

This army . . . should be composed of our best regulars for the advance and of three-years' volunteers, all well officered, and with four months and a half of instruction in camps prior to (say) November 10. In the progress down the river all the enemy's batteries on its banks we of course would turn and capture, leaving a sufficient number of posts with complete garrisons to keep the river open behind the expedition. Finally, it will be necessary that New Orleans should be strongly occupied and securely held until the present difficulties are composed.

Third. A word now as to the greatest obstacle in the way of this plan—the great danger now

pressing upon us—the impatience of our patriotic and loyal Union friends. They will urge instant and vigorous action, regardless, I fear, of consequences—that is, unwilling to wait for the slow instruction of (say) twelve or fifteen camps, for the rise of rivers, and the return of frosts to kill the virus of malignant fevers below Memphis. I fear this; but impress right views, on every proper occasion, upon the brave men who are hastening to the support of their Government. . . . I commend these views to your consideration, and shall be happy to hear the result.

With great respect, yours, truly,
Winfield Scott.



LYMAN TRUMBULL

The Most Shameful Rout You Can Conceive Of (1861)

Joined by several other members of Congress, Republican Senator Lyman Trumbull of Illinois jaunted out to Manassas, Virginia, on July 21, 1861, to witness the first important battle of the war. The initial developments were encouraging, and he sat down to enjoy a picnic lunch while the battle to end the rebellion raged. Later in the afternoon he found himself, along with a number of other civilians from Washington, unexpectedly caught up in the maelstrom of the frantic Union retreat. In this letter to his wife, he describes the Union's debacle and his subsequent mortification. (Paragraphing has been modified.)

Washington, July 22nd, 1861.

We started over into Virginia about 9 o'clock A.M., and drove to Centreville, which is a high commanding position and a village of perhaps fifty houses. Bull Run, where the battle occurred, is South about 3 miles and the creek on the main road, looking West, is about 4½ miles distant. . . .

At Centreville, [Senator James] Grimes and I got saddles and rode horseback down the main road towards the creek about three miles toward a hospital where were some few wounded soldiers and a few prisoners who had been sent back. This was about half-past three o'clock P.M. . . . On the hill at Centreville we could see quite beyond the timber of the creek off towards Manassas and see the smoke and hear the report of the artillery, but not very rapid as I thought. This we observed before leaving Centreville, and were told it was our main

FROM Horace White, *The Life of Lyman Trumbull* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1913), pp. 165–67.

army driving the enemy back, but slowly and with great difficulty.

. . . We returned on the road towards Centreville and turned up towards a house fifty or a hundred yards from the road, where we quietly took our lunch, the firing continuing about as before. Just as we were putting away the things we heard a great noise, and looking up towards the road saw it filled with wagons, horsemen and footmen in full run towards Centreville. We immediately mounted our horses and galloped to the road, by which time it was crowded, hundreds being in advance on the way to Centreville and two guns of the Sherman battery having already passed in full retreat. We kept on with the crowd, not knowing what else to do. On the way to Centreville many soldiers threw away their guns, knapsacks, etc. Gov. Grimes and I each picked up a gun. I soon came up to Senator [Henry S.] Lane of Indiana, and the gun being heavy to carry and he better able to manage it, I gave it to him. Efforts were made to rally the men by civilians and others on their way to Centreville, but all to no purpose. Literally, three could have chased ten thousand. All this stampede was occasioned, as I understand, by a charge of not exceeding two hundred cavalry upon [General Robert] Schenck's column down in the woods, which, instead of repulsing as they could easily have done (having before become disordered and having lost some of their officers), broke and ran, communicating the panic to everybody they met. . . . It was the most shameful rout you can conceive of. I suppose two thousand soldiers came rushing into Centreville in this disorganized condition. The cavalry which made the charge I did not see, but suppose they disappeared in double-quick time, not dreaming that they had put a whole division to flight. Several guns were left down in the woods, though I believe two were brought off. . . .

Whether other portions of our army were shamefully routed just at the close of the day, after we had really won the battle, it seems impossible for me to learn, though I was told that McDowell was at Centreville when we were there and that his column had also been driven back. If this be so it is a terrible defeat. At Centreville there was a reserve of 8000 or 10,000 men under Col. [Dixon] Miles who had not been in the action and they were formed in line of battle when we left there, but the enemy did not, I presume, advance to that point last night, as we heard no firing. We fed our horses at Centreville and left there at six o'clock last evening. Came on to Fairfax Court House, where we got supper, and leaving there at ten o'clock reached home at half-past two this morning, having had a sad day and witnessed scenes I hope never to see again.

Not very many baggage wagons, perhaps not more than fifty, were advanced beyond Centreville. From them the horses were mostly unhitched and the wagons left standing in the road when the stampede took place. This side of Centreville there were a great many wagons, and the alarm if possible was greater than on the other. Thousands of shovels were thrown out upon the road, also axes, boxes of provisions, etc. In some instances wagons were upset to get them out of the road, and the road was full of four-horse wagons retreating as fast as possible, and also of flying soldiers who could not be made to stop at Centreville. The officers stopped the wagons and a good many of the retreating soldiers by putting a file of men across the road and not allowing them to pass. In this way all the teams were stopped, but a good many stragglers climbed the fences and got by. I fear that a great, and, of course, a terrible slaughter has overtaken the Union forces—God's ways are inscrutable. I am dreadfully disappointed and mortified.