

Major Engagements of the German and Irish Soldiers in the American Civil War

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Although nativism, politics, and religion certainly played large roles in the perception of Irish and Germans in the North, these elements are overshadowed by the importance that combat experience had on these men and the public's opinions of them. Both big and small, East and West, countless battles of the American Civil War involved the participation of German and Irish soldiers—regardless of whether or not they were in an ethnic regiment. Conversely, only a small fraction of those battles (mostly following the fighting done by the Irish Brigade and the Eleventh Corps) were consequential enough to influence the public perceptions of these ethnic soldiers. Among those of significance, the battles of First Bull Run and Antietam showcased the fighting Irishman, while the Germans were mostly remembered (rather infamously) for their participation in the Battle of Chancellorsville. However, it was the watershed Battle of Gettysburg where *both* Irish and Germans were put on display for the rest of the country to see and judge.

With war having only begun mere months before, the Union army marched South into Virginia in hopes of quickly capturing the new Confederate capitol at Richmond, putting an end to what would be seen as a brief insurrection. Directly confronting the rebel army at the small junction of Manassas, Virginia, Union General Irvin McDowell (1818–1885) engaged in what would become not only the first true test of ethnic soldiers, but the first true test of the Union Army as a whole. Comprised of mostly inexperienced soldiers getting their first taste of combat, the Irish 69th New York was among those preparing to enter the fray.¹ Captain Thomas Francis Meagher (1823–1867) (the soon to be commander) of the 69th New York highlighted the importance of Catholicism to these anxious Irish soldiers as they received a general absolution by the regiment's chaplain.

There were few of the 69th who failed to confess and ask forgiveness on that day. Every one, officers as well as privates, prepared for death. Sincerely and devoutly they made their peace with God. This is the secret of their courage, and the high, bright spirit with which they bore all the hardships, the privations, the terrors, and the chastisement of the battle.²

¹ *The Union Army: A History of Military Affairs in the Loyal States, 1861–65 – Records of the Regiments in the Union Army – Cyclopaedia of Battles – Memoirs of Commanders and Soldiers* (Madison, WI: Federal Pub., 1908).

²Michael Cavanagh, ed., *Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher: Comprising the Leading Events of His Career Chronologically Arranged, with Selections from His Speeches, Lectures and Miscellaneous Writings, Including Personal Reminiscences* (Worcester, MA: Messenger Press, 1892), 396.

Although they had been consistently persecuted on the basis of their faith, Catholicism was critical in unifying the Irish servicemen— a firm cultural/religious foundation which they clung to throughout the war.³

When the battle first commenced, the 69th, under Colonel (but soon-to-be General) William T. Sherman (1820–1891), did not see any action that morning. However, that afternoon, the 69th would see itself come off unscathed and as heroes in the eyes of the public, in what would be the Union’s first disaster of the war. After having crossed the river of Bull Run to make their way to the fighting, the 69th was tasked with making a final desperate charge at the Confederate position on Henry Hill. As the *Harper Weekly* describes, the men of the Irish regiment summoned up all their courage, “stripped themselves, and dashed into the enemy with the utmost fury.”⁴ The mental image of Irish soldiers stripping themselves down to their bare skin before an assault resonated with the public. It seemed for many to verify the stereotypical Irish ‘brawler’ that loved drinking and fighting – a stereotype that the 69th seemingly capitalized upon.



A *Harper’s Weekly* artist’s depiction of the 69th NY’s shirtless charge of Henry Hill⁵

³ Susannah Ural, “‘Ye Sons of Green Erin Assemble’ Northern Irish American Catholics and the Union War Effort, 1861–1865,” in *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America’s Bloodiest Conflict*, ed. Susannah Ural (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 115.

⁴ *Harper’s Weekly*, August 10, 1861, *Sonofthesouth.net*, <http://www.sonofthesouth.net/leefoundation/civil-war/1861/august/charge-bull-run.html> (accessed October 11, 2021).

⁵ *Harper’s Weekly*, August 10, 1861.

At the end of the fighting, the 69th hastily retreated with the rest of the Union army, but not before many of them (including their famed commander, Colonel Michael Corcoran) were captured. However, it was the seemingly natural inclination towards fighting that the Irish demonstrated, not the disorganized retreat, that stuck with the American public. Susannah Ural perfectly encapsulates the fame the Irish-Americans acquired, writing, “Their actions at the Battle of First Bull Run, the first engagement of the war, proved to many native-born Americans that Irish soldiers could serve loyally and bravely in this conflict and behave well under fire, which could not be said of many Union forces that July day.”⁶ However, Bull Run was not the end of Irish significance in the Civil War, rather, it was the mere beginning.

A year after their heroic performance at Bull Run, Irish-Americans saw another noteworthy performance at the Battle of Antietam. Marching into Maryland in the South’s first attempt at invasion, General Robert E. Lee’s (1807–1870) plans were intercepted. When McClellan took chase in an effort to prevent Lee from marching further North, the two massive armies met on the Northeast outskirts of Sharpsburg, Maryland. Attached to Israel Richardson’s (1815–1862) 1st Division of General Edwin Sumner’s II Corps, the Irish Brigade did not enter the fray until hours after the fighting initially began on September 17, 1862. However, around 9:30 that morning (four hours into the battle), Meagher and his Irish Brigade were finally called upon to help push the Confederates from their position on what would become known as ‘Bloody Lane’ – where the Irish showed their true fighting spirit. As artillery Captain Edward Field recalls, the Irish began “using this lane as a breast work, they held it to the close of the fight, losing not a prisoner, having not one straggler, but at a loss of life that was appalling.”⁷ In doing so, the Irish were not only showing their ability to fight, but they were proving their ability to fight under intense, unfavorable conditions. According to General McClellan, it was under these conditions that “the Irish Brigade sustained its well-earned reputation,” as they seized the ‘Bloody Lane,’ “strewing the ground with their enemies as they drove them back, their ammunition nearly expended, and their commander, General Meagher, disabled by the fall of his horse, shot under him.”⁸ Proving not only their military prowess, the Irish also displayed unwavering patriotism and loyalty to the Union cause, being ready “on each occasion . . . to spring forward and place the colors in front” after “the colors were shot down sixteen times.”⁹ And at the end of the day, it was the Irish Brigade which had led the charge that displaced the Confederate invaders.

⁶ Susannah J. Ural, *The Harp and the Eagle: Irish-American Volunteers in the Union Army, 1861–1865* (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 74.

⁷ “Capt. Edward Field (September 1862),” in *Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher*, by Michael Cavanagh, 460.

⁸ “Gen. George B. McClellan (September 1862),” in *Memoirs of General Thomas Francis Meagher*, by Michael Cavanagh, 459–60, at 459.

⁹ “Incidents of the Battle,” *The New York Times*, September 21, 1862. <https://www.nytimes.com/1862/09/21/archives/incidents-of-the-battle.html> (accessed October 11, 2021).

Major Engagements of the German and Irish Soldiers

At Antietam, unlike the Battle of Bull Run, the accomplishments of the Irish on the battlefield directly led to the weakening of anti-Irish sentiments across the country. In Massachusetts, an amendment to the state constitution rolled back some of the barriers to voting for naturalized citizens, including but not limited to Irishmen and Irishwomen.¹⁰ Colonel Patrick Guiney of the 9th Massachusetts, having just recently served at Antietam, sent Massachusetts Governor John Andrew the battle flag of the 9th to express his thanks, writing:

Sometimes when all else looked vague and battle-fortune seemed to be against us, there was a certain magic in the light of this old symbol of our enslaved but hopeful Ireland, that made the Ninth fight superhumanly hard ... Along with the tender of this flag to the state, I ... offer to Your Excellency personally the warmest thanks of myself and command for your generous efforts to expunge from the Constitution of Massachusetts that provision which would make political distinction between us [Irishmen] and our brother in hope, conviction, disaster, and victory.¹¹

Clearly, the fight against discrimination had been aided by the Irish contribution at Antietam. However, for many of the Irish living in the North, questions arose about whether or not the unprecedented bloodshed was worth it. Ultimately, this enormous loss of life, shortly followed by the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation and dismissal of General McClellan, had indeed indicated to many Irish-American citizens and soldiers that “the war was moving in a direction they could not support.”¹²

For the Germans, the defining battles of their wartime service were on the horizon. And, on the first of May 1863, the Germans would fight a watershed battle which helped define anti-German hostility in the coming years: Chancellorsville. After the Union disaster at Fredericksburg (in which both German and Irish troops suffered horrendous casualties) and the replacement of General Burnside for General Hooker as the commander of the Army of the Potomac, the Union morale was nearing a new all-time low. For the Germans in the Army of the Potomac, mostly consisting of the regiments which made up the bulk of the XI Corps, morale was especially low following the angry resignation of Franz Sigel and appointment of non-German Oliver Otis Howard (1830–1909) in Sigel’s stead.¹³ Yet, when Hooker’s army clashed with Lee, morale sank even further – with Germans once again caught in the crosshairs of public outrage.

¹⁰ Article XXVI, in *Constitution of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, April 6, 1863, <https://malegislature.gov/laws/constitution#articlesOfAmendment> (accessed October 11, 2021).

¹¹ Patrick R. Guiney, in *Commanding Boston’s Irish Ninth: The Civil War Letters of Colonel Patrick R. Guiney, Ninth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry*, ed. Christian G. Samito (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 144.

¹² Ural, “‘Ye Sons of Green Erin Assemble’ Northern Irish American Catholics and the Union War Effort, 1861–1865,” 115.

¹³ Christian B. Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 47.

Problems for the XI Corps at Chancellorsville really began with their new commander General Howard. On the second day of fighting, with his Corps on the extreme right of the Union lines, General Howard either ignored (according to Gen. Carl Schurz) or did not receive (according to Howard) a critical order – exposing the Union right as a ripe target for attack. Hooker’s order, which would have allowed Howard to “examine the ground, and determine upon the position you will take ... in order that you may be prepared for him [Confederate Gen. Jackson] in whatever direction he advances,” would have allowed the Eleventh Corps to position themselves in a place less exposed to a surprise attack, and further warned the Northern Army that there was “good reason to suppose that the enemy is moving to our right.”¹⁴ Predictably, Hooker’s order was correct. General Jackson sneaked up on and crushed Howard’s XI Corps, directly leading to the disintegration and rout of the entire Army of the Potomac. Lee’s tactical masterpiece was complete, and the Germans of the Eleventh Corps were his ultimate victims. Although the “corps as a whole lost close to 2,500 men, about 25 percent of those engaged; of that number, just under 1600 were killed and wounded,” with “twelve of 23 regimental commanders [who] were casualties,” the loss of support from the American public also stung the already battered German citizens and soldiers.¹⁵

As news of the devastating loss reached the American public, nativist sentiments (which tended to be responsive to battlefield performance) exploded in anger toward both the XI Corps and German-Americans as a whole. Even the other Union soldiers that served at Chancellorsville took advantage of scapegoating the XI Corps, with the 9th Massachusetts commander, Patrick Guiney, remarking that the Army of the Potomac “would have gained a great victory were it not for the cowardice of the Eleventh Corps—a German corps that was formerly commanded by Sigel but now by Howard,” further emphasizing the widespread belief that the loss occurred because “the Dutch Corps ran.”¹⁶ The Northern public, already becoming disillusioned by the lack of Union success, took advantage of Guiney’s narrative, further shifting the story to move blame away from the native-born Americans and onto the defeated Germans. In *The New York Times*, stories of the Union rout were sure to embellish how the Germans were to blame, as, when the XI was assaulted, “thousands of these cowards threw down their guns and soon streamed down the road toward headquarters.”¹⁷ The *New York Times* even reported that “Gen. Howard, with all his daring and resolution and vigor, could not stem the tide of the retreating and cowardly poltroons” – obviously ignorant of the fact that it was General Howard’s inaction that led to the flank’s exposure in the first place.¹⁸ Regardless of whether it was deserved or not, for the remainder of the war, Germans

¹⁴ “General Joseph Hooker,” in Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 53.

¹⁵ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 73.

¹⁶ Guiney, *Commanding Boston’s Irish Ninth*, 187–88.

¹⁷ “The Great Battle of Sunday,” *The New York Times*, May 5, 1863, <https://www.nytimes.com/1863/05/05/archives/the-great-battle-of-sunday.html> (accessed October 11, 2021).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

both in and out of the service were constantly reminded of their perceived failure at Chancellorsville – permanently tainting the war record of the maligned “damn Dutch.”

At arguably the most famous battle in American history, however, German and Irish troops carried their weight and contributed to the eventual Union victory – though not without hiccups along the way. As Robert E. Lee made his second advance into Union territory, the Germans in the Eleventh Corps and the Irish in Patrick Kelly’s Irish Brigade prepared themselves to revive their ethnicities’ reputations. And, when Brigadier General John Buford’s (1826–1863) cavalry made contact with Lee’s forces outside Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, it was the German XI Corps that was among the first to respond to his pleas for reinforcements. Responding to these pleas, Oliver Otis Howard’s XI Corps raced to the North side of town and braced for General Ewell’s rebel assault. Soon after setting up this defensive line, however, the German Eleventh was overrun back through town and pushed back onto Cemetery Hill just south of Gettysburg. As they were overrun, their methodical retreat became hasty, eventually devolving into a panicked rout. In the chaos, German soldiers were crammed onto the Gettysburg streets where scores of the soldiers were cut down, lost, and captured by the advancing rebels. Here, the XI Corps suffered devastating losses, with even people like Brigadier General Alexander Schimmelfennig (1824–1865) (commander of Carl Schurz’s 1st Brigade, 2nd Division) left “hiding ... from the evening of the first day to the morning of July 4th,” until they were able to find their way back to Union lines.¹⁹ That night, the remainder of the humiliated and understrength XI Corps took their rest among the graves atop Cemetery Hill, anticipating even more horrific bloodshed the following day.²⁰ Yet, luckily for them, when the remnants of the defeated Germans reemerged the next day, they were positioned at the northernmost part of General Meade’s famous “fishhook position,” thus being spared from the ferocious fighting that came to define the second day of Gettysburg.

Though their particular engagement in the battle and withdraw could have been damning to the Eleventh Corps, the German press and populace did not see it that way. Instead, Germans throughout the North took pride in the participation and bloodletting of the ‘German Corps,’ especially since the native-born newspapers seemed too enthralled with the Union victory and thus “not as interested in finding scapegoats.”²¹ Still, the Germans of the Eleventh Corps (and, by extension, the Germans of the Union Army) were not as pleased with the results of their engagement at Gettysburg. As one visitor to a Union hospital in the wake of Gettysburg noted, the reputation of the Eleventh had not improved following the battle, but rather was “still smeared by other corps and accused of cowardice, probably because it is mainly composed of Germans.”²² Not

¹⁹ Anna Louise Garlach, in *Voices of the Civil War: Gettysburg*, ed. *Time-Life Books* editors (Alexandria, VA: Time-Life, 1999), 63.

²⁰ Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz: Illustrated with Portraits and Original Drawings*, vol.3 (New York: The McClure Company 1909), 19–20.

²¹ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 124.

²² Anonymous, “Letter to the *Highland Bote*” (August 7, 1863) in *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 152.

only were the losses appalling to an already undermanned corps, but the fact that the Eleventh was forced into a chaotic rout also left a bad taste in the mouths of the other members of the Army of the Potomac.

For the Irish, though, the second day was one of legend. Before the battle even began, the Irish Brigade was a shell of its former self. With losses mounting from preceding battles and disease, the beleaguered “brigade in name only” made its way North to join in the engagement at Gettysburg. Its commander, Colonel Patrick Kelly (who had taken command from Meagher after the disastrous battle of Chancellorsville) braced his 500 remaining Irishmen for the Confederate onslaught that was sure to come.²³ Incorrectly thinking that he could better position his troops, Union General Dan Sickles (1819–1914) moved his entire III Corps to a peach field – creating a dangerous salient in Meade’s fishhook. Part of Brigadier General John C. Caldwell’s (1833–1912) 1st Division of the II Corps, the Irish Brigade was among the four brigades sent on a dangerous relief attempt for Sickles’ exposed Corps. After receiving another general absolution for sins (like the 69th did at Bull Run), the Irish Brigade first engaged the enemy at a wheatfield North of the infamous ‘Devil’s Den’ (after it had been captured by Confederate General John Bell Hood’s Division) – a combat zone as horrific as Antietam’s ‘Bloody Lane’ the year prior. Met with hand-to-hand combat at a stony hill near the wheatfield, the Irish Brigade once again displayed their fighting prowess and pushed back the enemy.²⁴

However, they were not to hold it. Exhausted, out of ammunition, and with casualties mounting in the already undermanned brigade, Colonel Kelly found the brigade “in this very disagreeable position” and “ordered the brigade to fall back, firing,” further noting that after the order was given, the brigade “encountered a most terrific fire, and narrowly escaped being captured” by the flanking rebels.²⁵ Although the order was successful and the Brigade safe from total annihilation, the damage done was devastating. As Irish-American Private William A. Smith of the 116th Pennsylvania recalled in a letter home, the 116th had 900 men when it was initially formed, but the fighting at the wheatfield had “knocked our regiment all to pieces. There is only 9 in my company now . . . 108 in all in our Regiment with 1 Major— 1 Adjutant— and 2 captains in all of them that come out.”²⁶ From the fighting at Gettysburg, the Irish Brigade, once the pride and joy of the Irish war effort, was left with a mere 328 men remaining.

²³ D. P. Conyngham, *The Irish Brigade and Its Campaigns*, ed. Lawrence Frederick Kohl (New York: Fordham University Press, 1994), 415–16.

²⁴ Ural, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 164–65.

²⁵ *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, DC: GPO, 1880 – 1901), Ser. I, Vol. 27 , pt. 1 , pg. 386, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924077699761&view=1up&seq=406&skin=2021&q1=Kelly> (accessed October 11, 2021).

²⁶ Ural, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 166.

Still, Irish contributions at Gettysburg spoke volumes to the Northern public, cementing the status of Irish-American soldiers as competent and fearless defenders of American democracy. Susanna Ural sums up the Irish effort at Gettysburg as a monumental event, saying:

The image of the fighting Irish at that definitive contest would become an essential part of the memory of Gettysburg. Father Corby's blessing and the Irish Brigade at the wheat field, as well as the defense of Paddy O'Rorke's New Yorkers at Little Round Top and Dennis O'Kane's Pennsylvanians at the angle would become part of the history and the legend of that battle.²⁷

To the American public, the 'Fighting Irishman' trope had been verified, and those of the Irish brigade immortalized as patriotic, albeit violent, heroes.

In contrast to the Irish war-time reputation, the Germans were almost always viewed as being consistently worse. As historian Ella Lonn noted in her groundbreaking 1952 book, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, by the end of the war, the Germans had been "condemned as a worthless lot, coming from the scum of a vicious population."²⁸ With historian Stephen Engle adding that the Eleventh Corps in particular gained its reputation "throughout the army as the ethnic unit (it was supposedly composed of mainly German Americans as fifteen of the twenty-eight infantry regiments were primarily German), the 11th Corps had a relatively undistinguished history in the war, as a corps that was routed at the battles at Chancellorsville and Gettysburg."²⁹ Unfortunately, the failure of the Eleventh Corps at these two pivotal performances ended up reinforcing anti-German beliefs into both Northern soldiers and civilians. Speaking of these popular anti-German sentiments, one German-American sergeant derisively warned his father, "you leave in peace the arrogant Yankees who think the Germans are only good enough to work for them, but otherwise pay them less respect than a Negro. And yet it is the Germans who have done the most to cultivate America."³⁰ In the end, the German-Americans who served in the American Civil War were unable to muster the battlefield highlights necessary to prove to the native-born public that the famed German martial proficiency was indeed real.

²⁷ Ural, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 172.

²⁸ Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), 594-95.

²⁹ Stephen D. Engle, "Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union, and the Construction of Wartime Identity," in *Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict*, ed. Susannah Ural (New York: NYU Press, 2010), 26.

³⁰ Sgt. Wilhelm Francksen, "Letter to Father" (March 1, 1863), in *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home*, ed. by Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, trans. by Susan Carter Vogel (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 145.

By contrast, the Irish emerged from Civil War combat with the reputation of being both skilled and fierce fighters.³¹ Beginning with Michael Corcoran and the 69th New York, before the war even really took off, the Irish contribution was an indispensable part of Union success – one the public seldom failed to recognize. Across the North, Irishmen served loyally and were eventually recognized as key players in this great American drama, with the flag of the Irish brigade even becoming an iconic symbol of Union victory. However, just a few days following Gettysburg, Irish-American citizens in New York began a days' long riot over the controversial "Enrollment Act," costing the city hundreds of lives and thousands of dollars. The narrative of the Irish service changed. While still considered exceptional fighters, the New York Draft Riots overshadowed the Irish service-record in the public eye, effectively putting an end to the positive portrayal of the Irish combat record, with native-born Americans resorting back to pre-war notions of Irish barbarism.³² Nevertheless, throughout the course of the war, the Irish were more often applauded for their service than other ethnicities, with a unique reputation as being amongst the most competent and fear-inducing type of soldier that the Union Army had to offer. Furthermore, the Irish-American leaders of the Union Army were immortalized, as names like Meagher, Kelly, Corcoran, and even Sheridan were forever recorded in songs, poems, and books as a testament to their importance in both the Irish and American stories. Still, although the recognition that Irish-American soldiers received for their exploits could overall be considered lacking by modern standards, it still represents a marked improvement from the Nativist oppression of the 1850s.

Although their performance in battle was only one of many factors in determining the standing of German and Irish soldiers in the Union Army, it was undoubtedly the biggest. Throughout the war, the sentiments of the press and perception from the ethnic soldiers themselves most often echo the battlefield results of the units. For example, in the time immediately following the Eleventh Corps' rout at Chancellorsville, public reception of Germans and attitudes toward German soldiers were at war-time lows, with anti-German hostility becoming so prevalent in some areas that German-led demonstrations to defend the Eleventh were sometimes seen as the only relief.³³ Mere weeks later, though, the German-American press was quick to sweep these sentiments under the rug after Gettysburg, instead focusing on the bravery of the Eleventh Corps in the defining battle of the Northern war effort (a bravery sure to be relabeled as cowardice had the Union lost the battle). However, it is worth mentioning that many of the battles that the German and Irish are remembered for were not decided by the actions of those German or Irish soldiers.

³¹ Christian B. Keller, "New Perspectives in Civil War Ethnic History and Their Implications for Twenty-First-Century Scholarship," in *This Distracted and Anarchical People: New Answers for Old Questions About the Civil War-Era North*, ed. Andrew L. Slap and Michael Thomas Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 125.

³² Ural, "'Ye Sons of Green Erin Assemble' Northern Irish American Catholics and the Union War Effort, 1861–1865," 125.

³³ "German Indignation Meeting," *The New York Times*, June 3, 1863, <https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1863/06/03/78703690.html?pageNumber=8> (accessed November 11, 2021).

Major Engagements of the German and Irish Soldiers

Instead, as military histories and battlefield dispatches show, the massive Army of the Potomac had scores more native-born soldiers than it did ethnic ones, and as such, it was the native-born soldiers who shouldered the majority of responsibility for the performance of the Army.

So, while it is true that the routing of the Germans at Chancellorsville certainly did *contribute* to the Army of the Potomac's loss, to continue the earlier example, it would be unfair to neglect other factors such as Lee's brilliant gamble of splitting his army in half or Hooker's abandonment of the Federal artillery positions at Hazel Grove. After all, military engagements are massive in scale, and while an individual unit may play a role in a battle, that role is far from the only thing influencing the outcome of that battle. Regardless, German and Irish soldiers still saw an overemphasis from the press on the role they played in deciding any given battle, with the Irish left reveling in the tough reputation combat had given them, while the Germans emerged from the war made to feel ashamed by their ethnicity's perceived failure to contribute.

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