalry service. "Whoever heard of a dead cavalryman,"<sup>33</sup> was Hooker's famous caustic comment before he proceeded to consolidate the cavalry under an able leader and whip the commands into real fighting battle units. From the time that he took command, the superiority of the Confederate cavalry disappeared. The Union cavalry under Generals Pleasanton and Stoneman began to meet their opponents on equal terms. Within the month, Hooker had transformed a broken and utterly discouraged army into an efficient and compact one of 100,000 well-drilled infantry, 1,200 well-equipped cavalry, and 400 well-oiled guns. But above all, he had so instilled it with his own enthusiasm that it wholly survived the battle of Chancellorsville without even the consciousness of defeat, and then went right on to win at Gettysburg. Hooker did a splendid job; the army knew it and showed it by their cheers as he passed along the lines. All this plus his past record, his frank manner, and his fine soldierly appearance gained him a great popularity in the army and throughout the country.

For a while California was inordinately proud of its soldier. A big white thoroughbred stallion bought in New Orleans was presented to him "by some California friends" as coming from the California boys in his army.<sup>34</sup> A San Francisco harness firm—Main and Winchester—gave him an elaborately complete set of "horse trappings" and a complete parade and campaign outfit for himself. The latter was made up of everything "that the heart of a California rider could desire."<sup>35</sup>

Previous to this, before Hooker had reached top place in the Army of the Potomac, California admirers had subscribed \$2,000 for a dress sword which was made by John W. Tucker, a well-known jeweler of San Fran-



cisco. When the sword was finished it was learned that a commanding general could not receive so costly a gift from a group of individuals or any ordinary civic body. It became necessary that the State officially present the sword; it was sent to Sacramento and remained on display at the Capital until the Legislature passed a resolution to purchase and present it to the popular hero.<sup>36</sup> On its blade was engraved: "Presented to Major General Joseph Hooker, of the State of California, in token of his distinguished bravery in the Battles of Williamsburg, Fair Oaks, Glendale, Malvern Hills, Bull Run, Germantown, South Mountain and Antietam."<sup>37</sup>

California was proud of Fighting Joe—its Number One soldier—for California, like Hooker, was in favor of a vigorous prosecution of the war and believed in fighting it out to the end. So the Legislature passed (March 23, 1863) a "concurrent resolution" of recognition of the "favor reflected on the state by his splendid services" and conveyed to him an expression of its satisfaction and confidence. Hooker sent his thanks, and wrote that his name was listed in the Army Register as a representative of his adopted State and that next to an honorable record and complete success of his fighting cause, he could esteem nothing higher than California's good opinion of the manner in which he had performed his duties.<sup>38</sup>

Early in April of '63, the revitalized army was ready for inspection. The President, Mrs. Lincoln, their son, "Tad," Attorney-General Bates, and three guests from the Pacific Coast—Dr. A. G. Henry, of Washington Territory; Captain Crawford, of Oregon; and Noah Brooks, of the Sacramento *Union*—paid a memorable visit to Hooker and his army at Falmouth, Virginia. While on guard duty in Washington, the California boys had seen Lincoln; now they saw him in the new saddle from San Francisco, astride Hooker's big brown horse, with the commanding General sitting handsomely at the President's left on the big white one.

Lincoln was impressed with Hooker's army, but Brooks reminds us that he was a little concerned over Hooker's too oft repeated remark "when we take Richmond," and confidentially said to Brooks, "This is the most depressing thing about Hooker. It seems to me that he is over confident." Brooks also wrote that when Lincoln heard that Hooker had said with that magnificent air of his, in reference to the famous Lincoln-to-Hooker letter, "After I have been to Richmond I shall have the letter published in the newspapers. It will be amusing." Lincoln's comment was, "Poor Hooker! I'm afraid he is incorrigible."<sup>39</sup>

Yet Lincoln's misgivings were submerged in a great hope. He liked Hooker personally and he liked his proven fighting qualities and military smartness, so much so that he was ready to risk his egotism, jealousies, and rashness. He knew Hooker was about to oppose Lee with a battle plan that was, and still is, considered a superb one. Hooker swore to his officers, "My plans are perfect—may God have mercy on General Lee for I will have

none!"<sup>40</sup> And some of his staff called it "a masterpiece." But Lincoln was profoundly anxious. He was in desperate need of a victory. He wanted every man in the Army of the Potomac to feel his own and the battle's importance. That is why he and his entourage went to Falmouth for that impressive Grand Review.

Hooker had a splendid plan for the victory, "simple, bold, and practical"—a concededly brilliant arrangement—and then spoilt it. In a terrible moment of bewildered consciousness of his tremendous responsibility, he faltered; the glorious victory that should have been his went to Robert E. Lee. Hooker's greatest weakness, after all, was not the rashness that Lincoln feared; it was Hooker's unsuspected fear of himself.

By the end of April, Hooker began his well-thought-out movement which culminated in the Battle of Chancellorsville. The story of the battle is recorded in many books. General Lee beat a brilliant sure-fire scheme and a splendid army of 100,000 men with his 60,000. Hooker lost 16,000 soldiers, and Lee lost 12,000 and the great Stonewall Jackson; but Lee won the battle that Hooker was sure he himself would win, that he could and should have won, had he not faltered. Some said that Hooker was wounded, some said that he was drunk, but Hooker himself said that he was not hit by a shell, and he was not drunk, but, "For once I lost confidence in Hooker," he confessed, "and that is all there is to it."<sup>41</sup> And that was honest.

So hopeful and so eager for a victory that he had a right to anticipate, Lincoln was never so anguished with disappointment and discouragement. Noah Brooks said:

I shall never forget that picture of despair. He held a telegram in his hand, and as he closed the door and came towards us, I mechanically noticed that his face, usually sallow, was ashen in hue. The paper on the wall behind him was of the tint known as "French gray," and even in that moment of sorrow and dread expectation I vaguely took in the thought that the complexion of the anguished President's visage was almost exactly like that of the wall. He gave me the telegram and in a voice trembling with emotion, said, "Read it—news from the army." (The telegram was from Hooker's chief-of-staff, Butterfield, confirming the rumor that the army had retreated across the river.) The appearance of the President as I read aloud those fateful words, was piteous. Never, as long as I knew him, did he seem so broken up, so dispirited and so ghostlike. Claspings his hands behind his back, he walked up and down the room, saying, "My God, my God, what will the country say! What will the country say!"<sup>42</sup>

William O. Stoddard, Lincoln's No. 3 Private Secretary, wrote that it "was an awful day in Washington." Letters that he had to inspect, from friend and foe, told of discontent, anger and despondency. John Hay, Secretary No. 2, stuck his head in the door and announced that Stanton had said that "this is the darkest hour of the war." It was 9:00 P. M. when Seward, Stanton, Halleck and others walked slowly out of Lincoln's room, leaving him alone with his thoughts. Young Stoddard worked at his desk signing the President's name to land title documents until three in the morning and

all the while the pacing of the President's sentry-like feet sounded in his ears.<sup>43</sup>

The next morning Lincoln, with General Halleck, hurried to Hooker's headquarters by steamer and carriage through a pouring rain. There he found things not so sorry as he feared.<sup>44</sup> Hooker was still looking fit and confident and he had rescued his army intact. His entire First Corps under General Reynolds did not get into the fight at all. When Hooker realized that Lee and Jackson had "out-foxed" him, he wisely, or unwisely, withdrew his forces. Though it was a terrible blow to the North, Lincoln encouraged Hooker; he wanted Hooker to move, urging him to outline another campaign. "If you have not [a plan] please inform me, so that I, incompetent as I may be, can try and assist in some plan for the army."<sup>45</sup>

Robert E. Lee, himself, helped furnish the plan as, at last on the offensive, he thrust his advance deep into Pennsylvania. Hooker correctly predicted Lee's intentions and formed his plan, which became a campaign of skillful and efficient movement that maneuvered Lee into position at Gettysburg. He actually predicted two weeks in advance that the little town of Gettysburg would mark the location of the coming battle!<sup>46</sup> Hooker "seemed to have recovered all that keenness of insight and steadiness of judgment which was obscured for a while at Chancellorsville."<sup>47</sup>

As the two great forces, the Army of the Potomac under Hooker and the Army of Northern Virginia under Lee, were about to meet again, Lincoln and the military leaders realized that the coming battle would be a great and decisive one. Lincoln was again terribly uneasy. His heavy feet continued to wear down the red roses in his Brussels carpet when he should have been asleep. The Federal Army must win this time; the North and all that he was passionately striving for needed it badly. Though appreciative of Hooker's skill and propitious position and the healthy spirit of his army, the sunken eyes of the President were dulled with foreboding. He feared the calm, sagacious, victory-minded Lee.

The relations between Hooker and General-in-Chief Halleck had become unendurable. The instinctive dislike between them that dated from the early days in California had developed into an active antipathy. Hooker knew that Halleck opposed his advancement in command, and Hooker's retaliatory caustic comments returned promptly to Halleck's ears. Also the friendly and direct communications between Lincoln and Hooker greatly annoyed Halleck. And every act of each was misunderstood by the other.<sup>48</sup>

As the impending contact with Lee approached, Hooker showed signs of nervousness in his requests for reinforcements. He especially asked for the 11,000 soldiers which he considered as unnecessarily held at Harper's Ferry. When General Halleck at Washington refused his request, Hooker, in a great pet resigned his command as an act of protest. The public joined Hooker's criticism of Halleck's unreasonable act. The *Alta California*

printed an article entitled "Halleck's Key," which it picked from Hooker's published question, "What is the use of holding the key after the door is smashed?" Lee had no more use for Harper's Ferry, so why keep 11,000 needed soldiers guarding it? In it the *Alta* condemned Halleck and did not fail to recall that Halleck had given the Harper's Ferry force to General Meade when he had asked for it.<sup>49</sup>

To Hooker's apparent surprise and chagrin—possibly to his secret relief—Lincoln promptly accepted his resignation (June 27). Lincoln held that any general who resigns his command on the eve of battle should always have his resignation accepted.<sup>50</sup> Certain ones in Washington believed that Lincoln adroitly created the situation which compelled Hooker's resignation.

Whatever Hooker's disappointment may have been, he accepted Lincoln's order with dignity. Awakened from sleep in the dead of night by his successor, General Meade, and Colonel James A. Hardie, Lincoln's messenger, he congratulated Meade in his usual affable manner and assisted him in taking over the command. In the morning, he formally introduced General Meade to the amazed Army of the Potomac, complimented him to it as a brave and accomplished officer and said that his sorrow at leaving was relieved by the conviction that the army would yield to his successor, "a willing and hearty support." "With the earnest prayer that the triumph of its arms may bring success worthy of it and the nation, I bid it farewell." After an emotional good-bye to officer friends, he boarded "the cars" for Baltimore.<sup>51</sup>

Meade took over the army and followed Hooker's line of campaign: he even asked for and obtained most of the troops at Harper's Ferry and went on to win at Gettysburg.

After impatiently waiting three days for orders at Baltimore, Hooker proceeded to Washington, where he was immediately placed under arrest by General Halleck for visiting the Capital without leave.<sup>52</sup> It was an act that Secretaries Nicolay and Hay characterized as "entirely legal but most ungracious."<sup>53</sup> The public thought so too. Intensely devoted to the cause of the Federal Government, Hooker showed no signs of soreheadedness. His one thought was to get back into the fight. Anxious to participate in the battle he had looked forward to, he asked President Lincoln for General Meade's Fifth Corps in the Army of the Potomac.<sup>54</sup> General Meade sympathetically expressed a willingness to accept him, but on second thought changed his mind. So Lincoln had to tell Hooker that he was not wanted; the embarrassment, it was said, was all on Lincoln's side. Hooker understood, and though he loved personal glory he refused to sulk in his tent; and Lincoln believed "that he was too good a man to throw away just because he missed fire once."<sup>55</sup>

Hooker was kept busy in Washington during August writing the report of his last campaign.<sup>56</sup> When an urgent call for help from General Rosecrans came after his defeat at Chickamauga (Sept. 19, 1864), Hooker was

given the survivors of the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps of the Army of the Potomac to form the Twentieth Corps and hurried west. He and his army of 20,000 were transported from the Rapidan River to Washington and thence to Nashville within eight days—a remarkable piece of administrative work on the part of Hooker, his staff, and the railroads, which pleased and astonished the President.<sup>57</sup> Hooker, on arrival, quickly merged his corps into the Army of the Cumberland under the great General George H. Thomas, for whom Hooker had a great admiration. With his veterans, he won new laurels at Chattanooga as he fought his picturesque "Battle Above the Clouds" on Lookout Mountain, and helped Generals Grant, Sherman and Thomas win the victory of Missionary Ridge in the Atlanta Campaign.

When Major General James R. McPherson, able commander of the Army of the Tennessee, was killed (July 23, 1864), Sherman recommended General O. O. Howard, a junior major general under Hooker, to succeed him. This was too much for Hooker who, as the logical successor to McPherson, felt that he had earned the right to his place; and, doubtful of receiving fair treatment from Sherman, he asked to be relieved of his command. "Justice and self-respect alike require my removal from an army in which rank and service are ignored," he said.<sup>58</sup> Sherman wrote home, "I don't regret it; . . . knowing him intimately I honestly preferred Howard."<sup>59</sup> "In this manner General Hooker retired from active service in the field. . . . In the country at large he never lost his popularity, which was founded on a basis of brilliant abilities and honorable service, and gained the final touch of splendid legend in the 'Battle Above the Clouds'."<sup>60</sup> On July 30, 1864, nine months before the war's end, he was placed in command of the Northern Department at Cincinnati. In that city, the handsome fifty year old bachelor, met and later (October 3, 1865) married Miss Olivia Groesback, the sister of a prominent Congressman.<sup>61</sup>

During September, 1864, Hooker was in New York and attended a great Union League meeting at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Always popular with the public, his appearance on the platform "started an outburst of enthusiasm that that building had never before witnessed." One article reporting the affair was entitled "Rapturous Reception of Fighting Joe Hooker." The crowd, one-third of whom were women, sprang involuntarily to their feet and cheered. "The hero of many battles bowed his acknowledgement and after repeated calls, responded in a brief speech." He said that "the government has been slow, the people have been fast and have led the government, but the latter has come along. . . ." Here was a chance to say a generous word for the President whose re-election was soon coming up and who had personally and repeatedly given Hooker opportunity. Yet all that he was reported to have added was, "—and on the whole has done tolerably well."<sup>62</sup>

Hooker soon came to realize that the Government had done more than tolerably well as he witnessed the Nation's grief from Lincoln's funeral train. He was in command, as grand marshal of the funeral parade in Springfield, Illinois, from the old State Capitol building to the hillside vault in Woodlawn Cemetery.<sup>63</sup>

On his return from Springfield, he was stationed in New York City in command of the Department of the East, and a year later (August 23, 1866), in Detroit, in command of the Department of the Lakes. Here his army career was brought to an end by a stroke of apoplexy. With partial recovery and a leave of absence, he and his wife—also ailing—sought European spas. They soon returned—he was no better and she was worse. He petitioned for retirement, which was granted October 15, 1868, with full rank of major general. In the same year (on July 15) his wife died, three years after the marriage.

By 1872, General Hooker was well enough to visit California. Though the once splendid specimen was broken physically, he wanted to see California again and his old haunts—the ranch, the plaza and the Blue Wing Tavern at Sonoma. The city of Vallejo, especially, made preparations for a great reception. He entered it by the old Sulphur Springs Road and was met like a returning conqueror by the Society of California Pioneers, the G. A. R. and other organizations. It was a big day. During a speech, he took the opportunity to censure the Government's treatment of the people of the South; he considered the southern people then as he did when fighting them, "brave brethren equalled nowhere on earth." In the afternoon, he left the celebrating city for his former home in Sonoma.<sup>64</sup> He stayed with Mr. Watriss on his old farm. Mr. Watriss told the present owner of the place that Hooker enjoyed recalling old times in Sonoma County and showed signs of emotion as he saw reminders of his former physical vigor. He also related how the General was forever explaining the Battle of Chancellorsville.

For five years more, General Hooker lived on—a broken, querulous old man, whose favorite topic was his complaint against Sherman, Meade and McClellan.<sup>65</sup> Living alone in the Garden City Hotel at Garden City, Long Island, with faithful "Tom," his colored valet, attending him, "Fighting Joe" Hooker died suddenly at the age of 64 after thirteen years of partial paralysis.<sup>66</sup> His large military funeral was held in the Presbyterian Church in Madison Square, New York City, and his body was laid away beside that of his wife, in Spring Grove Cemetery in Cincinnati.<sup>67</sup> At the head of his casket there was "a rich floral pillow from California," on which purple buds spelled "California Pioneers" against a white background.<sup>68</sup>

Hooker left a handsome fortune—stocks, bonds and Cincinnati real estate, but no memoirs or letters; nothing from himself to question the criticisms of his contemporaries or historians. The literature of the War contains for Hooker both blame and praise. One cannot resist the feeling of regret that

was expressed by Secretaries Nicolay and Hay over Hooker's loss of the command of the Army of the Potomac:

He had never exhibited more vigor and ability, more insight and capacity, than in this fortnight which preceded his resignation. Every step of the way from Falmouth to Frederick he had known when to move and when to halt, when to strike and when to refrain from striking. When he was relieved he was on his way to the very point where Lee considered his armor the weakest. If he had remained in command, with his clearness of vision and boldness of planning, joined with that impetuosity of attack which he showed on every occasion except once in his life, it is easy to imagine what splendid results he might have accomplished for the cause he had so intensely at heart.<sup>69</sup>

He possessed, however, certain unfortunate habits of conduct that dragged him down from the spot of opportunity on which Abraham Lincoln had deliberately and hopefully placed him. Hooker loved his liquor, but no more, perhaps, than did Grant and Sheridan and other successful leaders.<sup>70</sup> Other generals possessed an appetite for military glory that expressed itself too often at the expense of their commanding officers and even of the battle itself, but "The most indiscreet and outspoken of all was naturally General Hooker, whose words always readily 'escaped the fence of his teeth'."<sup>71</sup> He was too quick with censure and criticism; much of it open and sincere but unnecessary, very imprudent, and actually harmful. And in addition to these traits of which Lincoln was long aware, Hooker possessed a fatal trick of character, a defective mechanism of the subconscious, that sent an inhibitory impulse to his self-confidence and the "Fighting Joe" spirit which, at the great moment of consummation of a brilliant approach, caused him to falter. This was expressed by General Stoneman who said that Hooker was the most brilliant of all the generals up to a certain point, but when his limitations were reached he was utterly helpless; that he, Stoneman, had been in Sonoma with Hooker and knew him thoroughly. "He could play the best game of poker I ever saw until it came to the point when he should go a thousand better, and then he would flunk."<sup>72</sup>

If Lincoln had not placed Hooker in supreme command against so great a combination as Lee and Jackson, Hooker might have been another Howard or a Sheridan; but the failure at Chancellorsville cost him his aura of fame. Yet he was one of the top generals of the Northern Armies with a record of real contribution to the success of the Federal cause. On the debit side of the ledger is Chancellorsville; yet one might contend that by his reorganization and handling of the great Army of the Potomac before and after that battle, he compensated for his own and even for Burnside's defeat. Certainly the army he turned over to Meade was a far better one than either he or Burnside received. On the credit side, remains his brilliant record as a subordinate general. As commander of the Army of the Potomac, there should be remembered the record of his quick grasp of the critical situation, in which he found himself confronted by Lee's northern push into Pennsylvania, which threatened Washington, and the superb maneuvering of his army into its

favorable position for the decisive Battle of Gettysburg. Congress seemed to think so for it "resolved," with enthusiasm:

That the gratitude of the American people and the thanks of their representatives in Congress, are due, and are hereby tendered to Major-General Joseph Hooker, and the officers and soldiers of the Army of the Potomac, for the skill, energy and endurance which first covered Washington and Baltimore from the meditated blow of the advancing and powerful army of rebels led by General Robert E. Lee, and to Major-General George G. Meade, Major-General Oliver O. Howard, and the officers and soldiers of that army, for the skill and heroic valor which at Gettysburg repulsed, defeated and drove back, broken and dispirited, beyond the Rappahannock, the veteran army of the rebellion.<sup>73</sup>

There is an equestrian statue of Hooker in front of the State House in Boston, but in California nothing is dedicated to his memory other than a small and inadequately dated bronze tablet by the highway, marking his home and farm near historic Sonoma.

#### NOTES

1. Blake, Henry N., *Three Years in the Army of the Potomac*, Boston, 1865, p. 136.
2. Macartney, Clarence Edward, *Lincoln and His Generals*, Philadelphia, 1926, p. 138.
3. Crosby, Elisha O., MS of reminiscences, in possession of Harold C. Holmes, Oakland.
4. "A California Hero," *Alta California*, June 29, 1862. Hereafter referred to as *Alta*.
5. Eldredge, Zoeth Skinner, *History of California*, III, 210.
6. [Munro-Fraser, J. P.,] *History of Sonoma County*, S. F.: Alley, Bowen & Co., 1880, pp. 445-46. It was the house of Jacob Leese wherein lived General Persifor F. Smith, Colonel Joseph Hooker, Major Phil Kearny, and Captains Stone and Stoneman.
7. Statement on plaque attached to present structure which was once the Blue Wing Tavern.
8. Hittell, Theodore H., *History of California*, S. F., 1897, III, 897.
9. Letter from J. Hooker to Brigadier General R. Jones, dated Sonoma, Dec. 29, 1851, in the possession of the author.
10. As told by George Watriss to John P. Serres, present owner of the "Hooker Ranch."
11. San Francisco *Examiner*, June 24, 1921, p. 10. Information therein credited to Superior Judge Emmet Seawell.
12. *Ibid.*
13. San Francisco *Herald*, Oct. 31, 1853, and *Alta*, Nov. 11, 1853.
14. Watriss to Serres.
15. *History of Sonoma County*, *op. cit.*, pp. 143-44.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid. Examiner*, *op. cit.*
18. Bancroft, *History of Oregon*, San Francisco, 1888, II, 306.
19. Bancroft, however, states that Hooker was living in the Rogue River Valley in Oregon, when the Civil War broke out. Biographical footnote in *History of Oregon*, *op. cit.*
20. San Francisco *Bulletin*, Nov. 1, 1879.
21. "... in the disloyalty of General Pillow to General Scott at the end of the war, Hooker by giving testimony in favor of Pillow, incurred the enmity of Scott." *Dictionary of American Biography*, IX, 197.
22. Macartney, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
23. *Alta*, May 21, 1861.



24. Seitz, Don C., *Lincoln the Politician*, N. Y., 1931, p. 260.
25. *Alta*, Feb. 28, 1863.
26. Barton, William E., *President Lincoln*, Indianapolis, 1933, II, 515.
27. *Alta*, Feb. 28, 1863.
28. Macartney, *op. cit.*, p. 137.
29. *The Diary of Gideon Welles*, Boston & N. Y., 1911, I, 229.
30. Nicolay, John George, and Hay, John, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, N. Y., 1890, VII, 88. For a further discussion of Hooker's appointment, see article signed "Z," "General Hooker's Appointment and Removal," in *Century Magazine*, XXXIII, 106-11 (November, 1886).
31. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.* "That is just such a letter as a father might write to a son. It is a beautiful letter, and although I think he was harder on me than I deserved, I will say that I love the man who wrote it." Tarbell, Ida M., *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, N. Y., 1900, VIII, 136.
32. Swinton, William, *Campaign of the Army of the Potomac*, N. Y., 1866, p. 268.
33. Macartney, *op. cit.*, p. 146.
34. *San Francisco Bulletin*, May 8 and May 15, 1863.
35. *Alta*, Jan. 26, 1863; May 8, 29, and 30, 1863.
36. *Alta*, Feb. 24, 1863. Popular subscription for the sword was begun in September, 1862. *Alta*, Sept. 21, 1862.
37. *Alta*, Feb. 28, 1863. This issue also contained eleven verses on "The Gallant Fighting Joe."
38. *Alta*, March 23, 1863; Hittell, *op. cit.*, IV, 371.
39. Brooks, Noah, *Abraham Lincoln, A Biography for Young People*, N. Y., 1888, pp. 373-74. Hooker told some of his staff officers that God Almighty could not prevent him from winning a victory, and when he told Lincoln that he would either win a victory or be in hell, Lincoln suggested that he "carry plenty of water along." *Reminiscences of Winfield S. Hancock*, N. Y., 1887, p. 94.
40. *Dict. of Amer. Biog.*, N. Y., 1928, IX, 196.
41. Macartney, *op. cit.*, p. 154.
42. Brooks, Noah, *Washington in Lincoln's Time*, N. Y., 1895, p. 57.
43. Stoddard, William O., *Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life*, N. Y., 1884, p. 386.
44. Secretary of War Stanton telegraphed Governor Stanford, "There has been no serious disaster to the organization and efficiency of the army." *S. F. Bulletin*, May 8, 1863. The *Bulletin* reassured its readers that Hooker's demonstration was not a defeat, merely a failure.
45. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VII, 198.
46. *A Biographical Memorial of General Daniel Butterfield*, N. Y., 1904, p. 332, footnote.
47. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VII, 223.
48. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VII, 213.
49. *Alta*, July 3, 1863; *S. F. Bulletin*, Aug. 14, 1863. "Even if it were the key to Maryland, of what value was the key after the door was smashed in." Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VII, 225.
50. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VII, 228. See also, "Hooker's Appointment and Removal," *Century Magazine*, *loc. cit.*
51. *The Annual Cyclopaedia and Register of Important Events of the Year 1863*, N. Y., 1865, III, 102; *S. F. Bulletin*, July 22, 1863.
52. Coffin, Charles Carlton, *Marching to Victory*, N. Y., 1889, p. 190.
53. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, p. 227.
54. Butterfield, *op. cit.*, VII, 332.
55. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, LX, p. 278.
56. Butterfield, *op. cit.*, p. 135.
57. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VIII, 112; Bates, David Homer, *Lincoln in the Telegraph Office*, N. Y., 1907. "A Remarkable Feat in Railroad Transportation," Chapter XIII, pp. 172-82.

58. *Dict. of Amer. Biog., op. cit.*, IX, 196.
59. *Home Letters of General Sherman*, N. Y., 1909, p. 303.
60. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, IX, p. 278.
61. *Alta*, Nov. 20, 1865.
62. *New York Tribune*, Sept. 23, 1864.
63. Broadside of Order of Funeral Procession. Original in possession of author.
64. *Alta*, June 27, 1872.
65. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, IX, 278.
66. *Alta*, Nov. 14, 1879.
67. Cincinnati *Enquirer*, Nov. 2, 1879.
68. *Alta*, Nov. 8, 1879. Pall-bearers were such prominent men as Generals Hancock, Butterfield and Doubleday, John Jacob Astor, and Charles L. Tiffany. *Alta*, Nov. 6, 1879.
69. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VII, 228.
70. In a letter to an intimate friend dated July 20, 1863, General Butterfield, Hooker's chief-of-staff, wrote concerning him: "I don't know what kind of a sot he is reported to be. I have been with him almost daily since October last up to the date of his being relieved, and I have failed to discover any signs of drunkenness in him. Had I found it to be the case, I should certainly have asked to be relieved from his staff. I found him ever vigilant, faithful and true to his country and his army—a truer patriot than Hooker never breathed." Butterfield, *op. cit.*, p. 132. In 1895, in a speech at a reunion at Chattanooga, General Butterfield referred to certain "reckless statements of his [Hooker's] personal habits and character. From a long service with him and every opportunity to judge and know by personal observation, I denounce these statements as false. The time has come when his old comrades and those who knew him best should set this slander finally at rest." Butterfield, *op. cit.*, p. 331.
71. Nicolay and Hay, *op. cit.*, VI, 213.
72. *Colonel Alexander McClure's Recollections of Half a Century*, Salem, Mass., 1902, p. 348.
73. Macartney, *op. cit.*, p. 164.

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Dates and other biographical data without references in this list can be found in the *Dictionary of American Biography*.