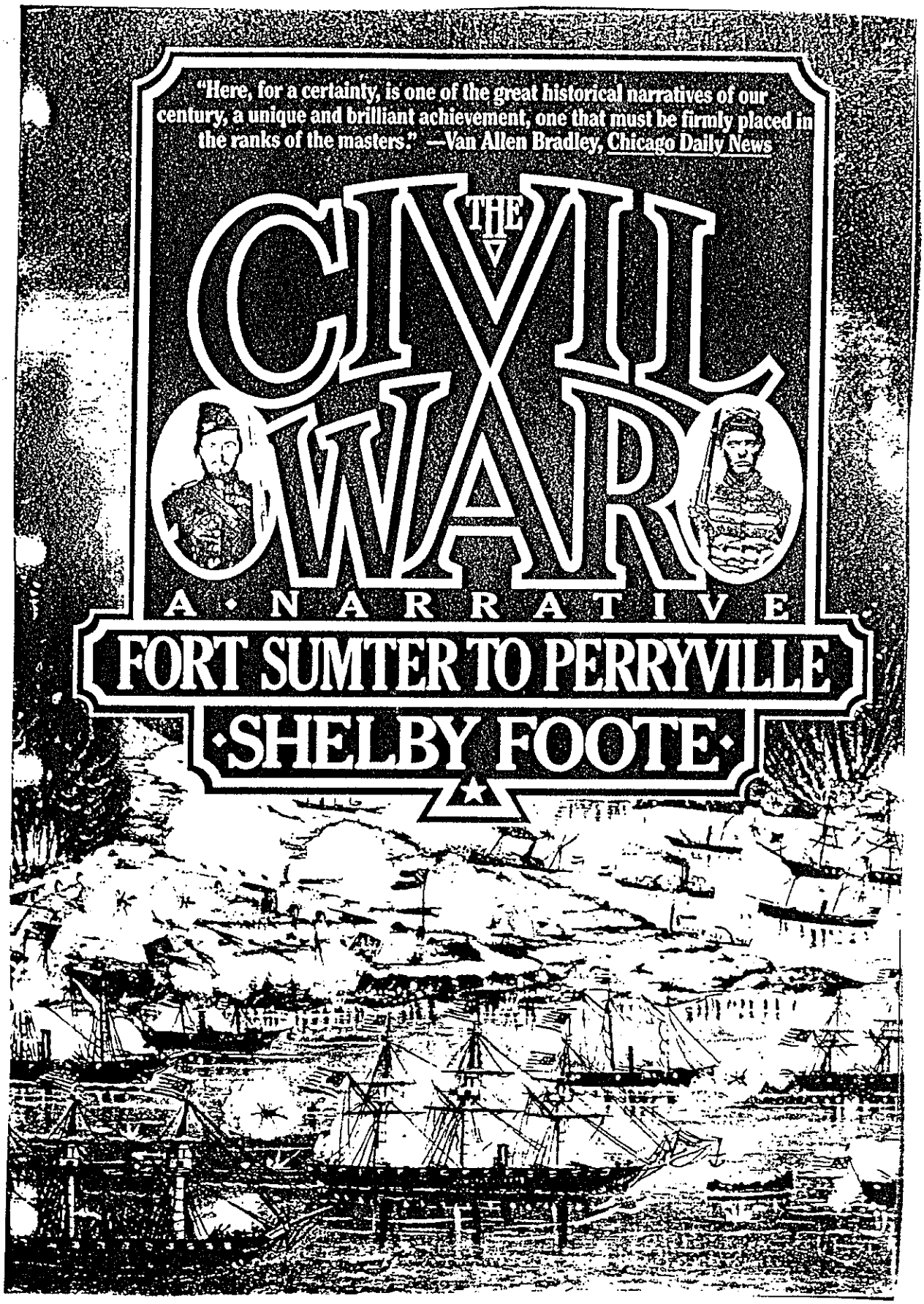

"Here, for a certainty, is one of the great historical narratives of our century, a unique and brilliant achievement, one that must be firmly placed in the ranks of the masters." —Van Allen Bradley, Chicago Daily News
THE CIVIL WAR
A · NARRATIVE
FORT SUMTER TO PERRYVILLE
SHELBY FOOTE

Beauregard was at Corinth, and he had been reinforced: Halleck's information was true, as far as it went. But the Creole was not planning a Manassas. He was planning a Cannae, or at least an Austerlitz, and for once (though he did not neglect the accustomed flourish at the outset: "Soldiers: I assume this day the command of the Army of the Mississippi, for the defense of our homes and liberties, and to resist the subjugation, spoliation, and dishonor of our people. Our mothers and wives, our sisters and children, expect us to do our duty even to the sacrifice of our lives. . . . Our cause is as just and sacred as ever animated men to take up arms, and if we are true to it and to ourselves, with the continued protection of the Almighty, we must and shall triumph") his dream was built on something more than rhetoric and hope.

Recent and looming disasters at last had jarred the Richmond government into action. The fall of Henry and Donelson, followed at once by the loss of Kentucky and Middle Tennessee, now threatened the railroad leading eastward from Memphis, through Corinth and Tuscumbia, to Chattanooga, where it branched south, through Atlanta, to Charleston and Savannah, and north, through Knoxville, to Lynchburg and Richmond. "The vertebrae of the Confederacy," former War Secretary L. P. Walker called it, and rightly; for once this only east-west all-weather supply line was cut, the upper South would be divided — as prone for conquest as a man with a broken backbone. Now when Beauregard cried wolf, as he had done unheeded so often before, the authorities listened. Without Major General Braxton Bragg and the 10,000 soldiers he commanded at Mobile and Pensacola, the southern coast would be wide open to amphibious attack, but under the press of necessity the dispersed defensive was out, no matter the risk; Bragg and his men were ordered north to Corinth. So were Brigadier General Daniel Ruggles and his 5000 from New Orleans, though their departure left the South's chief city without infantry to defend it. By early March they were with Beauregard, absorbed into the Army of the Mississippi. Combined with Polk's 10,000 — so that in point of fact it was they who did the absorbing — they brought the expansive Creole's total strength to 25,000 men.

His spirits were lifted toward elation by this considerable transfusion of troops from his native shore — including one elite New Orleans outfit which carried his name on its roster as an honorary private; "Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard!" rang out daily at roll call, like the sudden unfurling of a silken banner; "Absent on duty!" the color-sergeant proudly answered for him. He looked forward to combinations and maneuvers that would be nothing less than Napoleonic in concept and execution. Johnston by now was across the Tennessee, marching westward from Decatur with the remnant of what had been the Army of Kentucky. Floyd's brigade had been sent to

Chattanooga, but Forrest's troopers had caught up with the column, bringing Hardee's total to 15,000. When they arrived there would be 40,000 soldiers around Corinth, exactly the number the impatiently waiting general had said would allow a strike at Cairo and Paducah. Nor was that all. Van Dorn's 15,000, licking their Elkhorn Tavern wounds in Arkansas, had been alerted for an eastward march that would bring them across the Mississippi at Memphis, where they would find boxcars waiting to bring them rapidly down the vital railroad line to Corinth. The total then would soar to 55,000. Any twinge of regret for the 20,000 lost at Donelson and penned up now on Island Ten was quickly assuaged by the thought that, even without them, the Army of the Mississippi would not only be the largest any Confederate had ever commanded, but in fact would be almost twice as large as the combined force that had covered itself and its generals — particularly Beauregard — with glory at Manassas. As he waited now for Johnston he rehearsed in his mind the recommendations he would make for the utilization of this strength.

Scouts had been bringing him full reports of the enemy situation all this time. Grant's army was twenty-odd miles to the north, in camp on the left bank of the Tennessee, awaiting the arrival of Buell's army, which was moving west from Nashville. Even with the addition of Van Dorn and Johnston, the southern army would not be as large as the two northern armies combined, but it would be larger than either on its own. The answer, then — provided the gray-clad reinforcements won the race, which seemed likely, since the Yankees marching overland from Nashville were encountering various obstacles such as burned bridges — was a slashing attack. If Van Dorn and Johnston reached Corinth before Buell reached the Tennessee, the superior Confederate army would pounce on Grant and accomplish his destruction, then fall in turn on Buell and treat him likewise, after which the way to Louisville and St Louis would lie open. Beauregard saw and rehearsed it thus in his mind, complete no doubt with the final surrender ceremonies at the point of deepest penetration, wherever that might be. When Johnston arrived on the 24th at the head of the column which now reached the end of its long retreat from Bowling Green, he considered the race half won.

The tall, handsome Texan, who had set out seven months ago, buoyed up by the confident hopes of the South that he would drive the blue invaders from the soil of his native Kentucky, now came back to Mississippi oppressed by the seething resentment of those who had cheered him loudest then. He took it calmly, the flared mustache and deep-set eyes masking whatever hurt the barbs of criticism gave him. "What the people want is a victory," he had said, and he welcomed Beauregard's proposal — the more so since it coincided with plans he had made on the march — as a chance to give them one. In fact, as a

sign of appreciation for all the Louisiana general had done in the trying past few weeks, Johnston made the gesture of offering him command of the army for the coming battle; he himself would act as department commander, he said, with headquarters at Memphis or at nearby Holly Springs. Beauregard's heart gave a leap at this, touching his fiery ambition as it did, but he recognized a gesture when he saw one, and declined. Then the two got down to preparing the army for combat, prescribing rigid training schedules for the soldiers, who being raw needed all the instruction they could possibly absorb, and reorganizing them into four corps: 10,000 under Polk, 16,000 under Bragg, 7000 under Hardee, and 7000 under Breckinridge. (The last was designated as Crittenden's at first, but he was presently removed to suffer demotion for the Fishing Creek debacle.) The 15,000 under Van Dorn would add a substantial fifth corps when they got there, but even without them the army was about as large as the one Grant had in camp on the near bank of the Tennessee, twenty-two miles to the north.

The reinstated Federal commander had been with his army a week by the time Johnston joined Beauregard at Corinth. After the hundred-mile boat ride Grant came ashore at Savannah, a hamlet on the east bank, where C. F. Smith, an old soldier who never neglected the creature comforts, had established headquarters in a fine private mansion overlooking a bend of the Tennessee. One division was at Crump's Landing, three miles upstream on the opposite bank, and as Grant arrived the other five were debarking at Pittsburg Landing, six miles farther south and also on the west side of the river. The site had been recommended by the commander of one of the new divisions; a "magnificent plain for camping and drilling," he called it, "and a military point of great strength."

This was Tecumseh Sherman. He too had been reinstated, Halleck having decided that he was not really insane after all, just high-strung and talkative; besides, he had a brother in the Senate. Grant, for one, thought highly of him. During the Donelson campaign Sherman had worked hard, forwarding reinforcements and supplies and offering to waive his then superior rank for a chance to come up and join the fighting. But the men assigned to him were not so sure, not at the outset anyhow. Red-headed and gaunt, with sunken temples and a grizzled, short-cropped ginger beard, he had a wild expression around his eyes and a hungry look that seemed to have been with him always. "I never saw him but I thought of Lazarus," one declared. His shoulders twitched and his hands were never still, always picking at something, twirling a button or fiddling with his whiskers. They had not fancied getting their first taste of combat under a man who had been sent home such a short while back under suspicion of insanity. Three days before Grant's arrival, though at first their fears were intensified, they learned

better. Smith sent them south for a try at breaking the vital Memphis & Charleston Railroad, down across the Mississippi line.

They came off the transports at midnight in a blinding rain. By daylight they were far inland, and still the rain came pouring. Bridges were washed out, so that the cavalry, scouting ahead, lost men and horses, drowned while trying to ford the swollen creeks. Behind them, the Tennessee was rising fast, threatening to cut them off by flooding the bottom they had marched across. At this point, just when things were at their worst, Sherman ordered them back to the transports. It had been a nightmare operation, and probably they had done no earthly good; they were wet, tired, hungry, cold; for the most part they had been thoroughly frightened. But curiously enough, when they were back aboard the transports, drinking hot coffee and snuggling into blankets, they felt fine about the whole thing. They had been down into enemy country, the actual Deep South — a division on its own, looking for trouble: that gave them the feeling of being veterans — and they had seen their commander leading them. Sherman was not the same man at all. He was not nervous; his shoulders did not twitch; he was calm and confident, and when he saw the thing was impossible he did not hesitate to give it up. Whatever else he might be, he certainly was not crazy. They knew that now, and they were willing to follow wherever he led them.

Grant too had changed, the veterans saw when he came up to Pittsburg to inspect them. Mostly it was the aura of fame that had been gathering around him in the month since the news from Donelson first set the church bells ringing. He was Unconditional S. Grant now, and his picture was on the cover of *Harper's Weekly*. There was a hunger for particulars about him, for instance how he "generally stood or walked with his left hand in his trousers pocket, and had in his mouth an unlighted cigar, the end of which he chewed restlessly." The cigar was an example of the change that stemmed from fame. Learning that he had kept one clamped in his teeth that critical afternoon at Donelson, whenever he was not using it like a marshal's baton to point the direction for attack, readers had sent him boxes of them to express their admiration, and since Grant had never been one to waste things, least of all good tobacco, the long-stemmed meerschaum that had given him so much satisfaction in the past was put away while he concentrated on smoking up those crates of gift cigars. One other change he had made on his own. His beard, which formerly had reached down past the second button on his coat, had been clipped short. It seemed to the soldiers, observing him now, a gesture not unlike that of a man rolling up his sleeves in preparation for hard work.

For him, work meant fighting; that was his trade, the only one he had ever been any good at or able to earn a living by, and he wanted to be at it right away. Restrained by Halleck, however — "We must

strike no blow until we are strong enough to admit no doubt of the result," the department commander warned — all Grant could do now was prepare for the attack he would launch when Buell got there. Meanwhile the position appeared to him to be about as good as Sherman had reported. A hundred-foot yellow-clay bluff rose abruptly from the narrow shelf of the landing, where steamboats had unloaded peacetime cargoes for Corinth, to a plateau eroded by gullies and covered with second-growth timber except for scattered clearings cut by farmers for orchards and grain fields. It was not quite a "magnificent plain," but it did have points of military strength, the flanks being protected by Lick and Snake Creeks, which emptied into the Tennessee above and below the landing. The area between them, a quadrilateral varying roughly from three to five miles on a side, gave plenty of room for drilling the five divisions camped there and was conveniently cross-hatched by a network of wagon trails leading inland and connecting the small farms. But Grant's primary interest was on the main road leading southwest to Corinth, one hard day's march away. That was the one he would take when the time came: meaning Buell. Halleck reported him nearing Waynesboro, forty miles away, but cautioned Grant: "Don't let the enemy draw you into an engagement now. Wait till you are properly fortified and receive orders."

This raised another question; for the position had not been fortified at all. Smith had already expressed an opinion on that. The crusty general had been put to bed with an infected leg, having skinned his shin on the sharp edge of a rowboat seat, but he was quite undaunted. "By God," he said, "I ask nothing better than to have the rebels come out and attack us! We can whip them to hell. Our men suppose we have come here to fight, and if we begin to spade it will make them think we fear the enemy." Grant agreed and left things as they were, despite the warning. The war was on its last legs, he told Halleck, and the enemy too demoralized to constitute a danger: "The temper of the rebel troops is such that there is but little doubt but that Corinth will fall much more easily than Donelson did when we do move. All accounts agree in saying that the great mass of the rank and file are heartily tired."

One man at least did not agree at first, and that was Sherman. Privately he was telling newsmen, "We are in great danger here." But when asked why he did not protest to those in charge, he shrugged; "Oh, they'd call me crazy again." As time went by, however, and no attack developed, he became as complacent as the rest. Before the end of March he wrote gaily to an army friend in Cairo: "I hope we may meet in Memphis. Here we are on its latitude, and you have its longitude. Draw our parallels, and we breakfast at the Gayoso, whither let us God speed, and then rejoice once more at the progress of our cause."

Already there had been cause for rejoicing by some of his

fellow generals, promotions having come through on the 21st for the three who commanded divisions at Donelson. Smith received his in bed — his leg was getting worse instead of better — but McClernand took his step-up with the continuing belief that other advancements were in store, and Lew Wallace was now the youngest major general in the army. Smith's division was placed in charge of W. H. L. Wallace, an Ohio lawyer who had won his stars at Donelson. Two of the three divisions added since were led by brigadiers who had moved to Illinois from the South and stood by the Union when trouble came: Benjamin M. Prentiss, a Virginia-born merchant, and Stephen A. Hurlbut, a lawyer originally from Charleston, South Carolina. Sherman, commanding the remaining green division, had had less combat experience than any of them — none at all, in fact, since that grievous July afternoon on the banks of Bull Run in far-away Virginia, where McClellan, now that April was at hand, was boarding a steamer to go down the coast and join his army for an advance up the James peninsula — but he was the only one of the six who was regular army, and Grant left the tactical arrangements in general to him, commuting daily by steamboat from the Savannah mansion, nine miles away.

Between them, these six commanded eighteen brigades: 74 regiments containing 42,682 soldiers, some raw, some hardened by combat. Green or seasoned, however, they approved to a man of their commander's intention to march down to Corinth, as soon as Buell arrived with 30,000 more, and administer another dose of the medicine they had forced down rebel throats the month before.

Johnston had sixteen brigades, 71 regiments with a total strength of 40,335. But even apart from the day-to-day danger of Buell's reaching Pittsburg Landing with three fourths that many more, the present near-equality in numbers was considerably offset by a contrasting lack of combat experience. Two thirds of Grant's men had been in battle — in fact had been victorious in battle — whereas in Johnston's army, except for Forrest's troopers and the handful Polk had sent to Pillow's aid five months ago at Belmont, few had heard a shot fired in anger, and only Hardee's men had even done much real marching. Bragg referred to the forces around Corinth as "this mob we have, miscalled soldiers," and complained that a good part of them had never done a day's work in their lives. Johnston of course was aware of these shortcomings, but his scouts having kept him well informed he counted much on the element of surprise. He knew what he would find up there: an army camped with its back to a deep river, unfortified, hemmed in by boggy creeks, disposed for comfort, and scattered the peacetime way. Meanwhile, drill and instruction were repairing the Confederate flaws Bragg had pointed out so harshly. He would strike as soon as he felt it possible. The question was, how long would he have

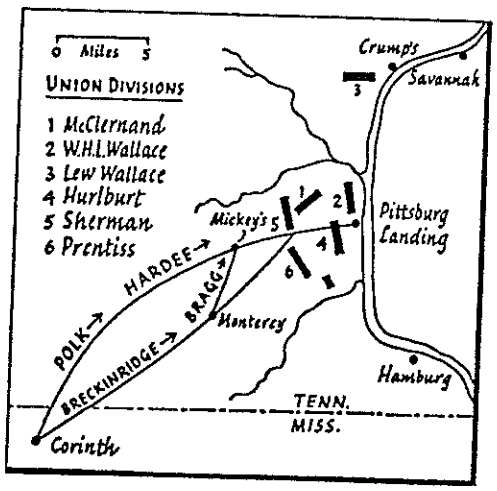
before Buell got there or Grant saw the danger and corrected his dispositions or, worse, moved out and beat him to the punch?

Late at night, April 2, a telegram from Bethel, twenty miles north on the M & O, seemed to Beauregard to confirm the last and worst of these fears: Lew Wallace was maneuvering in that direction. Taking this for the beginning of a full-scale attack on Memphis, he forwarded the message to Johnston after writing on the bottom: "Now is the moment to advance, and strike the enemy at Pittsburg Landing." Johnston read it, then crossed the street to confer with Bragg, who had been made chief of staff in addition to his other duties under last week's reorganization. Johnston wanted more time for drilling his army and awaiting the arrival of Van Dorn, but Bragg was insistent in support of Beauregard's indorsement. Whatever this latest development meant, Buell was drawing closer every day. It had to be now or never, he said, and Johnston at last agreed. Ready or unready, Van Dorn or no Van Dorn, they would go up to Pittsburg and attack the Federal army in its camp. Within an hour of the telegram's midnight arrival, orders went out for the four corps commanders to "hold their commands in hand, ready to advance upon the enemy in the morning by 6 a.m. with three days' cooked rations in haversacks, 100 rounds of ammunition for small arms, and 200 rounds for field-pieces."

Early next morning Beauregard's chief of staff got to work, preparing the march instructions from notes the general had made on scraps of paper during the night. As he worked he had at his elbow Napoleon's Waterloo order, using it as a model despite the way that battle had turned out for the one who planned it. Since this would require considerable time — first the writing, then the copying and the distribution — Beauregard called Hardee and Bragg to his room to explain the march routes verbally; their corps would lead the way, and the written instructions could be delivered after they got started. As he spoke he drew a crude map on the top of a camp table, indicating distances and directions.

Two roads ran from Corinth up to Pittsburg. On the map they resembled a strung bow leaned sideways, curved side up, with the two armies at the top and bottom tips. The lower route, through Monterey, was the string; the upper route, through Mickey's, was the bow. Bragg and Breckinridge were to travel the string, Hardee and Polk the bow, in that order. Hardee was to reach Mickey's that night, bivouac, then at 3 a.m. pass on and form for battle in the fields beyond. Polk was to wait while Bragg marched up the road from Monterey and cleared the junction at Mickey's, then follow him into position, clearing the way for Breckinridge in turn. They were to regulate their columns so as not to delay each other, keeping their files well closed and the various elements properly spaced. So much for the march order; the battle order followed.

Beyond Mickey's, within charging distance of the enemy outposts, they were to form for battle in successive lines, Hardee across the front with one brigade from Bragg, who was to form a second line five hundred yards in rear. Polk and Breckinridge were to mass their corps to the left and right, a half-mile behind Bragg, so that when he went forward, following Hardee, Polk could spread out wide in his support, leaving Breckinridge in column as the general reserve. The flanks of the army, with the three lead corps extending individually across the entire front, rested on the creeks that hemmed Grant in. As they advanced, each line would thus support the one in front, and the reserve corps would feed troops from the rear toward those points where resistance turned out stiffest. The attack on the right was intended to move fastest, bearing generally left in a long curve, first along the watershed of Lick Creek and then down the west bank of the Tennessee, so as to sweep the Federals clear of the landing and drive them back against the boggy northward loop of Snake Creek, where they could be destroyed.



Today was Thursday, April 3. According to schedule, the troops would complete the twenty-mile approach march and be deployed for battle no later than midmorning tomorrow. But when the council broke up at 10 o'clock, already four hours past the starting time, and the generals dispersed to get their columns on the road, troops and wagons quickly snarled to a standstill, blocking the streets of Corinth. Polk at last got clear of the jam, but had to wait while Hardee doubled his column and took the lead. By then it was late afternoon, and Polk was held up till after sunset. When he stopped for the night he had covered a scant nine miles. Down on the lower road, Bragg's unwieldy column did no better. Manifestly, the schedule would have to be revised. Beauregard set it forward a whole day, intending now to be deployed in time to strike the Federals early Saturday morning.

But if Thursday had been like a bad dream, Friday was a nightmare. The march, which had seemed so easy to regulate on the flat, uncluttered table-top, turned out to be something quite different on the ground, which was neither flat nor uncluttered — nor, as it turned out, dry. The abrupt, thunderous showers of a Mississippi April broke over the winding column, and soon the wagon and artillery wheels had

churned the roads into shin-deep mud. There were halts and unaccountable delays, times when the men had to trot to keep up, and times when they stood endlessly in the rain, waiting for the file ahead to stumble into motion. In their wake, the roadsides were littered with discarded equipment, overcoats and playing cards, bowie knives and Bibles. A more welcome delay was the rest halt given each regiment while its colonel read the commanding general's address, written in Corinth while they were assembling for the march.

> Soldiers of the Army of the Mississippi:
>
> I have put you in motion to offer battle to the invaders of your country. With the resolution and disciplined valor becoming men fighting, as you are, for all worth living or dying for, you can but march to a decisive victory over the agrarian mercenaries sent to subjugate and despoil you of your liberties, property, and honor. Remember the precious stake involved; remember the dependence of your mothers, your wives, your sisters, and your children on the result; remember the fair, broad, abounding land, the happy homes and the ties that would be desolated by your defeat.
>
> The eyes and hopes of eight millions of people rest upon you. You are expected to show yourselves worthy of your race and lineage; worthy of the women of the South, whose noble devotion in this war has never been exceeded in any time. With such incentives to brave deeds, and with the trust that God is with us, your generals will lead you confidently to the combat, assured of success.
>
> A. S. JOHNSTON, General

It was delivered in various styles, ranging from the oratorical, with flourishes, to the matter-of-fact, depending on the previous civil occupation of the reader. The troops cheered wildly or perfunctorily, depending on their degree of weariness and in part on how the address was read, then fell back into column on the muddy roads for more of the stop-and-go marching.

But the one who had it worst that day was Bragg. He too had made a late start out of Corinth, and the head of his oversized column did not reach Monterey, where it should have bivouacked the night before, until near midday. One of his divisions was lost somewhere in the rear, perhaps sidetracked, and he had had no word from Breckinridge at all. As a result, though Hardee and Polk were marching hard to make up for yesterday's wasted time, the latter was held up short of Mickey's, waiting for Bragg to clear the junction, and the former had no sooner got past it than he received a message asking him to call a halt so that Bragg's dragging column could close the expanding gap. Bragg was a tall, gangling man, a West Pointer and a Mexican War hero — "A little more grape, Captain Bragg," Zachary Taylor was supposed to have told him at Buena Vista, as every schoolboy knew (though what he really said was, "Captain, give 'em hell") — a native

North Carolinian, lately a Louisiana sugar planter, in his middle forties but looking ten years older because of chronic stomach trouble and a coarse gray-black beard which emphasized his heaviness of jaw and sternness of aspect; not that the latter needed emphasis, already having been rendered downright ferocious by the thick bushy eyebrows which grew in a continuous line across the bottom of his forehead. It galled him to have to send that message to Hardee, amounting as it did to an admission of being to blame for the delay; for he was a strict disciplinarian, and like most such he was quick to lose his temper when things went wrong.

Still jammed on the roads leading into and out of Mickey's, when they should have been moving into the final position where they would deploy for the attack tomorrow morning, the weary and bedraggled troops were caught that night in the same thunderstorm that attended the *Carondelet* on her run past Island Ten, just over a hundred miles away. All semblance of order dissolved under torrents of rain. When Johnston and Beauregard rode into Mickey's soon after sunrise, expecting to find the army arrayed for combat — they had left Corinth the day before and spent the night at Monterey — the rain had stopped and the sun was shining bright on the flooded fields, but the army was far from arrayed. In fact, most of it had not even arrived. Hardee was approximately in position, but he was waiting for the brigade from Bragg that would complete his line. By the time it got there, the sun was already high in the sky and Beauregard was fuming. He had cause. As they marched forward to file into line, the men began to worry about the dampness of the powder in their rifles; but instead of drawing the charges and reloading, they tested them by snapping the triggers; with the result that, within earshot of the Federal outposts, there was an intermittent banging up and down the columns, as rackety as a sizeable picket clash. Nor was that all. The returning sun having raised their spirits, the men began to tune up their rebel yells and practice marksmanship on birds and rabbits.

For two hours then, with Johnston and Beauregard standing by, Bragg continued to deploy the remainder of his corps — all but the rear division, which still had not arrived. When Johnston asked where it was, the harassed Bragg replied that it was somewhere back there; he was trying to locate it. Johnston waited, his impatience mounting, then took out his watch: 12.30. "This is perfectly puerile! This is not war!" he exclaimed, and set off down the road himself to look for the missing division. He found it wedged behind some of Polk's troops, who had not been willing to yield the right of way. The daylight hours were going fast. By the time Johnston got the road cleared and the last of Bragg's men passed to the front, his watch showed 2 o'clock. Polk's deployment used up another two hours, and Breckinridge, who had come up at last, was still to be brought forward. The shadows were get-

ting longer every minute. It was not until about 4.30, however, that Johnston received the worst shock of all.

Riding forward he came upon a roadside conference between Beauregard and Polk and Bragg. The Creole's big sad bloodhound eyes were rimmed with angry red and his hands were fluttering as he spoke. He was upset: which was understandable, for it was already ten hours past the time when he expected to launch the attack. He favored canceling the whole movement and returning at once to Corinth. In his mind, surprise was everything, and what with the delay piled on the previous postponement, the constant tramping back and forth and the racket the men had been making, all chance for surprise had been forfeited. He knew this, he said, because at one point that afternoon he had heard a drum rolling, but when he sent to have it silenced, the messenger came back and reported that it could not be done; the drum was in the Union camp. Beauregard reasoned that if he could hear enemy drum-taps, there was small doubt that the Federals had heard the random firing and whooping in the Confederate columns. Besides, ten southern troopers had been captured in a cavalry clash the night before; surely by now they had been questioned, and one at least had talked.

"There is no chance for surprise," he ended angrily. "Now they will be intrenched to the eyes."

Johnston heard him out, then turned to Polk, his West Point roommate. The bishop disagreed. His troops were eager for battle; they had left Corinth on the way to a fight, he said in that deep, pulpit voice of his, and if they did not find one they would be as demoralized as if they had been whipped. Bragg said he felt the same way about it. While he was speaking Breckinridge rode up. Surprised that withdrawal was even being considered, he sided with Polk and Bragg, declaring that he would as soon be defeated as retire without a fight. Hardee was the only corps commander not present, but there was no doubt which side he would favor; he was already formed for battle, anxious to go forward. The vote was in, and Johnston made it official. There would be another delay, another postponement, but there would be no turning back.

"Gentlemen, we shall attack at daylight tomorrow," he said.

He told the corps commanders to complete the deployment and have the troops sleep on their arms in line of battle. Beauregard was protesting that Buell most likely had come up by now, bringing the Federal total to 70,000. But that made no difference either: not to Johnston, who had reached what he believed would be his hour of vindication after his long retreat. As he walked off he spoke to one of his staff. "I would fight them if they were a million," he said. "They can present no greater front between those two creeks than we can, and the more men they crowd in there, the worse we can make it for them."

While the army completed its deployment, the troops bedding

down so that when they woke in darkness they would already be in line for the dawn assault, the sun set clear and red beyond the tasseling oaks. There was a great stillness in the blue dusk, and then the stars came out, dimming the pale sickle moon already risen in the daylight sky. Mostly the men slept, for they were weary; but some stayed awake, huddled around fires built in holes in the ground to hide them. In part they stayed awake because of hunger, for it was a Confederate belief that rations carried lighter in the stomach than in a haversack, and they had consumed their three days' rations at the outset. The nearest of them could hear Yankee bugles, faint and far like foxhorns three fields off, sounding out of the dark woods where tomorrow's battle would be fought. "The elephant," veterans called combat, telling recruits the time had come to meet the elephant.

Strictly speaking, Beauregard was right, at least in part. Buell had arrived — that is, he slept that night on the outskirts of Savannah, intending to confer with Grant next morning — but with only one of his divisions, the others being scattered along twenty miles of the road back toward Nashville. They would arrive tomorrow and the next day. Grant, being informed of this, could go to bed that night rejoicing that things had worked out so well at last. He intended to send Buell's men upstream to Hamburg. The road from there to Corinth was a mile shorter than the one leading down from Pittsburg, and the two converged eight miles this side of the objective. Conditions thus were ideal for his intention, which was to attack as soon as Buell's army could be transferred to the west bank for coöperation with his own. Irksome as the delay had been, it had given him time to study the terrain and whip his reinforcements into shape, including even some seasoning clashes with rebel cavalry who ventured up to probe the rim of his camp at Pittsburg Landing.

The men themselves were feeling good by now, too, though at the outset they had had their doubts and discomforts. They had spent a rough first week clearing campsites, a week full of snow and sleet and a damp cold that went through flesh to bone. "The sunny South!" they jeered. All night, down the rows of tents, there was coughing, a racking uproar. Diarrhea was another evil, but they made jokes about that too; "the Tennessee quickstep," they called it, laughing ruefully on sick call when the surgeons advised them to try the application of red-hot pokers. Then suddenly the weather faired, and this was the sunny South indeed; even the rain was warm. By the end of March Grant was reporting, "The health of the troops is materially improving under the influence of a genial sun which has blessed us for a few days past."

He knew because he had been among them, making his daily commuter trip by steamboat from Savannah. Mostly, though, he kept his mind on the future, the offensive he would launch when Buell got

there. He left the present — the defensive — largely to Sherman, who had kept busy all this time confirming his commander's high opinion of him. The red-haired Ohioan's green division was the largest in the army, and he had awarded it the position of honor, farthest from the landing. Three miles out, on the Corinth road, his headquarters tent was pitched alongside a rude log Methodist meeting-house called Shiloh Chapel. Two of his brigades were in line to the west of there, extending over toward Owl Creek, which flowed into Snake Creek where it turned northwest, a mile from the river, leaving Owl Creek to protect the army's right flank south of the junction. His third brigade was east of the chapel, and his fourth was on the far side of the position, beyond Prentiss's two brigades, whose camp was in line with his own. The others were three-brigade divisions: McClernand's just in rear of Sherman's, Hurlbut's and W. H. L. Wallace's well back toward the landing, and Lew Wallace's five miles north, beyond Snake Creek. It was not so much a tactical arrangement, designed for mutual support, as it was an arrangement for comfort and convenience, the various positions being selected because of the availability of water or open fields for drilling. In Sherman's mind, as in Grant's, the main concern was getting ready to move out for Corinth as soon as Buell arrived. He had long since got over his original concern, privately admitted, that the army was "in great danger here."

The same could not be said for all his officers. One in particular, the colonel of the 53d Ohio, had sounded the alarm so often that his soldiers were jeered at for belonging to what was called the Long Roll regiment. High-strung and jumpy — like Sherman himself in the old days — he was given to imagining that the whole rebel army was just outside his tent flap. During the past few days his condition had grown worse. Friday, April 4, he lost a picket guard of seven men, gobbled up by grayback cavalry, and when he advanced a company to develop the situation they ran into scattered firing and came back. All day Saturday he was on tenterhooks, communicating his alarm to Sherman. That afternoon he piled on the last straw by sending word to headquarters that a large force of the enemy was moving on the camp. Sherman mounted and rode out to confront him. While the colonel told excitedly of the hordes of rebels out there in the brush, Sherman sat with his mouth clamped down, looking into the empty woods. At last the man stopped talking. Sherman sat glaring down at him, then jerked the reins to turn his horse toward camp. "Take your damned regiment back to Ohio," he said, snapping the words. "Beauregard is not such a fool as to leave his base of operations and attack us in ours. There is no enemy nearer than Corinth."

So he said, adding the final remark to sharpen the sting of the rebuke, though actually he knew better. This was but one of several such clashes, including one the previous evening in which ten rebel

prisoners were taken, and just this morning he had notified Grant: "The enemy has cavalry in our front, and I think there are two regiments of infantry and one battery of artillery about 2 miles out. I will send you 10 prisoners of war and a report of last night's affair in a few minutes."

There was a need for frequent reports, for Grant would not be coming up to visit the camps today. He had sprained his ankle during the violent thunderstorm the night before, when his horse slipped and fell on his leg. The soft ground had saved him from serious injury, but his boot had had to be cut off because of the swelling and he was limping painfully on crutches. The first dispatch from Sherman had opened, "All is quiet along my lines," and presently there was another, apparently sent after he got back from administering the stinging rebuke to the Ohio colonel: "I have no doubt that nothing will occur today more than some picket firing. The enemy is saucy, but got the worst of it yesterday, and will not press our pickets far. . . . I do not apprehend anything like an attack on our position."

The prisoners, if sent, went unquestioned. What could they possibly have to say that would interest a man who had already made up his mind that if he was to have a battle he would have to march his soldiers down to Corinth and provoke it? Sustained in his opinion by reports such as these two from Sherman, Grant refused to be disconcerted by incidentals. Besides, the staff officer who was best at conducting interrogations was at Hamburg, inspecting the campsite selected for Buell's army. No time was to be lost now, for the lead division had arrived at noon, along with a note from Buell: "I shall be in Savannah tomorrow with one, perhaps two, divisions. Can I meet you there?" The note was dated yesterday; "tomorrow" meant today. But Grant either did not observe the heading (another incidental) or else he was in no hurry. "Your dispatch received," he replied. "I will be there to meet you tomorrow" — meaning Sunday.

Ever since his run-in with Halleck, regarding the alleged infrequency of his reports, he had kept the St Louis wire humming. Before he went to bed tonight in the fine big house on the bluff at Savannah, with nothing to fret him but the pain in his swollen ankle, he wrote a letter informing his chief that Buell's lead division had arrived; the other two were close on its heels and would get there tomorrow and the next day. He told him also of yesterday's picket clash. "I immediately went up," he said, "but found all quiet." Then he added: "I have scarcely the faintest idea of an attack (general one) being made upon us, but will be prepared should such a thing take place."

Next morning at breakfast he heard a distant thunder from the south. The guns of Shiloh were jarring the earth.

* * *

Until then, Beauregard had not given up urging a withdrawal. Between dawn and sunup, wearing for luck the jaunty red flat-topped cap he had worn at Manassas, he came to Johnston's overnight camp for a last-minute plea that the attack plan be abandoned. He looked fresh and rested after a sound sleep in his ambulance — his personal tent had been misplaced on the march — but he had lost none of yesterday's conviction that the assault could not succeed. In fact he was more than ever convinced that all chance for surprise was gone. He had heard Federal bands playing marches in the night and there had been bursts of cheering from the direction of the landing. This meant only one thing, he said: Buell had come up, urged forward by the alerted Grant, and now there were 70,000 men in the Union camp, intrenched and expectant, waiting for the Confederates to walk into the trap.

The reply came not from Johnston, who stood with a cup of coffee in his hands, sipping from it as he heard him out, but from the army itself. The Creole was caught in midsentence by a rattle of musketry from dead ahead, a curious ripping sound like tearing canvas. Staff officers looked in that direction, then back at Johnston, who was handing the half-empty cup to an orderly. "The battle has opened, gentlemen," he said. "It is too late to change our dispositions." Beauregard mounted and rode away; the argument was no longer a matter for words. Johnston swung onto his horse and sat there for a long moment, his face quite grave. Then he twitched the reins, and as the big bay thoroughbred began to walk toward the sound of firing, swelling now across the front, the general turned in the saddle and spoke to his staff: "Tonight we will water our horses in the Tennessee River."

The opening shots had been fired ahead of schedule because one of Prentiss's brigade commanders, sleepless and uneasy in the hours before dawn, had sent a three-company reconnaissance out to explore the woods to his front. Encountering a portion of Hardee's skirmish line, which had not yet gone forward, they mistook it for a scouting party and attacked with spirit, driving the skirmishers back on the main body. Repulsed in turn by heavy volleys, they fell back to give the alarm that the enemy was moving in strength against the Federal position. Prentiss thus was warned of what was coming before it got there, and turned his green division out to meet the shock.

Sherman too was warned, but took no heed because the alarm was sounded by the same colonel he had rebuked for crying wolf the day before. A man had stumbled out of a thicket into the Ohio camp, holding a wound and crying, "Get in line! The rebels are coming!" A captain who went to investigate quickly returned shouting, "The rebs are out there thicker than fleas on a dog's back!" But when the colonel sent a courier to inform Sherman, word came back: "You must be badly scared over there."

Presently, though, riding forward with an orderly to where the colonel was shakily getting his men into line, he saw for himself the Confederates advancing across a large field in front, the skirmishers holding their rifles slantwise like quail hunters and the main body massed heavily behind them. The sun, which had risen fast in a cloudless sky — "the sun of Austerlitz," Southerners called it, seeing in this a Napoleonic omen — flashed on their bayonets as they brought their rifles up to fire. "My God, we're attacked!" Sherman cried, convinced at last as the volley crashed and his orderly fell dead beside him. "Hold your position; I'll support you!" he shouted, and spurred away to send up reinforcements. But: "This is no place for us," the colonel wailed, seeing his general head for the rear, and went over and lay face-down behind a fallen tree. His men were wavering, firing erratically at the attackers. When the next enemy volley crashed, the colonel jumped up from behind the tree; "Retreat! Save yourselves!" he cried, and set the example by taking off rearward at a run.

Most of his men went with him, believing they knew a sensible order when they heard one, but enough stayed to give Sherman time to warn the brigades on his other flank to drop their Sunday breakfast preparations and brace themselves for the assault. They formed in haste along the ridge where their tents were pitched, looking out over a valley choked with vines and brambles, and began to fire into the wave of gray that was surging out of the woods on the far side. Green as they were, they held their ground against four successive charges, firing steadily until the fifth swept up the slope, then gave way in tolerable good order to take up a second position farther back. The 6th Mississippi, for one, could testify to the accuracy of their fire; for it started across that valley with 425 men and reached the tented ridge with just over 100; the rest lay dead or wounded among the brambles. So thick they lay, the dead of this and the other four regiments in those charges, that one observer remarked that he could have walked across that valley without touching his feet to the ground; "a pavement of dead men," he called it.

Prentiss was fighting as doggedly on the left, and McClernand had marched to the sound of guns, filling the gap between the two divisions, so that the three were more or less in line, resisting stubbornly. All three were leaking men to the rear, the faint-hearted who sought safety back at the landing under the bluff, but the ones who stayed were determined to yield nothing except under pressure that proved itself irresistible. By the time Sherman's soldiers got settled in their second position, waiting for what came next, they had the feel of being veterans. Whatever came next could not possibly be worse than what had gone before, and having their commander move among them added to their confidence. He had been hit twice already, but gave no sign of even considering leaving the field. The first time was in the

hand; he wrapped it in a handkerchief and thrust it into his breast, never taking his eyes off the enemy. The other bullet clipped a shoulder strap, nicking the skin, but that did not seem to bother him much either. When a headquarters aide came riding up to ask how things were going, he found Sherman leaning against a tree, propped on his uninjured hand, watching the skirmishers. "Tell Grant if he has any men to spare I can use them," he said, still narrow-eyed. "If not, I will do the best I can. We are holding them pretty well just now. Pretty well; but it's hot as hell."

By midmorning Grant himself was at his lieutenant's elbow, amid the bursting shells and whistling bullets. Brought to his feet by the rumble of guns from the south, he had left the breakfast table and gone aboard his steamer at the wharf below the mansion, pausing only long enough to send two notes. One was to Buell, canceling their meeting in Savannah, and the other was to Brigadier General William Nelson, whose division had arrived the day before, directing him to "move your entire command to the river opposite Pittsburg." On the way upstream — it was now about 8.30 — he found Lew Wallace waiting for him on the jetty at Crump's. The firing sounded louder; Pittsburg was definitely under attack, but Grant still did not know but what a second attack might be aimed in this direction. Without stopping the boat he called out to Wallace as he went by, "General, get your troops under arms and have them ready to move at a moment's notice." Wallace shouted back that he had already done so. Grant nodded and went on.

When he docked and rode his horse up the bluff from the landing, a crutch strapped to the saddle like a carbine, the tearing rattle of musketry and the steady booming of cannon told him the whole trouble was right here in the three-sided box where his main camp had been established. Wounded men and skulkers were stumbling rearward, seeking defilade, and beyond them the hysterical quaver of the rebel yell came through the crash of gunfire and the deeper-throated shouts of his own soldiers. Grant's first act was to establish a straggler line, including a battery with its guns trained on the road leading out of the uproar. Then he went forward to where W. H. L. Wallace and Hurlbut had formed ranks and by now were sending reinforcements to the hard-pressed divisions on the far edge of the fight. The situation was critical, but Grant kept as calm as he had done at Donelson in a similar predicament. This time, though, he had reserves, and he sent for them at once. A summons went to Lew Wallace, five miles away, instructing him to join the embattled army. Another went to Nelson, presumably already toiling across the boggy stretch of land between Savannah and the river bank opposite Pittsburg, urging him to "hurry up your command as fast as possible."

By 10 o'clock he was up front with Sherman. One of the Ohioan's

brigades had disintegrated under fire, but the other two were resisting heavy pressure against their second position, half a mile back from the ridge where their tents were pitched. He said his biggest worry was that his men would run out of ammunition, but Grant assured him that this had been provided for; more was on the way. Satisfied that Sherman could look out for himself, the army commander then visited McClernand, fighting as hard in rear of Shiloh Chapel, and finally Prentiss, whose division had been repulsed by the fury of the initial onslaught, but in falling back across the open field had come upon an eroded wagon trail which wound along the edge of some heavy woods on the far side. They had got down into the shallow natural trench of this sunken road to make a stand, and that was what they were doing when Grant arrived. In fact they were doing a thorough job of it, dropping the Confederates in windrows as they charged across the fields. Approving of this execution, Grant told Prentiss to "maintain that position at all hazards." Prentiss said he would try.

He not only tried, he did maintain that position against repeated headlong charges delivered without apparent concern for loss. Elsewhere, however, conditions were much worse. At noon, when Grant returned to his headquarters near the rim of the bluff, he found the fugitives streaming rearward thicker than ever, through and past the straggler line, white-faced and unmindful of the officers who tried to rally them. Bad news awaited him: Sherman and McClernand had been forced back still farther. Both were retiring sullenly, fighting as they did so, but if either division broke into a rout, the rebels would come whooping down on the landing and the battle would be over. W. H. L. Wallace and Hurlbut had committed all their troops, and nothing had been heard from Lew Wallace, who should have completed his five-mile march before now, nor from Nelson across the river. There was no reserve at hand to block a breakthrough. In desperation Grant sent two staff officers beyond Snake Creek to hurry Wallace along and a third across the Tennessee with a note for Nelson, worded to show the urgent need for haste: "If you will get upon the field, leaving all your baggage on the east bank of the river, it will be a move to our advantage, and possibly save the day to us. The rebel force is estimated at over 100,000 men."

Beauregard had taken over the log church called Shiloh, and from this headquarters he performed for the army commander the service the other Johnston had performed for him at Manassas, exercising control of the rear area and forwarding reinforcements to those points where additional strength was needed. Thus Johnston was left free to move up and down the line of battle, encouraging the troops, and this he did. Some he sought to steady by speaking calmly. "Look along your guns, and fire low," he told them. Others he sought

to inspirit with fiercer words: "Men of Arkansas, they say you boast of your prowess with the bowie knife. Today you wield a nobler weapon: the bayonet. Employ it well!" Whichever he did, or whether he did neither, but merely rode among them, tall and handsome on his tall, handsome horse, the men cheered at the sight of their commander exposing himself to the dangers he was requiring them to face. This was indeed his hour of vindication.

His men swept forward, overrunning the enemy's front-line camps and whooping with elation as they took potshots at the backs of fleeing Yankees. Where resistance stiffened, as along the ridge where Sherman's tents were pitched, they matched valor against determination and paid in blood for the resultant gain. Not that there were no instances of flinching at the cost. An Arkansas major reported angrily that a Tennessee regiment in front of his own "broke and ran back, hallooing 'Retreat, retreat,' which being mistaken by our own men for orders of their commander, a retreat was made by them and some confusion ensued." No sooner was this corrected than the same thing happened again, only this time the major had an even more shameful occurrence to report: "They were in such great haste to get behind us that they ran over and trampled in the mud our brave color-bearer." There were other, worse confusions. The Orleans Guard battalion, the elite organization with Beauregard's name on its muster roll, came into battle wearing dress-blue uniforms, which drew the fire of the Confederates they were marching to support. Promptly they returned the volley, and when a horrified staff officer came galloping up to tell them they were shooting at their friends: "I know it," the Creole colonel replied. "But dammit, sir, we fire on everybody who fires on us!"

Such mishaps and mistakes could be corrected or even overlooked by the high command. More serious were the evils resulting from straggling, caused mainly by hunger and curiosity. When some Northerners later denied that they had been surprised at Shiloh, a Texan who had scalded his arm in snatching a joint of meat from a bubbling pot as he charged through one of the Federal camps replied that if Grant's army had not been surprised it certainly had "the most devoted mess crews in the history of warfare." Sunday breakfasts, spread out on tables or still cooking over campfires, were more than the hungry Confederates could resist. Many sat down, then and there, to gorge themselves on white bread and sweet coffee. Others explored the Yankee tents, foraging among the departed soldiers' belongings, including their letters, which they read with interest to find out what northern girls were like. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, were lost thus to their comrades forging ahead, and this also served to blunt the impetus of the attack which in its early stages had rolled headlong over whatever got in its way.

Most serious of all, though, were the flaws that developed when

the attack plan was exposed to prolonged strain. Neatly efficient as the thing had looked on paper, it was turning out quite otherwise on the rugged plateau with its underbrush and gullies and its clusters of stubborn blue defenders. Attacking as directed — three corps in line from creek to creek, one behind another, each line feeding its components piecemeal into the line ahead — brigades and regiments and even companies had become so intermingled that unit commanders lost touch with their men and found themselves in charge of strangers who never before had heard the sound of their voices. Coördination was lost. By noon, when the final reserves had been committed, the army was no longer a clockwork aggregation of corps and divisions; it was a frantic mass of keyed-up men crowded into an approximate battle formation to fight a hundred furious skirmishes strung out in a crooked line. Confusing as all this was to those who fought thus to the booming accompaniment of two hundred guns, it was perhaps even more confusing to those who were trying to direct them. And indeed how should they have understood this thing they had been plunged into as if into a cauldron of pure hell? For this was the first great modern battle. It was Wilson's Creek and Manassas rolled together, quadrupled, and compressed into an area smaller than either. From the inside it resembled Armageddon.

Attempting to regain control, the corps commanders divided the front into four sectors, Hardee and Polk on the left, Bragg and Breckinridge on the right. Coördination was lacking, however, and all the attacks were frontal. Besides, compliance with Johnston's original instructions — "Every effort will be made to turn the left flank of the enemy, so as to cut off his line of retreat to the Tennessee River and throw him back on [Snake] Creek, where he will be forced to surrender" — was being frustrated by Prentiss, who stood fast along the sunken road. "It's a hornets' nest in there!" the gray-clad soldiers cried, recoiling from charge after charge against the place. When Sherman and McClernand gave way, taking up successive rearward positions, the Confederate left outstripped the right, which was stalled in front of the Hornets Nest, and thus presented Johnston with the reverse of what he wanted. He rode toward the far right to correct this, carrying in his right hand a small tin cup which he had picked up in a captured camp. Seeing a lieutenant run out of one of the tents with an armload of Yankee souvenirs, Johnston told him sternly: "None of that, sir. We are not here for plunder." Then, observing that he had hurt the young man's feelings, which after all was a poor reward for the gallantry shown in the capture, by way of apology he leaned down without dismounting and took the tin cup off a table. "Let this be my share of the spoils today," he said, and from then on he had used it instead of a sword to direct the battle. He used it so now, his index finger

hooked through the loop of the handle, as he rode toward the right where his advance had stalled.

At this end of the battle line, on the far flank of the Hornets Nest, there was a ten-acre peach orchard in full bloom. Hurlbut had a heavy line of infantry posted among the trees, supported by guns whose smoke lazed and swirled up through the branches sheathed in pink, and a bright rain of petals fell fluttering like confetti in the sunlight as bullets clipped the blossoms overhead. Arriving just after one of Breckinridge's brigades had recoiled from a charge against the orchard, Johnston saw that the officers were having trouble getting the troops in line to go forward again. "Men! they are stubborn; we must use the bayonet," he told them. To emphasize his meaning he rode among them and touched the points of their bayonets with the tin cup. "These must do the work," he said. When the line had formed, the soldiers were still hesitant to reënter the smoky uproar. So Johnston did what he had been doing all that morning, all along the line of battle. Riding front and center, he stood in the stirrups, removed his hat, and called back over his shoulder: "I will lead you!" As he touched his spurs to the flanks of his horse, the men surged forward, charging with him into the sheet of flame which blazed to meet them there among the blossoms letting fall their bright pink rain.

This time the charge was not repulsed; Hurlbut's troops gave way, abandoning the orchard to the cheering men in gray. Johnston came riding back, a smile on his lips, his teeth flashing white beneath his mustache. There were rips and tears in his uniform and one bootsole had been cut nearly in half by a minie bullet. He shook his foot so the dangling leather flapped. "They didn't trip me up that time," he said, laughing. His battle blood was up; his eyes were shining. Presently, however, as the general sat watching his soldiers celebrate their capture of the orchard and its guns, Governor Isham Harris of Tennessee, who had volunteered to serve as his aide during the battle, saw him reel in the saddle.

"General — are you hurt?" he cried.

"Yes, and I fear seriously," Johnston said.

None of the rest of his staff was there, the general having sent them off on various missions. Riding with one arm across Johnston's shoulders to prevent his falling, Harris guided the bay into a nearby ravine, where he eased the pale commander to the ground and began unfastening his clothes in an attempt to find the wound. He had no luck until he noticed the right boot full of blood, and then he found it: a neat hole drilled just above the hollow of the knee, marking where the femoral artery had been severed. This called for a knowledge of tourniquets, but the governor knew nothing of such things. The man who knew most about them, Johnston's staff physician, had been ordered by the

general to attend to a group of Federal wounded he encountered on his way to the far right. When the doctor protested, Johnston cut him off: "These men were our enemies a moment ago. They are our prisoners now. Take care of them." So Harris alone was left to do what he could to staunch the bright red flow of blood.

He could do little. Brandy might help, he thought, but when he poured some into the hurt man's mouth it ran back out again. Presently a colonel, Johnston's chief of staff, came hurrying into the ravine. But he could do nothing either. He knelt down facing the general. "Johnston, do you know me? Johnston, do you know me?" he kept asking, over and over, nudging the general's shoulder as he spoke.

But Johnston did not know him. Johnston was dead.

It was now about 2.30. When the command passed to Beauregard — who in point of fact had been exercising it all along, in a general way, from his headquarters at Shiloh Chapel — his first order was that news of Johnston's death was to be kept from the men, lest they become disheartened before completing the destruction of the northern army. There would be no let-up; the attack was to continue all along the line, particularly against the Hornets Nest, whose outer flank was threatened now by the Confederates who had flung Hurlbut's men gunless out of the orchard and taken their place. After a lull, which allowed for the shifting of troops to strengthen the blow, the line was ready to go forward. A dozen separate full-scale assaults had been launched against the sunken road, each one over a thickening carpet of dead and wounded. All twelve had failed; but this one would not fail. Pressure alone not having been enough, now pressure was to be combined with blasting. At point-blank range, with Beauregard's approval, Dan Ruggles had massed 62 guns to rake the place with canister and grape.

When those guns opened, clump by clump, then all together, blending their separate crashes into one continuous roar, it was as if the Hornets Nest exploded, inclosing its defenders in a smoky, flame-cracked din of flying clods, splintered trees, uprooted brush, and whirring metal. Elsewhere on the field that morning a wounded soldier, sent to the rear by his company commander, had soon returned, shouting to be heard above the racket: "Captain, give me a gun! This durn fight aint got any rear!" Presently this was quite literally true for Prentiss, who held fast along the sunken road. On the flanks, the men of Hurlbut and W. H. L. Wallace scrambled backward to get from under the crash. The line was bent into a horseshoe. Then Wallace fell, cut down as he tried to rally his men, and they gave way entirely, running headlong. Hurlbut's followed suit. Only Prentiss's troops remained steadfast along the sunken road, flanked and then surrounded. The horseshoe became an iron hoop as the Confederates, pursuing Hurlbut

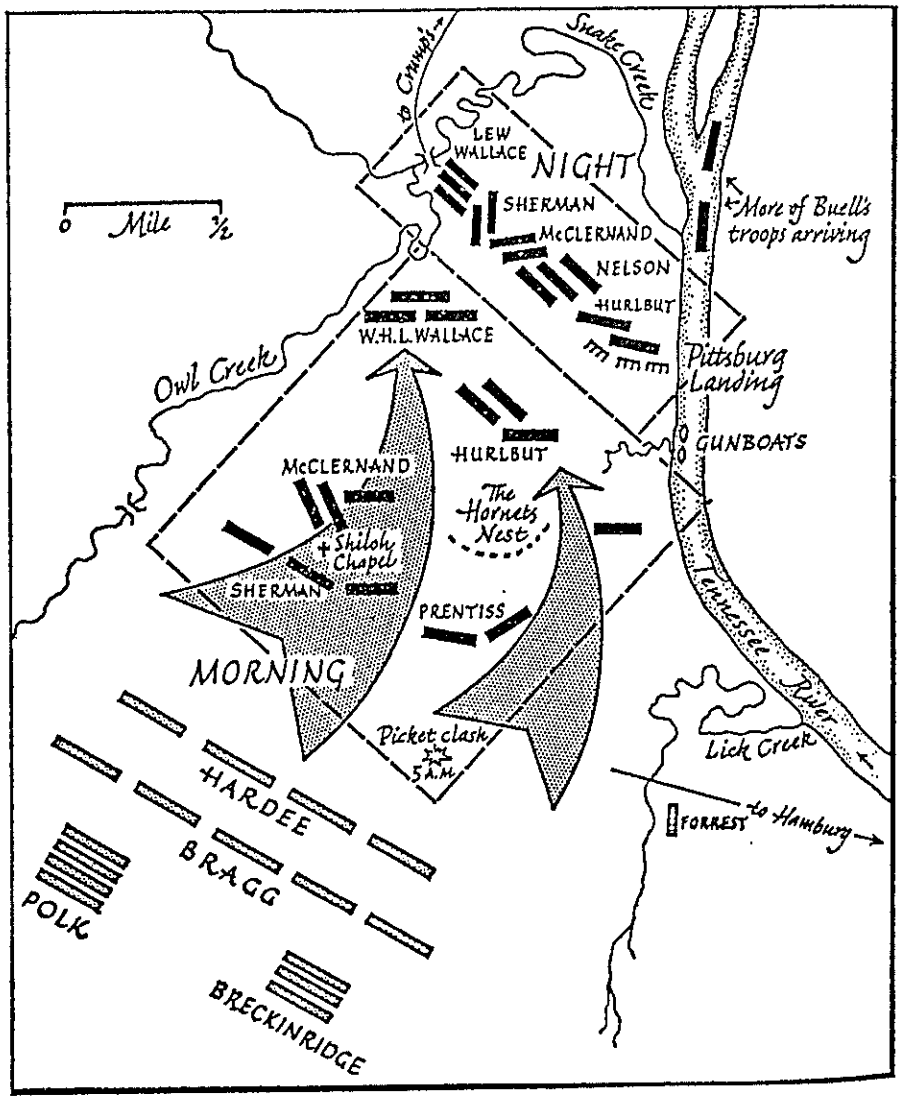
and the remnants of Wallace around both flanks of Prentiss, met in his rear and sealed him off.

He could hear them yelling back there, triumphant, but he fought on, obedient to his strict instructions to "maintain that position at all hazards." The dead lay thick. Every minute they lay thicker. Still he fought. By 5.30 — two long hours after Ruggles' guns began their furious cannonade — further resistance became futile, and Prentiss knew it. He had the cease-fire sounded and surrendered his 2200 survivors, well under half the number he had started with that morning. Sherman and McClernand on the right, and Hurlbut to a lesser degree on the left, had saved their divisions by falling back each time the pressure reached a certain intensity. Prentiss had lost his by standing fast: lost men, guns, colors, and finally the position itself: lost all, in fact, but honor. Yet he had saved far more in saving that. Sherman and McClernand had saved their divisions by retreating, but Prentiss had saved Grant by standing fast.

Beauregard saw it otherwise. During twelve hours of fighting, in addition to much other booty found in the captured camps, his army had taken 23 cannon, exclusive of those surrendered by Prentiss, and flushed the Northerners from every position they had chosen to try for a stand. The Hornets Nest, if the toughest of these, was merely one more in a series of continuing successes. Now that the sunken road lay in rear of the advance, the shortened line could be strengthened for the final go-for-broke assault that would shove what was left of Grant's army over the bluff and into the Tennessee. So he thought, at any rate; until he tried it. On the left, Hardee and Polk were pecking away at Sherman and McClernand, but the attacks were not delivered with spirit or conviction. Too many of their men had died or straggled, and those who stayed were near exhaustion. On the right, where more could be expected in the wake of the recent collapse, Bragg and Breckinridge fared even worse. Their casualties had been about as high and the number of stragglers was even higher; hundreds stayed behind to gawk at the captured thousands, including one real live Yankee general, who came marching out of the Hornets Nest under guard. Two of Bragg's brigades — or the remnants — tried an assault on the left flank of the Federals, who were crowded into a semi-circular position along the road that led from the landing to the bridge that spanned Snake Creek. However, it was delivered across a ravine knee-deep in backwater, and when the weary troops emerged on the far side they were met by massed volleys almost as heavy as those that had shattered Prentiss. They ran back, scrambling for cover, and the long day's fight was over.

The sun was down. Beauregard merely made the halt official when he sent couriers riding through the gathering twilight with orders for the attacks to be suspended and the men brought back to rest for

the completion of their work tomorrow morning. Much of the Yankee army might escape under cover of darkness, but it could not be helped. The lesson of Manassas was repeated. For green troops, victory could be as destructive of effective organization as defeat, and even more exhausting. As the men withdrew, a patter of rain began to sound. The rumble of heavy guns, fired intermittently from beyond the bluff, was



mixed with peals of thunder. Lightning flashed; the rain fell harder. A hundred miles northwest, the *Pittsburg*'s crew was thankful for the storm as they prepared to make their run past Island Ten; the *Carondelet* was waiting. Here on the battlefield which took its name from the log church called Shiloh — interpreted by Bible scholars to mean "the place of peace" — those who could found shelter in the Federal camps

and had their dreams invaded by the drum of rain on canvas. Others slept in the open, where the rain fell alike on the upturned faces of the dead and of those who slept among them, inured by having seen so much of death that day already, or else just made indifferent by exhaustion.

* * *

Confidence south of the battle line, that when the attack was renewed tomorrow the Federals would be driven into the river, was matched by confidence north of it, at least on the part of the northern commander, that the reverse would rather be the case. Surrounded by his staff Grant sat on horseback just in rear of the guns whose massed volleys had shattered the final rebel assault. His army had been driven two miles backward; one division had surrendered en masse; another had been decimated, its commander killed, and the other three were badly shaken, bled to half their strength. So that when one of the staff officers asked if the prospect did not appear "gloomy," it must have seemed an understatement to the rest; but not to Grant. "Not at all," he said. "They can't force our lines around these batteries tonight. It is too late. Delay counts everything with us. Tomorrow we shall attack them with fresh troops and drive them, of course."

Fresh troops were the answer, and he had them; Buell's men were arriving as he spoke. By morning, 20,000 of them would have climbed the bluff in the wake of Nelson's lead brigade, which had been ferried across from the opposite bank in time to assist in repulsing the attack against the fifty guns assembled on the left. The navy, too, was in support and had a share in wrecking the last assault. Though all the ironclads were at Island Ten, two wooden gunboats were at Pittsburg, anchored where a creek ran out of the last-ditch ravine into the river, and thus were able to throw their shells into the ranks of the Confederates as they charged. Nor was that all. As twilight deepened into dusk, Lew Wallace at last came marching across Snake Creek bridge to station his division on the right flank of the army. He had marched toward what he thought was such a junction as soon as he received Grant's first order, but then had had to countermarch for the river road when he learned that the flank had been thrown back near the landing. Five hours behind schedule, he got jaundiced looks on arrival, but his 6000 soldiers, mostly Donelson veterans, were no less welcome for being late. Combined with Buell's troops and the survivors of the all-day fight, they meant that Grant would go into battle on the second day with more men than he had had at dawn of the first. Then too, well over half of them would be unworn by fighting: whereas the Confederates would not only have been lessened by their casualties, but would most likely not have recovered from the weariness that dropped so many of them in their tracks as soon as the firing stopped.

Grant had another sizeable reserve — 6000 to 12,000 men, depending on various estimates — but he did not include them in his calculations. These were the skulkers, fugitives who took shelter along the river bank while the battle raged on the plateau overhead. Every man on the field had come up this way, debarking from the transports, so that when the going got too rough they remembered that high bluff, reared up one hundred feet tall between the landing and the fighting, and made for it as soon as their minds were more on safety than on honor. Some were trying to cadge rides on the ferries plying back and forth; others, more enterprising, paddled logs and jerry-built rafts in an attempt to reach the safety of the eastern bank. Still others were content to remain where they were, calling out to Buell's men as they came ashore: "We are whipped! Cut to pieces! You'll catch it! *You'll* see!" Nelson, a six-foot five-inch three-hundred-pound former navy lieutenant, lost his temper at the sight. "They were insensible to shame and sarcasm," he later declared, "for I tried both; and, indignant of such poltroonery, I asked permission to fire on the knaves." However, the colonel who commanded the fuming general's lead brigade was more sickened than angered by the display. "Such looks of terror, such confusion, I never saw before, and do not wish to see again," he recorded in his diary.

Perhaps like the colonel Grant preferred to leave them where they were, out of contact with the men who had stood and fought today or were expected to stand and fight tomorrow. Fear was a highly contagious emotion, and even if threats or cajolery could have herded them back up the bluff, they would most likely run again as soon as the minies began whizzing. Perhaps, too, he saw them as a reproach, a sign that his army had been surprised and routed, at least to this extent, because its commander had left it unintrenched, green men to the front, and had taken so few precautions against an enemy who, according to him, was "heartily tired" of fighting. At any rate he allotted the skulkers no share in his plans for tomorrow. Nor did he return to the fine big house nine miles downriver, or even seek shelter in one of the steamboat cabins. After inspecting his battle line — his four divisions would take the right, Buell's three the left — he wrapped himself in a poncho and lay down under a large oak to get some sleep. The rain had already begun, however, and presently it fell in torrents, dripping through the branches to add to the discomfort of his aching ankle. Unable to sleep, he wandered off to take refuge in a cabin on the bluff. But that would not do either. The surgeons had set up a field hospital there and were hard at work, bloody past the elbows. Driven out by the screams of the wounded and the singing of the bone-saws, Grant returned to his oak and got to sleep at last, despite the rain and whatever twinges he was feeling in his ankle and his conscience.

He had an insomniac counterpart beyond the line of battle. But Bedford Forrest's ankle and conscience were intact; his sleeplessness proceeded from entirely different causes. His regiment had been assigned to guard the Lick Creek fords, but after some hours of hearing the guns he had crossed over on his own initiative and claimed a share in the fighting. It stopped soon after sundown, but not Forrest. Out on a scout, he reached the lip of the bluff, south of the landing, and saw Buell's reinforcements coming ashore. For Forrest this meant just one thing: the Confederates must either stage a night attack or else get off that tableland before the Federals charged them in the morning. Unable to locate Beauregard, he went from camp to camp, telling of what he had seen and urging an attack, but few of the brigadiers even knew where their men were sleeping, and those who did were unwilling to take the responsibility of issuing such an order. At last he found Hardee, who informed him that the instructions already given could not be changed; the cavalryman was to return to his troops and "keep up a strong and vigilant picket line." Forrest stomped off, swearing. "If the enemy comes on us in the morning, we'll be whipped like hell," he said.

Unlocated and uninformed — he slept that night in Sherman's bed, near Shiloh Chapel — Beauregard not only did not suspect that Buell had arrived, he had good reason for thinking that he would not be there at all, having received from a colonel in North Alabama — it was Ben Hardin Helm, one of Lincoln's Confederate brothers-in-law — a telegram informing him that Buell had changed his line of march and now was moving toward Decatur. The Creole went to bed content with what had been done today and confident that Grant's destruction would be completed tomorrow. Before turning in, he sent a wire to Richmond announcing that the army had scored "a complete victory, driving the enemy from every position."

His chief of staff, sharing an improvised bed in the adjoining headquarters tent with the captured Prentiss, was even more ebullient, predicting that the northern army would surrender as soon as the battle was resumed. The distinguished captive, accepting his predicament with such grace as became a former Virginian, did not agree with his host's prognostication; nor was he reticent in protest. "You gentlemen have had your way today," he said, "but it will be very different tomorrow. You'll see. Buell will effect a junction with Grant tonight and we'll turn the tables on you in the morning." No such thing, the Confederate declared, and showed him the telegram from Helm. Prentiss was unimpressed. "You'll see," he said.

Outside in the rain, those who had been too weary to look for shelter, along with those who had looked without success, got what sleep they could, in spite of the 11-inch shells fired two every fifteen minutes by the gunboats. Their fuzes describing red parabolas across

the starless velvet of the night, they came down steeply, screaming, to explode among the sleepers and the wounded of both sides; "wash pots" and "lampposts," the awed soldiers called the big projectiles. All night the things continued to fall on schedule. Dawn grayed the east, and presently from the direction of the sunrise came the renewed clatter of musketry, the crack and boom of field artillery. As it swelled quickly to a roar, Prentiss sat bolt upright on the pallet of captured blankets inside Sherman's headquarters tent, grinning at his Confederate bedmate. "There is Buell!" he cried. "Didn't I tell you so?"

* * *

It was Buell, just as Prentiss said. His other two divisions, under Brigadier Generals Alexander D. McCook and Thomas L. Crittenden — the latter being the brother of the Confederate corps commander who had been relieved on the eve of battle — had come up in the night; he was attacking. Grant's four divisions — one hale and whole, if somewhat shamefaced over its roundabout march the day before, the others variously battered and depleted, but quite willing — took up the fire on the right, and at 7 o'clock the general sent a message to the gunboats. They were to cease their heavy caliber bombardment; the army was going forward.

Grant's orders, sent as soon as he rose at dawn from his sleep beneath the dripping oak, directed his generals to "advance and recapture our original camps." At first it was easy enough. The rebels, having broken contact the night before, were caught off balance and gave ground rapidly, surprised to find the tables turned by unexpected pressure. Wallace, Sherman, and McClernand, with Hurlbut's remnants in reserve, pushed forward to the vicinity of McClernand's camp before they ran into heavy artillery fire and halted, as Sherman said, "patiently waiting for the sound of General Buell's advance." They had not long to wait: Buell's men were taking their baptism of fire in stride. One Indiana colonel, dissatisfied with signs of shakiness when his men encountered resistance — Sherman, who was looking on, referred to it as "the severest musketry fire I ever heard" (which would make it severe indeed, after all he had been through yesterday) — halted them, then and there, and put them briskly through the manual of arms, "which they executed," he later reported, "as if on the parade ground." Considerably steadied, the Hoosiers resumed their advance. By noon, Buell's men had cleared the peach orchard on the left and Grant's were approaching Shiloh Chapel on the right. There the resistance stiffened.

After the initial shock of finding Buell on the field after all, Beauregard recovered a measure of his aplomb and went about the task of preparing his men to receive instead of deliver an attack. This was by no means easy, not only because of the gallant rivalry which urged

the two armies of Westerners forward against him, but also because his own troops had scattered badly about the blasted field in their search for food and shelter the night before. Polk, in fact, had misunderstood the retirement order and marched his survivors all the way back to their pre-battle camp on the Corinth road. Improvising as best he could, the Creole assigned Hardee the right, Breckinridge the center, and Bragg the left. When Polk returned, belatedly, he put him in between the last two. It was touch and go, however. Like Johnston, he found it necessary to set a spirited example for his men. Twice he seized the colors of wavering regiments and led them forward. Reproved for rashness by a friend who doubtless recalled what had happened to Johnston yesterday, Beauregard replied: "The order now must be 'Follow,' not 'Go'!"

At one point that afternoon he received a shock that was followed in quick succession by a hopeful surge of elation and a corresponding droop of disappointment. He noticed in some woods along his front a body of troops dressed in what appeared to be shiny white silk uniforms. At first he thought they were Federals who had breached his line, but when he saw that they were firing north, it occurred to him — though he had long since given up the notion that they could possibly arrive on time — that they might be the vanguard of Van Dorn's 15,000 reinforcements, hurried east by rail from Memphis. Certainly there were no such uniforms in the Army of the Mississippi, while there was no telling what outlandish garb the Elkhorn Tavern veterans might wear. Presently, however, a staff officer, sent to investigate, returned with the explanation. They were the general's own Orleans Guard battalion, who had turned their dress blue jackets wrong side out to put an end to being fired on by their friends. Yesterday they had startled the defenders of the Hornets Nest by charging thus with the white silk linings of their coats exposed; "graveyard clothes," the Federals had called them.

The Confederates had their backs up and were holding well along the ridge where Sherman's tents were pitched; today as yesterday Shiloh Chapel was army headquarters. But the men were bone-weary. Clearly they had no chance of defeating the reinforced Federals now applying pressure all along the line, the breaking of a single link of which might prove disastrous to the whole. Not only were they weary: their spirits had flagged at the sudden frown of fortune, the abrupt removal of victory just as it seemed within their grasp. Governor Harris, still a volunteer aide, sensed this feeling of futility in the soldiers. Shortly after 2 o'clock, he expressed his fear of a collapse to the chief of staff, who agreed and went to Beauregard with the question: "General, do you not think our troops are very much in the condition of a lump of sugar thoroughly soaked in water — preserving its original shape, though ready to dissolve? Would it not be judicious to get away with what we

have?" Beauregard nodded, looking out over the field of battle. "I intend to withdraw in a few moments," he said calmly.

Couriers soon rode out with orders for the corps commanders to begin the retreat. Breckinridge was posted along the high ground just south of Shiloh Chapel, his line studded with guns which kept up a steady booming as the other corps retired. Executed smoothly and without disorder, the retrograde maneuver had been completed by 4 o'clock, with time allowed for captured goods to be gleaned from the field and loaded into wagons, including five stands of regimental colors and twenty-one flags of the United States. Hardee, Bragg, and Polk marched their men a mile beyond and camped for the night where they had slept on their arms two nights before, in line of battle for Sunday's dawn assault. Breckinridge stayed where he was, prepared to discourage pursuit. But there was none to discourage: Grant's men were content with the recovery of their pillaged camps.

All day there had been intermittent showers, brief but thunderous downpours that drenched the men and then gave way to steamy sunshine. That night, however, the rain came down in earnest. Privates crowded into headquarters tents and stood close-packed as bullets in a cartridge box, having lost their awe of great men. When Breckinridge moved out next morning to join the long Confederate column grinding its way toward Corinth, the roads were quagmires. The wind veered, whistling out of the north along the boughs of roadside trees, and froze the rain to sleet; the countryside was blanketed with white. Hailstones fell as large as partridge eggs, plopping into the mud and rattling into the wagon beds to add to the suffering of the wounded, who, as one of them said, had been "piled in like bags of grain." Beauregard doubled the column all day to encourage and comfort the men, speaking to them much as he would do on a visit to one of their camps a week later, when, seeing a young soldier with a bandaged head, he rode up to him, extended his hand, and said: "My brave friend, were you wounded? Never mind; I trust you will soon be well. Before long we will make the Yankees pay up, interest and all. The day of our glory is near." Cheered by the bystanders, he gave them a bow as he rode away, and that night the boy wrote home: "It is strange Pa how we love that little black Frenchman."

For the present, though, the cheers were mostly perfunctory along that column of jolted, sleet-chilled men. They had had enough of glory for a while. It was not that they felt they had been defeated. They had not. But they had failed in what they had set out to do, and the man who had led them out of Corinth to accomplish the destruction of "agrarian mercenaries" was laid out dead now in a cottage there. All the same, they took much consolation in the thought that they had held their lines until they were ready to leave, and then had done so in good order, unpursued.

They were not entirely unpursued. In the Federal camp the burial details were at work and the surgeons moved about the field, summoned by the anguished cries of mangled soldiers from both armies; but Sherman was not there. Prompted by Grant, he had moved out that morning with one brigade to make a show of pursuit, or at any rate to see that the Confederates did not linger. A show was all it was, however, for when he reached a point on the Corinth road, four miles beyond his camps, he was given a lesson hunters sometimes learned from closing in too quickly on a wounded animal.

The place was called the Fallen Timbers, a half-mile-wide boggy swale where a prewar logging project had been abandoned. The road dipped down, then crested a ridge on the far side, where he could see enemy horsemen grouped in silhouette against the sky. Not knowing their strength or what might lie beyond the ridge, he shook out a regiment of skirmishers, posted cavalry to back them up and guard their flanks, then sent them forward, following with the rest of the brigade in attack formation at an interval of about two hundred yards. The thing was done in strict professional style, according to the book. But the man he was advancing against had never read the book, though he was presently to rewrite it by improvising tactics that would conform to his own notion of what war was all about. "War means fighting," he said. "And fighting means killing." It was Forrest. Breckinridge had assigned him a scratch collection of about 350 Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Texas cavalrymen, turning over to him the task of protecting the rear of the retreating column.

As he prepared to defend the ridge, outnumbered five-to-one by the advancing blue brigade, he saw something that caused him to change his mind and his tactics. For as the skirmishers entered the vine-tangled hollow, picking their way around felled trees and stumbling through the brambles, they lost their neat alignment. In fact, they could hardly have been more disorganized if artillery had opened on them there in the swale. Forrest saw his chance. "Charge!" he shouted, and led his horsemen pounding down the slope. Most of the skirmishers had begun to run before he struck them, but those who stood were knocked sprawling by a blast from shotguns and revolvers. Beyond them, the Federal cavalry had panicked, firing their carbines wildly in the air. When they broke too, Forrest kept on after them, still brandishing his saber and crying, "Charge! Charge!" as he plowed into the solid ranks of the brigade drawn up beyond. The trouble was, he was charging by himself; the others, seeing the steady brigade front, had turned back and were already busy gathering up their 43 prisoners. Forrest was one gray uniform, high above a sea of blue. "Kill him! *Kill* the goddam rebel! Knock him off his horse!" It was no easy thing to do; the horse was kicking and plunging and Forrest was hacking and slashing; but one of the soldiers did his best. Reaching far out, he shoved

the muzzle of his rifle into the colonel's side and pulled the trigger. The force of the explosion lifted Forrest clear of the saddle, but he regained his seat and sawed the horse around. As he came out of the mass of dark blue uniforms and furious white faces, clearing a path with his saber, he reached down and grabbed one of the soldiers by the collar, swung him onto the crupper of the horse, and galloped back to safety, using the Federal as a shield against the bullets fired after him. Once he was out of range, he flung the hapless fellow off and rode on up the ridge where his men were waiting in open-mouthed amazement.

Sherman was amazed, too, but mostly he was disgusted. As soon as he had gathered up his wounded and buried his dead, he turned back toward Pittsburg Landing. Snug once more in his tent near Shiloh Chapel, he wrote his report of the affair. It concluded: "The check sustained by us at the fallen timbers delayed our advance.... Our troops being fagged out by three days' hard fighting, exposure and privation, I ordered them back to camp, where all now are."

* * *

The ball now lodged alongside Forrest's spine as he followed the column grinding its way toward Corinth was the last of many to draw blood in the Battle of Shiloh. Union losses were 1754 killed, 8408 wounded, 2885 captured: total, 13,047 — about 2000 of them Buell's. Confederate losses were 1723 killed, 8012 wounded, 959 missing: total, 10,694. Of the 100,000 soldiers engaged in this first great bloody conflict of the war, approximately one out of every four who had gone into battle had been killed, wounded, or captured. Casualties were 24 percent, the same as Waterloo's. Yet Waterloo had settled something, while this one apparently had settled nothing. When it was over the two armies were back where they started, with other Waterloos ahead. In another sense, however, it had settled a great deal. The American volunteer, whichever side he was on in this war, and however green, would fight as fiercely and stand as firmly as the vaunted veterans of Europe.

Now that this last had been proved beyond dispute, the leaders on both sides persuaded themselves that they had known it all along, despite the doubts engendered by Manassas and Wilson's Creek, which dwindled now by contrast to comparatively minor engagements. Looking instead at the butcher's bill — the first of many such, it seemed — they reacted, as always, according to their natures. Beauregard, for example, recovered his high spirits in short order. Two days after the battle he wired Van Dorn, still marking time in Arkansas: "Hurry your forces as rapidly as possible. I believe we can whip them again." He believed what he told the wounded soldier, "The day of our glory is near," and saw no occasion for retracting the announcement of "com-

plete victory" sent to Richmond on the night of the first day. In fact, the further he got from the battle in time, the greater it seemed to him as a continuing demonstration of the superiority of southern arms. Nor did Davis retract the exultant message he sent to Congress in passing the telegram along. He was saddened, however, by other news it contained: namely, the loss of Albert Sidney Johnston. "When he fell," Davis wrote long afterward, "I realized that our strongest pillar had been broken."

Reactions on the other side were also characteristic. Once more Halleck saw his worst fears enlarged before his eyes, and got aboard a St Louis steamboat, bound for Pittsburg Landing, to take charge of the army himself before Grant destroyed it entirely. "Your army is not now in condition to resist an attack," he wired ahead. "It must be made so without delay." Grant tightened his security regulations, as instructed, but he did not seem greatly perturbed by the criticism. Now as always, he was a good deal more concerned with what he would do to the enemy than he was with what the enemy might try to do to him, and in any case he had grown accustomed by now to such reactions from above. The battle losses were another matter, providing some grim arithmetic for study. Total American casualties in all three of the nation's previous wars — the Revolution, the War of 1812, and the Mexican War: 10,623+6765+5885 — were 23,273. Shiloh's totaled 23,741, and most of them were Grant's.

Perhaps this had something to do with his change of mind as to the fighting qualities of his opponents. At any rate, far from thinking them "heartily tired" and ready to chuck the war, he later said quite frankly that, from Shiloh on, "I gave up all idea of saving the Union except by complete conquest."

✕ 3 ✕

While the ironclad gunboats of the western navy were pounding out their victories on the Tennessee, the Cumberland, and the mile-wide Mississippi — past Island Ten, they now were bearing down on undermanned Fort Pillow; Memphis, unbraced for the shock, was next on the list — the wooden ships of the blue-water navy were not idle in the east. Along the coasts of the Atlantic and the Gulf, where the thickened blockade squadrons hugged the remaining harbors and river outlets, the fall and winter amphibious gains had been continued and extended. Three times the *Monitor* had declined the *Merrimac-Virginia*'s challenge to single combat in Hampton Roads; if the rebel vessel wanted trouble, let her make it by trying to interfere with the *Monitor*'s task of protecting the rest of the fleet off Old Point Comfort. This she