

Sheridan: A Study of Generalship in the Shenandoah

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The battles of Shiloh, Antietam, Gettysburg, and Vicksburg are acknowledged turning points of the American Civil War. The Eastern Theater of the Civil War had been a singularly hostile one to the Union armies up to 1864. The Army of Northern Virginia had defeated the Union Army of the Potomac so many times that Gettysburg seemed an aberration. Then suddenly, in 1864, the Confederate armies in Virginia and Georgia were defeated and practically destroyed. The fundamental factor of the dramatic turn-around in these battlefields was the appointment of Ulysses S. Grant as head of the Union Army and the leadership of General William Tecumseh Sherman. The third great Union Commander of the Civil War, General Philip Sheridan, orchestrated a crushing Union victory in the Shenandoah Valley.

Looking at the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, it is important to analyze it in the context of Sheridan's life and experience. Where did he come from, what had prepared him for the task, and why was he picked? These questions are important, as is the matter of what he did to win the campaign itself. The story of Philip Sheridan's success in the Shenandoah Valley was a product of many things. Union battalion, regiment, division, and corps commanders and their soldiers performed their jobs successfully. But the key factor was that the overall Union Commander proved to be more than capable of accomplishing the mission. General Sheridan proved himself to be one of the greatest generals in this country's history. His skill, tenacity, driving force, and leadership won the Shenandoah Campaign of 1864.

Sheridan came from a humble background. Born to poor Irish parents in 1831, he went on to graduate from West Point in 1853. Surprisingly, this famous cavalry commander of the

Civil War was assigned, upon graduation, to the infantry branch. He was stationed on the West Coast at the outbreak of war. The expansion of the army to meet war demands resulted in Sheridan's promotion to captain, and he was assigned to the 13th United States infantry.¹ The actual manner of his transit from the West Coast to the Eastern Theater is something of a mystery. As General Grant stated, "he was promoted to a captaincy in May, 1861, and before the close of the year managed in some way, I do not know how, to get East."² At that point, General Henry W. Halleck snatched him for administrative duties. Then his career took off with his appointment, by the Governor of Michigan, as commander of the Second Michigan Cavalry, and simultaneously, promotion to Colonel.³ This was to prove a watershed for Sheridan, for he "led his regiment into a half-dozen skirmishes, a daring 180-mile raid, and a masterful battle at Boonville, Missouri, where his 750 troopers routed 4,000 Confederates."⁴ These achievements led to his promotion to Brigadier General only thirty-five days after becoming a Colonel.⁵ He was given command of the eleventh division and at Perryville his division repelled five Confederate assaults and, by doing so, preserved the line and saved Buell's Army. He went on to further renown in the Battle of Stones River, where Major General Rousseau described the scene as follows:

I knew it was infernal in there before I got in, but I was convinced of it when I saw Phil Sheridan, hat in one hand and sword in the other, fighting as if he were the devil incarnate, and swearing as if he had a fresh indulgence from Father Tracy every five minutes.⁶

¹ Edward J. Stackpole, *Sheridan in the Shenandoah: Jubal Early's Nemesis* (Harrisburg: The Stackpole Company, 1961), 109-111, 112.

² U. S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, ed. E. B. Long (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1952), 209.

³ Stackpole, 113, 114.

⁴ Paul Andrew Hutton, *Phil Sheridan and His Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 12.

⁵ Stackpole, 115.

⁶ Hutton, 12-13.

This unbroken string of successes continued through to the Battle of Chattanooga where he came to the attention of Grant. This resulted in Sheridan's joining Grant in the East and his rise to glory.

The stage was set for the Shenandoah Campaign. However, there was one more campaign to be fought by Sheridan before being sent to the Shenandoah. Grant's first assignment for Sheridan was to command the cavalry of the Army of the Potomac.⁷ He achieved much success in that role. One of the principal reasons for that was his attitude toward cavalry tactics. It was in this venue that his experience in both infantry and cavalry had great effect. As stated by Captain DuBois, Sheridan's Medical Director of the Cavalry Corps, Sheridan had a distinct view of cavalry utilization; in effect he wrote that Sheridan had the "power to give the rapidity of movement of cavalry to infantry . . . and . . . to convert cavalry into infantry and to give them the steadiness and discipline of the latter."⁸ At first there was conflict between Sheridan and General George Meade, who was in command of the Army of the Potomac, over the proper role of cavalry. The source of conflict lay in Meade's belief that the cavalry should be used to screen camps and protect the logistics trains. In contrast, Sheridan viewed the role of cavalry as offensive, specifically to provide reconnaissance, raids, and security by destroying hostile cavalry. This came to a head on May 8, 1864, when, after a confrontation, Grant chose to let Sheridan carry out independent operations.⁹ Grant ordered Sheridan to "cut loose from the Army of the Potomac, pass around the left of Lee's army and attack his cavalry."¹⁰ This set the stage for Sheridan's raid into the Confederate rear. The first major encounter of the raid freed four hundred Union Prisoners of War. The key battle of the raid occurred on May 11, 1864, at Yellow Tavern where the Confederate cavalry was defeated and J. E. B. Stuart killed.¹¹

⁷ Stackpole, 117.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 125.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 127-129.

¹⁰ Grant, 378.

¹¹ Stackpole, 134-136.

Thus, Sheridan was an experienced combat commander with an unbeaten record and a talent for independent operations, particularly where cavalry was concerned, and had been thoroughly prepared to undertake independent operations against Jubal Early in the Shenandoah Valley. There was one last prelude to the Shenandoah Valley Campaign and that was Jubal Early's campaign towards Washington through the Valley. On June 12, 1864, General Early received orders to take the 2nd Corps, with artillery attached, to undertake an independent campaign up the Shenandoah and threaten Washington.¹² Early's force defeated General Lou Wallace on July 9, and demonstrated in front of Washington's fortifications on July 11. This was quite frightening to the Union government, and Union forces were immediately summoned to "protect" the Capital. On July 18, a Union division tried to ford the Shenandoah River and was defeated by Early in the Battle of Cool Spring. With two corps, the 6th and 9th Corps, from Grant's army, General Horatio Gouverneur Wright defeated one of Early's infantry divisions two days later; Early retreated after this, convincing General Wright the threat was over and the two corps were returned to Grant. The small force under General George Crook that was left behind to secure the Valley was routed by Early's force at Second Kernstown. Afterwards, Early dispatched a cavalry force to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania to burn the town. That was accomplished with a vengeance.

In any assessment of that campaign one must remember that Early's force was quite small. The continuing victories, blemished only when a vastly superior force fell upon a single of his infantry divisions, can be, in fact had to be, a direct result of the leadership. A large share of credit should be given to Jubal Early. When Grant decided to take decisive action and dispatched the 6th and 19th Corps, augmented by two divisions of cavalry, under General Philip Sheridan to the Shenandoah Valley it was to face an accomplished and formidable foe. The stage had been set, now all that remained to be seen was whether

¹² Jubal A. Early, "In Sight of the Dome of the Capital," in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, ed. Ned Bradford (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), 527.

this cavalry general, Sheridan, had the leadership ability to take on a Confederate army in the Shenandoah.¹³

The situation in the Shenandoah Valley was serious at this point. Sheridan was going to have to enter into a battlefield that had witnessed the defeat of many Union leaders. Would Sheridan fare any better? His abilities were questioned at the very top, especially given the history of Union forces in the Valley. On hearing of Sheridan's appointment:

Lincoln objected because of Sheridan's youth, but youthful audacity was essential if the North was to seal off the Shenandoah breadbasket from Lee. The reputations of Fremont, Banks, Shields, Sigel, and Hunter were shattered campaigning in the valley.¹⁴

Grant issued the order initiating the Shenandoah Valley Campaign on August 5, 1864, and indicated his intent that not only was Early to be crushed, but the Valley was to be eliminated as a supply source for the Confederacy.¹⁵ Upon hearing the news of Sheridan's appointment, General Sherman wrote Grant saying, "I am glad you have given Sheridan the command of the forces to defend Washington. He will worry Early to death."¹⁶ Criticized by some, praised by others, and ordered to conduct a campaign of total destruction, it was time for Sheridan to show whether he had what it would take.

The first action of Sheridan's was auspicious as he, immediately upon establishing a headquarters for his Army of the Shenandoah, was to send for his chief engineer, Lieutenant John Rogers Meigs, to familiarize himself with the geography

¹³ National Park Service, *Study of Civil War Sites in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia: Pursuant to Public Law 101-628* (Washington: U. S. Department of the Interior, 1992), 38-39.

¹⁴ Hutton, 14.

¹⁵ Stackpole, 142.

¹⁶ A. Wilson Greene, "Union Generalship in the 1864 Valley Campaign," in *Struggle for the Shenandoah: Essays on the 1864 Valley Campaign*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Kent: The Kent State University Press, 1991), 43.

and topography of the Valley.¹⁷ Already he exhibited those traits that would make him such an effective commander, particularly the appreciation for the importance of terrain. He also established his lines of communications and supply. This created a misperception that may well have helped him later, as the result of his deliberateness in establishing his supplies he was seen as timid. This was a false impression as:

What may have appeared to the more impulsive Early, and to many people in the Northern states as well, to be evidence of lack of aggressiveness was nothing more than the calculated deliberateness of a general who believed in leaving to chance nothing that could be provided by foresight and careful preparation.¹⁸

The organization of Sheridan's forces also proved to be significant. He had the equivalent of six infantry divisions and two, later three cavalry divisions. Early had four infantry divisions and one cavalry division to whom Lee detached one additional infantry division and one cavalry division.¹⁹ In short, during the largest battle of the campaign Sheridan commanded 31,000 men and Early commanded 18,000 men.²⁰ It should be noted, however, that this was actually substantially less numerical superiority than the Union Army had enjoyed thus far in the war in almost every major battle. On the August 10, 1864, Sheridan finally was ready to move. Sheridan quickly pressed south until, upon reaching Cedar Creek, he found Early dug in on dominant terrain at Fisher's Hill. Sheridan showed superb generalship by refusing to allow a general engagement against an entrenched force on commanding terrain and switching to the defensive.²¹

¹⁷ Stackpole, 147.

¹⁸ Ibid., 147-148.

¹⁹ Ibid., 148-153.

²⁰ Thomas B. Buell, *The Warrior Generals: Combat Leadership in the Civil War* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1997), 441, 443.

²¹ Stackpole, 155.

At this point, Sheridan received word from Grant ordering a defensive campaign until reinforced due to large Confederate forces moving to reinforce Early. Grant reported that the reinforcements would leave Early with a numerical advantage of 10,000 men, Grant had overestimated the number, and Sheridan's position was open to attack from two sides so Sheridan undertook a strategic withdrawal. He took the initiative to destroy the crops throughout the areas as he withdrew, thus initiating the scorched earth campaign he had been sent to the Shenandoah to undertake. It was during this withdrawal that Sheridan's cavalry became engaged at Cedarville, where one infantry and two cavalry brigades of Confederate troops were soundly defeated.

In assessing Sheridan's generalship during the Shenandoah campaign, the battles in which he was not involved, such as the battle of Cedarville, should also be mentioned. Sheridan selected his own subordinate commanders. And any significant battle of the campaign was fought, if not by Sheridan, by a commander selected by Sheridan. Sheridan's genius can be seen in his character judgement as well as his campaigns. In any case, the Union withdrawal ended at Halltown, where Sheridan dug in his Army of the Shenandoah, with impassable rivers protecting both flanks; Early showed his wisdom by declining to attack such a strong position.²² Despite Early's acknowledgement of the strength of Sheridan's position, the whole withdrawal, conducted under orders, convinced him that, as Early wrote in his memoirs, "The events of the last month had satisfied me . . . that the commander opposed to me was without enterprise, and possessed an excessive caution which amounted to timidity."²³ At that point Sheridan and Early played a waiting game knowing that sooner or later either Grant or Lee was going to call back their reinforcements, Lee blinked first.

With the recall of General James Patton Anderson by Lee, Sheridan advanced to a new position at Berryville. When Anderson moved through the Berryville area, two Union

²² *Ibid.*, 167-169.

²³ *Ibid.*, 171.

divisions under General George Crook engaged him.²⁴ The result was a sharp engagement after which Anderson withdrew. Eventually, Anderson made it back to Lee, which once again established a healthy numerical superiority to Sheridan.²⁵ In the mean time, the Northern press was calling for action to the point that even Grant began to doubt Sheridan and decided to visit Sheridan in the field and force action.²⁶ When the meeting took place, Sheridan preempted Grant with a plan for an offensive against Early across the Opaque River. Sheridan had reconnoitered the terrain and seized upon his advantages, always the mark of a good general. Early was “kind” enough, at this moment, to split his army giving Sheridan the opportunity to defeat it in detail. Unfortunately, Early received word of Grant’s visit, understood its significance, and raced to reconstitute his army. Thus, when Sheridan initiated the battle he was disappointed by the fact that, although not concentrated, Early’s army was in mutually supporting positions.

On September 19, 1864, the first major battle of the Shenandoah Valley Campaign occurred; the North was to call it the Battle of the Opequon while the South called it the Third Battle of Winchester. The Battle of the Opequon was a bloody affair that rates as the fiercest battle fought in the Shenandoah Valley during the Civil War. The first phase of the battle involved the crossing of the Opequon by General James Harrison Wilson’s cavalry division, followed by the 6th Corps, the 19th Corps, and Crook’s corps. The second phase of the battle was the fording of General Wesley Merritt’s cavalry division in the face of strong resistance by John McCausland’s cavalry; eventually the Union cavalry broke clear and got around behind the Confederates. The third phase of the battle involved both Early and Sheridan deploying their forces for the main battle. The fourth phase of the battle commenced at 11:40 a.m., with the attack by General Cuvier Grover’s infantry division across Middle Field. It encountered General George Washington

²⁴ Ibid., 174.

²⁵ Wesley Merritt, “Destroying, Burning,” in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, ed. Ned Bradford (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1956), 539.

²⁶ Stackpole, 179.

Gordon's division and was devastated; Grover never broke the Confederate line. The 19th Corps kept feeding brigades into Middle Field until the corps was exhausted, at which point Middle Field became quiet.²⁷

Simultaneously, the 6th Corps launched an attack on Stephen Dodson Ramseur's division, which penetrated his left flank, and the Confederates started to fall back. At that point, Early had the Confederate reserve, General Robert Emmett Rodes' infantry division, counterattacked into the gap that had formed between the 6th and 19th corps. Sheridan sent in the 6th Corps reserve, General David Allen Russell's division, which managed to restore the line. At this point, the Confederate line was the same as at the beginning of the battle. In the mean time, Union cavalry under William Woods Averell and Merritt were engaging Confederate cavalry and pushing the Confederates back. Sheridan then sent the army reserve, Crook's corps, around the Confederate flank.²⁸ The move worked and Crook turned Gordon's flank, the end result was the Confederate line compacted in an L shape under heavy pressure on two fronts. At that moment Sheridan ordered a general attack in coordination with Averell and Merritt's cavalry, hitting the Confederate rear; the move worked and Early's army scattered.

The day had been grim but the Army of the Shenandoah stood triumphant upon the battlefield at dusk. The campaign was not over as Early reconstituted his army and fell back to defensive positions.²⁹ Sheridan had won his first major battle of the campaign, and he had done it with skill and resourcefulness. The timely use of his reserves to preserve the Union position, the flank attack outmaneuvering the Confederates, and the infantry-cavalry coordination that broke Early's forces, all of that has to be credited to Sheridan. As one of Sheridan's subordinates stated after the initial attack stalled, "he had come out to fight, and though chafing at the unexpected delay, fight he would to the bitter end."³⁰ Grant had this to say about his young

²⁷ National, 93-94.

²⁸ Ibid., 95.

²⁹ Ibid., 96.

³⁰ Merritt, 541.

subordinate, “he met Early at the crossing of Opequon Creek, and won a most decisive victory – one, which electrified the country.”³¹ As one historian has said, “Sheridan’s personal courage, ability to respond to fluid battlefield conditions, and skillful use of combined cavalry and infantry contributed to the successful outcome.”³² Sheridan even received a letter of appreciation from Lincoln, which stated, “Have just heard of your great victory. God bless you all, officers and men. Strongly inclined to come up and see you.”³³

The stage was now set for the next major battle as Sheridan moved to attack Early’s new defensive positions at Fisher’s Hill; as Stackpole stated, “in the last analysis, it would be a question of whether Sheridan’s field generalship . . . would pay off.”³⁴ Sheridan’s first action in preparing for the next battle was to detach General Torbert with a division and a half of cavalry to circle behind the Confederate position so as to cut off Early’s line of retreat. Once again, like at Opequon, Sheridan scouted the terrain and Early’s position before developing his final plan. He determined that there was great potential for a decisive turning movement against Early’s left flank. The time had come for the next battle.³⁵

On September 21 and 22 of 1864, the Battle of Fisher’s Hill was fought between Sheridan’s Army of the Shenandoah and Early’s battered Confederate army.³⁶ On the 21st, Sheridan moved the 6th Corps to a position opposite the Confederate right-center, the 19th Corps to the left of that, and Crook’s corps in reserve out of sight; he had the 6th and the 19th Corps entrench their positions. After moving his units into position, Sheridan ordered a group of hills in front of the Confederate position seized; after a number of repulsed attacks the hills fell. General Horatio Gouverneur Wright described the importance of this move as: “Of the greatest importance to the operations the next day, as it gave us a view of the enemy’s line and afforded

³¹ Grant, 475.

³² Greene, 57.

³³ Stackpole, 233.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 244-245.

³⁵ Stackpole, 246-247, 249.

³⁶ National, 99.

excellent positions for artillery, of which we availed ourselves in the more important struggle of the 22nd.”³⁷

Overnight and into the next morning Sheridan pushed his forces to within skirmishing range of the Confederate works, while bringing Crook’s corps up on the left flank, by way of ravines keeping the troops hidden. At 2:00 p.m. Sheridan ordered Crook to commence a flanking movement, at 4:00 p.m. Crook’s was in position and ordered the charge. Once Crook’s corps smashed into the Confederate flank Sheridan ordered a general assault; the Confederate army broke quickly and abandoned much equipment, including 14 artillery pieces, in their haste to escape. The only setback for Sheridan was his cavalry’s defeat in the rear, which prevented him from capturing Early’s entire force, thus, Early’s army escaped to fight again once more.³⁸ The battle was a crushing Union victory. Due to Sheridan’s superb planning, and his army’s excellent execution, the Confederate force suffered twice the casualties of Sheridan’s Army of the Shenandoah.³⁹ Surprisingly, little appears about this battle in memoirs and campaign descriptions. Perhaps, that is because it went so well and was over so quick that there just was not the type of violent contest of wills, which normally attracts so much attention. That is a shame, as the Battle of Fisher’s Hill was one of the most successful and brilliantly conceived and executed battles of the Civil War.

After a failed pursuit of Early and his men, Sheridan marched back north destroying everything of value to the Confederacy in his path.⁴⁰ While most people associate total war during the Civil War with General Sherman, General Sheridan and his Army of the Shenandoah were equally effective practitioners of it, albeit in a smaller area. The most important development, as far as Sheridan was concerned, was the revitalizing of the Union cavalry, which finally showed its mettle in the battle of Tom’s Brook.⁴¹ Sheridan had issued an order to

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 100.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 100-101.

³⁹ Stackpole, 256.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 262-270.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 271-272.

his cavalry which said, destroy the Confederate cavalry or die trying; his cavalry found the former preferable to the later.⁴² Confederate cavalry casualties amounted to ten percent, more importantly Union cavalry showed itself as superior, pursuing the enemy cavalry twenty-six miles back to Confederate lines.⁴³ Early was convinced, still, of his superiority over Sheridan and confident that his soldiers were the better fighters, thus he decided to launch a surprise offensive against Sheridan at the first opportunity.⁴⁴ The War Department called Sheridan to Washington; he arrived on October 17, and returned the next day to Winchester where he spent the night twenty miles from his Army.⁴⁵ The next day would be Sheridan's ultimate test in leadership, for at 5:00 a.m. on October 19, 1864, the Battle of Cedar Creek commenced.⁴⁶

The Battle of Cedar Creek started out extremely bad for the Army of the Shenandoah as the Union positions were taken by surprise.⁴⁷ The reason for that was the acting commander, General Wright, had ignored Sheridan's orders about security; he failed to secure his flanks and invited the dawn attack on the Union left flank that routed the Union troops.⁴⁸ After the first Confederate volley at 5:00 a.m. it only took half an hour to rout Crook's corps, thereafter the Union troops were forced to retreat.⁴⁹ At roughly 10:30 a.m. Sheridan arrived to find his entire army on the verge of collapse and rout.⁵⁰ The arrival of Sheridan was remembered by one of his men:

Stopping at Winchester over night on the 18th, on his way from Washington, General Sheridan heard the noise of the battle the following morning, and hurried to the field. His coming restored confidence. A cheer from the cavalry, which awakened the echoes

⁴² National, 105.

⁴³ Stackpole, 272.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 274-277.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 279-280.

⁴⁶ National, 110.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Greene, 69-70.

⁴⁹ National, 110.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

of the valley, greeted him and spread the good news
of his coming over the field.⁵¹

As Grant described the effect of Sheridan's return, "Many of those who had run ten miles got back in time to redeem their reputation as gallant soldiers before night."⁵² Greene described the occasion as, "Sheridan's arrival on the field, heralded by a swelling chorus of cheers resonating up the Pike, transformed the Northern army as if by chemical reaction."⁵³ The undeniable fact was that through force of will, Sheridan rallied his troops and quickly established a line. He started a counterattack at about 3:00 p.m. Sheridan had Merritt advance his cavalry on the Union left, at about 3:30 p.m. General Custer launched a division strength cavalry charge into the Confederate left; this was extraordinarily successful and the Confederate line started collapsing left to right. At 4:00 p.m. Sheridan ordered a general attack; that with repeated assaults managed to collapse the entire Confederate line. Sheridan had his cavalry pursue Early's devastated force until stopped by nightfall; his cavalry captured 43 artillery pieces, over 200 wagons, and large numbers of prisoners.⁵⁴ The story of Sheridan's ride sparked the popular imagination, of both the man and the horse that carried him to battle. The last part of the poem "Sheridan's Ride" goes as follows:

There, with the glorious general's name
Be it said, in letters both bold and bright:
Here is the steed that saved the day
By carrying Sheridan into the fight,
From Winchester – twenty miles away!⁵⁵

The Battle of Cedar Creek was Sheridan's greatest leadership challenge of the war; to say he passed the test is an understatement. No other battle in the Civil War had the tide

⁵¹ Merritt, 547.

⁵² Grant, 480.

⁵³ Greene, 72.

⁵⁴ National, 111.

⁵⁵ Sue Cottrell, *Hoof Beats North and South: Horses and Horsemen of the Civil War* (New York: Exposition Press, 1975), 48.

turn against a winning army so quickly, and all as a result of one man. Sheridan was truly one of the best, if not the best, general of the Civil War, proven in the worst trial of all, the Battle of Cedar Creek.

With the Union victory at Cedar Creek, the Shenandoah Valley Campaign was essentially over. In a period of one month Sheridan had defeated Jubal Early three times, and his hand picked subordinate commanders defeated Early's subordinates at least three other times. The Confederate disaster in the Shenandoah occurred so quickly, and after over two years of Confederate domination of the Valley, that there are inevitably arguments over why such a reversal of fortune took place. Many argue that the disaster was a result of poor generalship on Early's part, and make the comparison with Jackson's campaign in the Valley. In response to that suggestion, Gallagher has a number of arguments, first, "in his entire Confederate career, Jackson never confronted a man of Sheridan's ability."⁵⁶ He goes on to assert that, "Sheridan's gifts as a commander and the Federal force's superiority in numbers would have overcome the best efforts of any general laboring under the handicaps placed on Jubal Early."⁵⁷ On the quality of Sheridan's generalship the assessment of Greene is particularly revealing:

No general in those days of personal leadership inspired troops more effectively. He employed cavalry with infantry more skillfully than anyone . . . before him. He never knew a moment's indecision and adjusted instantly to changing tactical conditions. Above all, like another great Valley general, he nourished an indomitable will to win and always looked for a decisive victory.⁵⁸

The truth of those statements comes from the impressive display of leadership in the Shenandoah. As Buell described the obligations of general officers: "Intelligent employment of combat power; discipline well-being and morale of troops; . . .

⁵⁶ Gallagher, 17.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁸ Greene, 75.

supply; communications; gathering intelligence; the need for accurate maps; relations with politicians, the public, and the media.”⁵⁹

Those obligations, and the complementary traits, were well exhibited and shown by Sheridan in his service. The Shenandoah Valley Campaign displayed a remarkable general who exhibited remarkable generalship. The story of the Shenandoah Campaign is the story of General Philip Sheridan. The first campaign in the Shenandoah brought one brilliant general into the public eye. The last brought a possibly even superior general into the public eye. Either way, the Shenandoah Valley saw its share of great generalship.

The Shenandoah Valley showcased the superb skill of Sheridan. It was his generalship that finally was able to convert the Union advantages in men and material in to victory. As such, he stands in the company of Grant and Sherman. The Union had always had a manpower and material advantage, but not until the ascendancy of those great generals in 1864, did the Confederacy lose all hope of victory. In the end, the one great change between the losses of 1861-1863, and the victories of 1864-1865 were in the Union generalship. With Grant bearing down on Petersburg and Appomattox, with Sherman taking Atlanta and leaving a swath of destruction through Georgia and the Carolinas, and Sheridan ravaging Early and laying waste to the Shenandoah. The Confederacy was crushed, and the Shenandoah Campaign excels in exhibiting just what kind of generalship won the Civil War.

⁵⁹ Buell, xxvii.