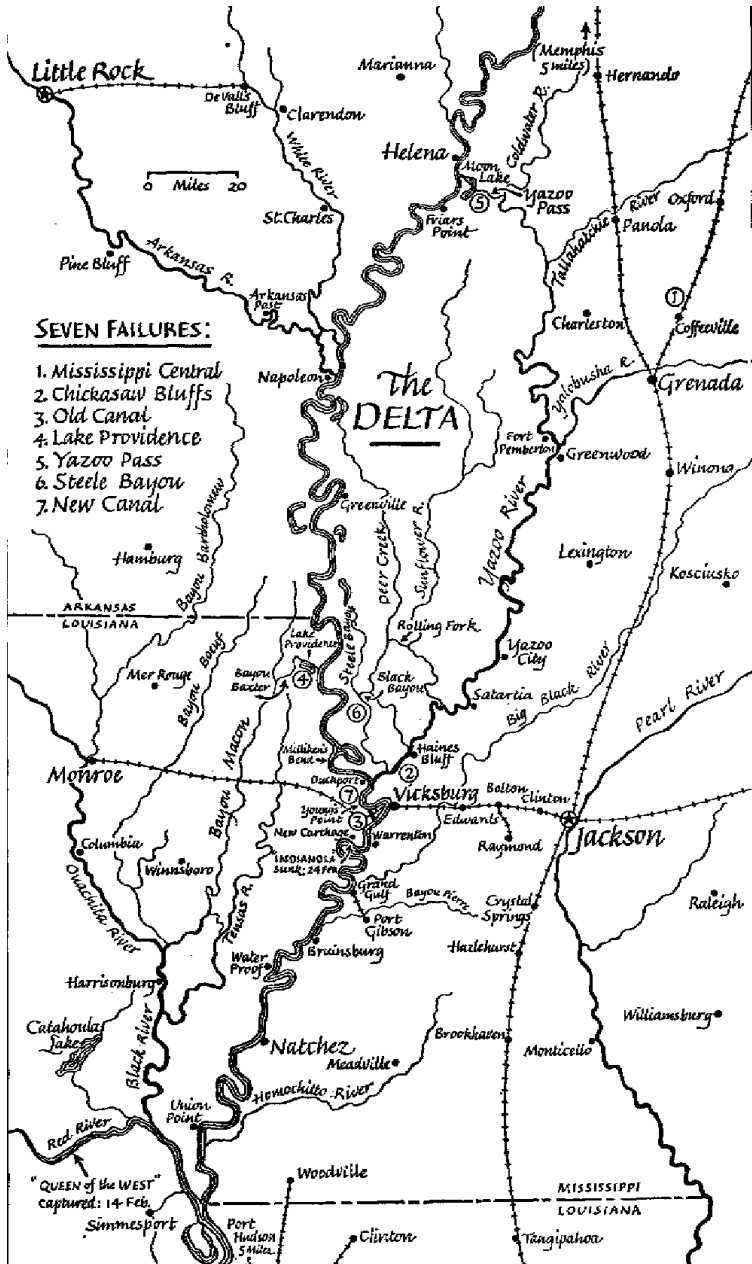


WH Clark



WH Clark

One

Hello. I am Tecumseh, a name which means celestial panther in your language. Although on the Indian tongue the meaning to whites would be more like celestial sphinx. I am a Creek Indian warrior of the tribe that the white man called "Red Sticks" during the War of 1812. I am not THE Tecumseh, as he was a Shawnee warrior-philosopher of my father's generation, but I am named after him and I do my best to live up to the honor. I will be telling you a story, of a great white soldier named Earl van Dorn.

The last thirty years have been tragic for the Creek Indians. As of the end of the War of 1812, when we sided with the British against the Americans, our numbers have been decimated, our tribal lands taken from us, and our warriors scattered to the four winds. Two generations ago we could call most of Georgia and Alabama our own land. Now it all belongs to the whites, and the few Creek tribes that remain have moved to either Florida or Oklahoma; at least, presently moving in those directions.

Technically, each tribe was comprised of two separate settlements - the "White Sticks" who were peaceable and civilized, and the "Red Sticks" who were the warriors and responsible for the protection of the community. Formally a pole painted red is what divided the two towns, is where our name came from. When the War of 1812 happened, and Americans set out to destroy our whole race, all the "Red Stick" warrior Indians came together to fight them. Now that the Americans have succeeded, the surviving warriors have no where to go. Not if they want to maintain their Indian identity.

Most of the Creek warriors have turned away from Tecumseh's teaching, and embraced the Christian religion. It is not really such a big change for the "White Sticks" because they were always peaceable and idealistic. It is a different matter all together for the "Red Stick" warriors, however, to turn the other cheek and make plow shares out of swords. Not that most had any choice in the matter, having been corralled onto federal reservations after the war.

Mostly, we went to Baton Rouge to find a sense of confidence, in our

identity as an Indian people. After all, Baton Rouge got its name from a "Red Stick" monument placed to denote the boundary between the Houma and Bogalusa Indian nations - same as with the Creek Indians. There were even ancient Indian mounds there in Baton Rouge, many thousands of years old. These artifacts meant that we were as ancient as the white man, and no less worthy of being a people in our own right. Alas, these three mounds were at the exact same latitude as three large pyramids in Egypt, half way around the round world in a place that used to be called Memphis by the ancients. Our sacred mounds were smaller, granted, but they were five hundred years older. Needless to say, it made us proud, to be at this place.

A few of us Red Sticks escaped the American Indian round up, and found a place to call home in the river city of Baton Rouge, which means Red Stick in French. It seemed to be a reasonable place to hide - no one in their right mind would hide in a place named right after your kind. There were many other Indians of different tribes in the area, so it was not hard for us to pretend to be civilized for a little while until another war came along and we could fight once again.

Indeed, in the late 1850's there was much talk in the South of how the North was mistreating them, and ignoring their representation in Washington's town. By 1860 some states had actually seceded from the Union, and war was sure to follow. Now the Red Stick warriors could speak of their hatred of the North freely, and expect no retaliation from white men.

Being a sensible people, my friends and I were wary of the situation. Indians are very particular about whom they follow, especially into battle. Our entire system is organized so that war chiefs arise by virtue of skill, success, and ferocity. The white man's system is different, and often military leaders arise with no skill other than political or social aptitude. That's "White Stick" leadership, not "Red Stick" leadership. So we were careful to find a worthy leader before picking up the Tomahawk once again.

There was no hurry, in the spring of 1860. The South and North were in a war of words and although the pace in Baton Rouge had picked up a little from the excitement of it all, life was little changed. We took the

opportunity of using this honeymoon stage of the Confederacy to find us a good white war chief. There were only twenty of us Red Sticks, so it was really no big deal; but it was important to us, and we took the selection quite seriously.

We found our leader in a West Point white called Earl Van Dorn. Joining his small raiding party, he led us west to Texas where we captured the federal forts at Galveston Island and even a couple of federal gunboats there. Then General Van Dorn went up to San Antonio to party with the Texans, leaving us Red Sticks behind.

We took to sitting on some hay bales in a small clearing near the Port of Galveston, watching the boats and people, and lending a hand loading the rail cars to pass the time. Van Dorn would be gone for a few weeks to central Texas, and we were still not entirely satisfied with his leadership. We had time yet to seek a white leader.

It was becoming unsettling to us, to perceive war from the white man's perspective now that we were officially aligned with the Confederacy. As we had in the early 1800's, the South was fighting for their land; but they were also fighting for freedom and other ideals that were motivating to the white rebel soldiers. We Red Sticks had been motivated to protect our tribe, and that was it. We fought for people and friends and children and wives; not ideals. Besides, these ideals seemed to us self evident and usually both sides in an Indian dispute had these same ideals.

It was all very confusing, and it only got worse when we Red Stick warriors in Galveston had two weeks free time on our hands. The whole Southern mystique, we had agreed, was further complicated by the white religion called Christianity. The Creeks had suffered because of this Christianity once before already; it having motivated the Americans to wipe our nation out a generation ago, and to steal all our land, and kill all the White Stick noncombatants. Now these Southern whites were justifying a whole new set of apparently contradictory goals by the same Christian Book of words.

We were doing just fine, discussing these things among ourselves while idly watching the goings on in the Port, until one of the Red Stick

warriors said something about evil. The disturbing point is that he made sense, about how we were evil before to the Americans but now we are not evil to the Confederates even though we had not changed at all. It just seemed like all whites, no matter what side they are on, blame everything on somebody called Satan and all the evil he does.

We knew enough about the Christ to know that the Great Spirit got upset enough about people speaking bad about God that He sent His son to investigate and to set the record straight for all human beings. It just seems like the Great Spirit would not be just as upset about all the wrong things being blamed on this fellow Satan, to call for another son to investigate. That, at least, is how we Indians saw the situation.

Fortunately for us this discussion, which was getting us all so very upset that we were on the verge of taking sides and then splitting each others heads wide open, was short lived. A stiff breeze was picking up off the Bay and we could see a large thunderstorm brewing not too far in the distance. A single massive anvil shaped cloud with steady bursts of lightening was coming right at us. The dock workers were frantic, to complete their off loading before the squall reached us. It's amusing, how scared white people are of rain. Only a few drops were falling now and they were panic stricken. We Indians just sat on our hay bails enjoying the cool breeze and the even cooler raindrops as they evaporated from our upturned faces.

A large schooner rushed into the port just then, and as soon as the last rope was made fast to the iron pilings on the pier wall, men were all over the sails like ants loosening ropes and pulling sails down. The wind was picking up and halyards were let loose, sails lost control of, and every manner of salty sea curse word could be heard from the sailors aloft. We watched, mesmerized.

As all this was going on, the passengers embarked and made haste to the nearest shelter. There were southern belles with billowing skirts held down in the wind not too successfully; gentlemen with bowlers locked down over their ears in the wind, everybody now getting quite drenched as the rain came down in vast sheets of water. Large drops splattered in the packed dirt of the dock proper, causing tender feet in delicate shoes to falter and slide. Everyone was having quite the

miserable time of it.

When all the passengers had gone, and most of the sailors were below decks, their task done; the scene became static, with a steady rain falling in a stiff wind. The Indians made as if to leave themselves, when suddenly their attention was wrenched back to the schooner as a huge bolt of lightening cracked feet away from the gangplank.

A man was on the gangplank itself when this happened, trailing behind him an enormous beast of a beautiful horse. Neither man nor horse blinked an eye nor lost a step as the lightening struck, ripping the ground asunder mere inches away from them and bursting eardrums from the immediate concussion of the thunder. The lightening was so close it left in its wake a trail of steam where the rain had been vaporized by the intense energy.

The man stepped forward, horse in gentle tow, through billowing steam and blowing rain, undaunted by their circumstances. The Indians, only just now ready to leave this place, were riveted in attention. A man so fearless, with a beast so powerful, is the kind of leader they were seeking. The rain all but forgotten, no fear themselves of lightening or thunder, they observed with every ounce of their being.

The man was dressed in gray military pants completely black from the rain, with an officer's stripe down the seams. Thick leather boots and leather jacket were just as soaked, but it was the glittering silver saber arched on its leather belt around one shoulder that caught the angle of light from the lightening. Silver trimming on the worn saddle held on the opposite shoulder was evidenced too. The man wore a cavalry officers hat, water pouring from its curve, to the back.

Right there in the middle of the mud sea that was now the pier loading dock, the man stopped, turned, put the saddle on his horse, then got a brush out of the saddle bags and started brushing down the huge gray and white horse. This went on for several minutes, as the storm passed and the rain lessened to a drizzle. A few rays of bright afternoon sunshine even showed up. Soon as the man had made his way all around his horse, brushing down hard its front, back and sides, he made to admire the stallion holding the reins lightly in his hands as he

stepped back. The horse reared its head, dug at the mud with its front feet clearly anxious for a good run on solid ground. The officer seemed no less anxious, packed his gear, buckled on the majestic silver saber, and adjusted the saddle then made as if to mount.

By this time he was surrounded by twenty Red Stick Indians gawking in open admiration at man, but mostly at horse. The rain was little more than a drizzle, but the whole group was totally soaked and dripping rain from every seam and shirt sleeve. Most of the Indians, still shy in the presence of white men, were slapping and petting and inspecting the horse. Tecumseh was looking right square in the soldier's eye, and he liked what he saw.

Sweeping an arm around at his fellow Red Sticks, Tecumseh identified them and himself. The man tipped his hat, letting loose an embarrassing gush of water as he did so, smiled a greeting, and held out a strong hand to Tecumseh in the white man's friendly greeting.

"Erb's my name. Louis Erb, from Memphis." Then he got right up on his horse and rode off at a gallop toward the nearest beach. The Indians all followed at a dead run; then somebody remembered their own horses and a couple of them ran back to the pier, gathered all the reigns and followed along as the bulk of the Red Sticks were by now running through the surf.

One of the mounted Indians asked what the man had said was his name. The other Indian hesitated; then said, sounded like Lucifer is what he said to me. They looked real seriously spooked for a couple of seconds, horses galloping happily under and all around them; then they both broke out in a ragged, somewhat evil smile - let loose a blood curdling holler, and went racing after their friends.

They all slowed down and stopped after a while, to admire the scattering of burned orange clouds silhouetting the setting sun over the ocean. The two mounted Indians got off their horses, then eased stealthily over to look more closely at the white soldier. One of the Red Stick Indians was about to reach out and touch him to be sure he was for real, when the other grabbed his shoulder in a vice grip and pointed to a name branded into the horses' neck. Leviathan, it said in bold

block letters worn with time but still discernible.

The hair standing right straight up on the backs of their necks, the two Indians shivered with terror, then made a mad dash straight out into the pounding ocean surf. They came ashore minutes later, shivering badly from head to toe. The others gathered up some drift wood and soon a roaring fire was going on the deserted beach, and everybody was gathering around to dry themselves out.

Once the sun had set, everybody dry and sitting around the crackling fire, Tecumseh was called aside by the two horse soldiers and I was told in hushed words about their dark suspicions concerning this new white man friend of ours. We decided to tell him about this, which he did not confirm or deny, as white men can do so famously.

By this time everybody in the group was in the discussion, Indians being impossible to keep away from a secret, and the embers were nearly burned black in the camp fire before we finally came to an agreement. The white man was to take a new name, and we decided a suitable one for him was Clark because of the famous Lewis associated with that famous Clark. It was not good logic, but if Red Sticks can hide safely in Baton Rouge then Louis should be able to remain undiscovered going by a name like Clark. We all shook on it, then scattered to find some food for our horses then bed them down for the night. We Indians were back by the camp fire in no time at all.

There we all were, sitting cross legged in a big circle on the beach at Galveston in Texas, talking about our futures and plans for glory. It was like fire water in our veins, to be really back upon the war path again. It was good to have found a white man leader worthy of the Red Stick warriors of the Creek Indian nation.

It was also decided that Red Stick warriors was not a good thing to call ourselves because we were in the Confederacy now and we would be fighting alongside with men from Alabama and Georgia who had lost families to us during the War of 1812 and then the Creek War. So, using the same twisted logic, we called ourselves the Missouri Volunteers.

So that is how it all began with us, Colonel Clark's Missouri Volunteers. It seems a big name for just twenty people, and a long introduction has been written here as well, but now we all have something to live up to in the next few years of the Civil War. Well, actually it wasn't quite as simple as all that. We Indians had enough exposure to the Christian myth to be at least a little bit fearful of their notion of evil. There were those among us who wanted to consider this more before going galavanting off on the trail with this white knight from some place called Memphis.

We were all still talking about things, and Tecmuseh found himself bringing up this matter, of this white man leader being maybe evil. It is to the Colonel's credit that, sitting right there amongst us, he seemed as curious to discover the truth about this as we. Before too long the discussion got heated, and we lapsed into our native tongue of Muskogee. Mostly because there are many subtle things, spiritual Great Spirit things, that cannot be adequately expressed in the english tongue. But also because it is uncomfortable for us native American people to be discussing evil in front of the accused himself.

After a while, I must admit that things were not going well for the Colonel. Evil is like that, hard to get out of the mind, and cleanse the spirit of its mere mention. We were on the verge of calling for a vote, when this great big huge shadow came over us - like evil itself, darkening our camp fire and stifling the sea breeze. We brave Indians shuttered, only to look up from the fire to see the nose of the big fearsome horse named Leviathan above us in the smoky air. Of course, several of us startled with fright even worse; like so many little children listening to a scary story in a strange new place, but after all it was only a horse - so we told ourselves, at least.

This Leviathan looked all around the circle of us, seeking out his master; he nodded his powerful neck when he spied the Colonel, then looked back at all the rest of us and gave us all a great big wet slobbery sneer. It was quite discombobulating to us, how this horse was putting us down in our very own pow wow.

By now everybody was silent, watching the beast, who moved then and came up behind the Colonel, holding down the reins into the Colonel's

lap. The Colonel tried to ignore the stallion, and made himself busy by rolling up his pants legs, and taking his boots and socks off. The reigns were still dangling in his face, so he grasped them, and the horse yanked him right up on his feet. They went trotting off together after that, dancing together in and out of the surf; he in his bare feet, the horse - well, you have the image.

So there we brave Indians were, discussing for all practical purposes the fate of a strange white man who had just then left us staring at a pair of tooled leather boots and dirty socks stuffed into the top. It was quite a foolish feeling, and having kind of lost the edge to the heavy philosophical things we were discussing we all got up overly casual like, to stretch our stiff legs and ambled down the beach after the Colonel and his smart but kind of scary great big horse.

It may seem odd to white people, but a sight we saw not long after was what made up our minds on this whole matter. Leviathan had outrun the Colonel in a foot race, and had trotted happily off into the distant surf breaking on the beach. We observed the Colonel, now playing little games with the many small birds called terns, scurrying in and out of the frothing surf waves plying the gently sloping sand, chasing the little birdies here and there like a small boy. Admittedly, it made us braves think seriously about taking our own moccasins off and playing in the warm salty water too; but we perished that thought.

The Colonel had herded all the terns into a large group, easily fifty in number. Then he stopped at the surfs edge; they stopped too, in the moist sand above the wave line. He looked at them, not moving a muscle; they stared back, motionless. Then with a little flurry, the group of birdies as if on command shuffled around to form the silhouette of a large sea gull, you know how you draw a big bird in the sand by connecting two arches. That was how these birds looked then. They were still, the Colonel was still - and by this time so were we Indians.

Then the Colonel raised his arms, yelled, and started chasing the little birds all over hell and back. They screamed, he screamed; they took a flight, and he scurried right after them. You had to have been there. It was a moment fitting for the Great Spirit. It was good enough for us

WH Clark

Indians, anyway.

Two

Back on July 4, 1863, General John C. Pemberton's rebel troops had, as instructed, laid down their arms and signed an affidavit not to take up arms again. The North, anxious to punctuate that Independence Day with garlands of victory, had offered the Confederates such generous terms (which included \$25 U.S. dollars for each soldier), they could hardly refuse. Thus did Vicksburg come to belong to the Yankees. The Gibraltar of the South was of the North now. The Confederacy was split in two, with the North in complete control of the Mississippi River.

Twenty thousands brave Confederate soldiers had died defending Vicksburg against Grant's siege. For six weeks the city had been besieged, suffering day and night under constant cannon fire from both the Mississippi River gunboats and entrenched Yankees inland. The civilian populace had found shelter in hills dug into the Chicksaw bluffs at the edge of town. The soldiers had manned the defenses, to the best of their ability. Out of food, low on water; morale abysmal, the officers under General Pemberton had finally relented and agreed to the Yankees' terms of surrender.

There were no cheers when the truce was announced. If anything, the rebel troops slid into a despondent depression. Most would rather have died than surrender. The townsfolk were even more devastated. The soldiers were rebuffed, certainly; but they were free to go home and would see no more action for the duration. The people of Vicksburg, on the other hand, had lost their city, their slaves, and their favorite son as well - Major General Earl Van Dorn. The General, they had just found out, had been killed a few days after the siege had begun.

Van Dorn had been reassigned from Vicksburg, where he had been Pemberton's Calvary commander and had all by himself stalled the first Yankee campaign on Vicksburg six months previous. Van Dorn had been sent to Tennessee to serve under Bragg where he distinguished himself in several daring raids holding the 90,000 union forces at bay against Bragg's 45,000 Confederates at Chickamauga.

The people of Vicksburg had expected him to be sent back home when

the union forces began their second campaign on their city.

Grant had four famously talented generals - Sherman, McClelland, Banks, and McPherson - and Vicksburg had Pemberton, a northern born Yankee from Philadelphia with no previous combat experience. Van Dorn and his cavalry were sorely needed; moreover, because the union assault came from south of town through Port Gibson - Van Dorn's place of birth - through the kind of heavily forested land where cavalry is most effective.

Actually, Pemberton did OK until the North's best Cavalry commander Grierson made a raid, moving all the way from Baton Rouge to Vicksburg in two days time, keeping Pemberton from getting his soldiers in the most defensible position for Grant's three prong attack. Pemberton had begged the area commander, General Joe Johnston, first not to take Van Dorn and his horse soldiers; then to return them once hostilities were underway. Johnston had, in fact, rushed to Pemberton's aid but came too late to be of any use; they were blocked at Jackson 70 miles from Vicksburg and never made it to the city.

It was obvious to everybody that Van Dorn could have made it to Vicksburg faster with the kind of troops they needed, and been far more effective in defending against a Yankee assault through land well known to him. They were furious, and believed that Pemberton had sold them out. Surrendering the city on Independence Day, him being from the independence city Philadelphia itself, didn't ingratiate him to them any too much.

It wasn't until the day the siege had lifted that they got word that Van Dorn had been shot on May 7 in his office in Tennessee near the Chickamauga battle lines. Killed, by some doctor well known to the locals. The Confederate authorities said it was the act of a jealous husband, that Van Dorn had been having an affair with the doctor's wife. The timing was too unlikely for anybody in Vicksburg to accept that explanation. Van Dorn had been murdered; no, assassinated, the day the union assault on Vicksburg began.

It is likely that Johnston would have sent Van Dorn to help Pemberton; that Van Dorn would have been in the area to stop Grierson's cavalry

raid from Baton Rouge; that a little extra confusion would have stalled the federal assault to give Pemberton enough time to position his soldiers properly; that Vicksburg would have survived the second campaign upon its ramparts. All of this upset the citizens of Vicksburg very much, and it only made them more suspicious when the new federal authorities in town were so irrational in their support of the jealous husband theory.

More than a few of the soldiers at Vicksburg were upset as well. Four thousand of them, in fact, had volunteered to contribute their \$25 to pay for somebody to investigate. They gave this money to the city leaders, who wired a former Colonel under Van Dorn as soon as the siege lifted on July 4, told him of their concerns, and got him riled up enough that he said he would have some men in Vicksburg ASAP.

As the people of Vicksburg waited for the Colonel, they tended to business. As the days passed, 30,000 Confederate troops straggled into the courthouse square and laid down their arms. The officers were allowed to keep their swords. Everybody got \$25 when they signed an affidavit refusing to fight again. The soldiers were ragged, dirty, barely skin and bones skeletons. They had given everything; had been willing to give more. Likewise with the city folk.

Typically, the Confederate soldiers arrived in some semblance of military order, and straggled away still under their officer's command. Discipline was the only thing left them. They were not happy to be going home under a white flag. Feet dragged, shoulders drooped, and none of the formations walked in step.

The four thousand who had pledged their \$25 to the City for an investigation of Van Dorn's demise were the last to leave town. They had been told the Colonel would arrive ASAP, but that was days ago. It seemed they have given up their money for nothing, and they were too spent to argue with the City, so they joined the long column of refugees and left town.

The departing troops lined a road leaving Vicksburg, winding through the densely wooded hills to the east of the city center at the cliffs overlooking the mighty Mississippi River. Some straggled out of their

formations, whisking into the woods like waifs. Nobody talked. It took all their energy just to walk.

After a while the whole column eased to a halt. Brisk hoof prints were clattering in the distance. A cloud of dust made orange by the late afternoon sun rose into the crisp spring air. As the horse soldiers approached a shutter of pride echoed through the long column of troops, one echelon at a time.

Shoulders straightened perceptively, chins cocked up, and resolve replaced despair in the soldier's faces. A few even grimaced with a hatred of their northern enemy, welling up from deep within their wounded souls. Officers were the most marked in their transformation. One after the other, as they each in turn called their troops into close march half step parade order; the officers guided their men to the grass beside the road, gave their formations halt; then right faced them to front the graveled country road.

As the horse soldiers clattered past, each officer called his troops to order; they saluted, and the officer drew his ceremonial sword in glittering salute, respecting the cavalry troops spirting past. It wasn't until the dust of their passage settled, and the horse steps had echoed into the background that the formations of soldiers were smartly called to rest.

When the cavalry passed that last group of men, entering the town square; as the last formation of troops was given parade rest by their officer... Well, a mighty cry erupted spontaneously from the assembled men. Hats flew into the air, often accompanied by bloody curses directed at the Yankees; hands clapped, and stanzas of Confederate battle hymns careened through the afternoon breeze. This otherworldly cacophony accompanied the cavalry troop, now entering the town square mounted upon their magnificent steeds.

The head of the forty odd cavalry troops passed the Stars and Bars to his second in command, then dismounted and approached the union officers assembled in the square to execute the terms of surrender. A Colonel's eagle glittered on the rebel leader's shoulders, and a crimson red sash was a dash of color to his tattered gray Confederate uniform.

The rest of the troop made as if to dismount themselves; but the Colonel turned and motioned them not to. The union officers immediately unholstered their weapons, as if to quell this last minute rebellion by these stalwart hold outs. The rebel Colonel strode forward, unfazed, and unflinching as if to say fire and I dare say you will immediately invoke the wrath of the Almighty. Your call.

Reaching the senior officer's make shift desk he asked the general politely if he would permit the cavalry troop to keep their arms and remain under their Confederate flag as they were to henceforth conduct a military investigation at the request of the City of Vicksburg. The general consulted with his staff, then gave reluctant approval. Van Dorn had been popular at West Point, and they were as anxious as the City to know the circumstances of his murder.

The Colonel remained behind to complete the paperwork, and motioned his men to immediately head out of town, to the north. They would not do so, but waited patiently for the formalities to be completed. At last the deed was done, and the Colonel stood, saluted, and turned to rejoin his men. He mounted up, took the Confederate battle flag from his top sergeant and the headed out of town, to set up their tents on a bluff north of town.

As the last cavalry trooper passed the group of union officers, one of the Yankees shouted out after them - who in hell's name are you men. No response. Then, who's the Colonel.

The name's Colonel J.O.B. Clark, saying the letters as one syllable ~ the Colonel being named alike the Biblical paragon who had a few words with God Almighty Himself. Then, with a start, the cavalry trooper let out a rebel yell as the rest of the troop went to a full, frothing gallop. They call us the Missouri Volunteers, the Rebel sergeant yelled out to the Yankee soldiers, rushing then to catch up to his friends.

A short while later, General Ulysses Grant showed up. To a man the Yankee surrender detail jumped to their feet. The General remained mounted, preferring to look down upon his subordinates. With a gruff voice he inquired about the battalion of reinforcements due from Arkansas, they were late and the men needed to be relieved for some

much deserved rest and relaxation.

Just then a furious volley of gunfire erupted a few miles to the north of the encampment, so voluminous as to cause some of the soldiers in the city square to dive for cover. The General turned and quickly galloped to a nearby knoll, pulling field glasses out as he did so. A look of great consternation was upon his countenance.

Behind him the soldiers of the surrender detail were muttering amongst themselves. The officer in charge tracked down the soldier who had been seen talking to the departing Confederates, and inquired as to anything he had learned. The soldier told him.

Reiterated the officer in charge, sputtering; THE Colonel JOB Clark - "Vulture" Clark, with the Missouri Volunteers. You DAMN sure you heard them right soldier. Yes, sure. The officer in charge bleached white in the face, and stumbled over to seat himself upon a wooden bench. General Grant returned to camp right then, trotting right past the officer in charge; the junior staff officer didn't move a muscle he was so cataleptic.

The General called them to order and muttered something about extending duty call. Their relief was held up it seems. Then he told his next in command to send some men out to bring back the casualties in the brief engagement they'd just heard. Damn vultures are circling already, he said beneath his breath; never know how they do that so fast here down South.

The General, in departing, was most impressed that every Union soldier in town square had stood bolt upright, in rigid attention as he departed. Need more good discipline like that, he said to his self.

As the General trotted out of sight, the officer in charge - still collapsed on the bench - took a peak out of the corner of his eye, northward to spy the alleged vultures gathering. Sure enough, he grimaced; a veritable tornado of them was forming. It took every ounce of discipline he could muster to make is own way up to the knoll, to spy the situation in the field glasses. The ground was thick with dead and wounded, all in Yankee uniform.

Far in the distance a small billow of dust and smoke punctuated with the Confederate battle flag quickly retreated out of eye sight.

WH Clark

Three

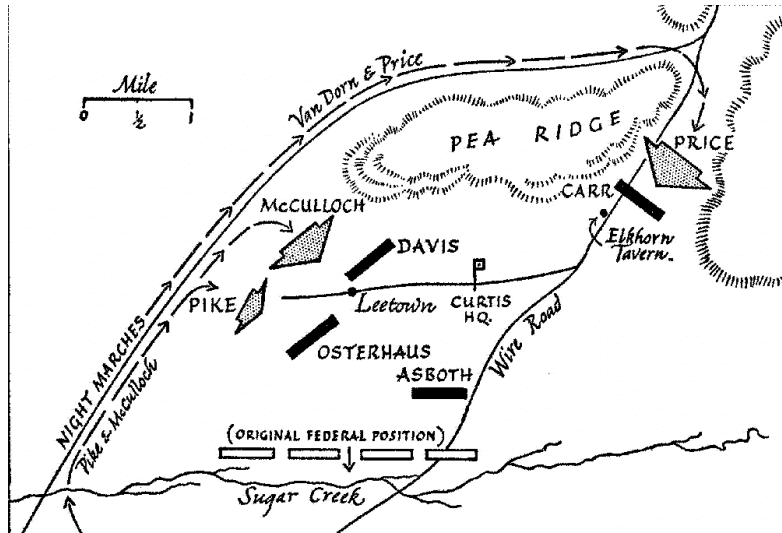
Our first big break - long before our assignment after Vicksburg - came just after the Pea Ridge campaign near Leetown on the western corner of the border between Arkansas and Missouri. Pea Ridge is a region of high bluffs and hills north of Leetown, where 11,000 federal troops were positioned.

It was early in March of 1862 and General Van Dorn was in overall command of 17,000 Confederate soldiers about a third of whom were Indians, about half under General Pike and the rest under General McCulloch. It was the first major Civil War battle for most of the Indians, who were terrified by the cannon fire and balked at orders to fight standing up in a line of battle, preferring to fire from behind rocks and trees. To make things worse, McCulloch was killed early in the battle and Indians being keyed far more than white men on their leaders in battle, they scattered and caused disarray in the entire Confederate army.

Van Dorn had ambitions of a bold strike at the union troops in this battle, hoping for a swift victory after which he could dash north to St. Louis and then deep into the North. Unfortunately he was hurt seriously in a horse accident a week before the battle and was confined to a horse drawn wagon, upon which he lay flat for the duration. Moreover, the Confederate troops had reached Leetown after a three day forced march from the south, through rain and snow and with limited rations, so they were not at their best when the battle began.

Van Dorn's plan was a risky military maneuver, splitting his troops into two groups. One group took the federal troops head on at Leetown, while the other under Van Dorn and Price circled around Pea Ridge to the north, to then come in to Leetown to the rear of the union encampment. It was a bold plan that was well executed - until McCulloch was killed and the Indians started to panic. Both of the commands with Indian soldiers were part of the half of Van Dorn's forces making a frontal assault on Leetown, so when their battle line wavered then stalled as General Pike sought to regroup his forces, the federal troops were made suspicious and after scouting the area,

surmised the rebels were coming at them from the rear. Thus they were able to dispatch troops to protect their rear.



It is worth noting that both of the Confederate commanders with Indian troops in their contingent were hit by the federal troops - McCulloch was killed by an overwhelming volley from a small cadre of Yankees, and Pike was wounded as well in the arm but he put it in a sling and kept on fighting for two more days. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that these two generals were purposefully targeted by the desperate federal defenders. After all, they too had been in the Indian Wars and they knew how much the Indians focused upon leaders when in battle. However, it was one of the most important of all the rules of engagement that no soldier could ever purposefully target any officer of the opposing side. It may be quite the opposite in the modern day, but it was the first through tenth commandment of war back then. Yet, as will be seen later, the union troops broke with tradition in the eastern theater of operations with regularity; it's not unexpected that the might do so in the west as well.

These suspicions arise from the defilement done to McCulloch's body

and person during the battle. Moreover, General McCulloch's replacement was killed within the hour, and a third commander was captured shortly thereafter while "rallying" some federal soldiers who were in confederate (or at least indeterminate) uniform. Whether from some inbred hatred of the Indian race, or malice toward any white man who might lead them; or by some preternatural scheme to assassinate the Generals leading Indian troops to enact a malicious chaos to thereby disrupt the Confederate order of battle, is unknown. It is certainly an improbably coincidence that the federals would go to such great lengths to remove the leadership of a specific regimental command.

Anyway, after two days of fighting the forces disengaged, with about 1500 casualties each. Van Dorn regrouped to the north of Pea Ridge and started off toward St. Louis where he planned to destroy the major rail depot at Rolla, about 100 miles southwest of St. Louis. This would have cut off the supply lines to the federal troops at Leestown he'd just blazed through. They were the last line of defense - there were no further defenders between Van Dorn and St. Louis. He had 16,000 healthy troops consolidated under three good Generals, with an Indian contingent that was rid of its battle fright and ready to take on the enemy.

This kind of rear guard action was Van Dorn's forte. In the next two years he would make several bold thrusts deep into enemy territory, to do enough damage to their supply lines to stall major offensives by months. Granted, Pea Ridge had not been a victory but he had managed to blow through the union troops, inflicting enough damage to keep them from following after him any time soon, as he dashed north toward St. Louis.

A week later, on March 23 while moving through the area of Springfield Missouri, Van Dorn received orders to head east to join A.S. Johnston and Beauregard who were in retreat from Kentucky. Van Dorn headed east right away, following roads and rail lines through Cedar Gap and the Ozarks poste haste, only to arrive in Mississippi too late. On April 6 the 40,000 Confederate forces under General Albert Sidney Johnston attacked the 40,000 federal forces under Grant at Shiloh Chapel, about

150 miles northwest of Memphis. 15,000 Yankee soldiers arrived the next day under General Wallace and turned the tide of the battle; that, plus the death of A.S. Johnston, which thrust the Confederates into disarray. The Confederates were forced to retreat in disarray to Corinth, outnumbered. There were 13,000 federal and 10,700 Confederate casualties.

The Confederate battle strategy at Shiloh had much to be desired. The troops of all three generals were spread out over a wide battle front, like three arcs of waves emanating from a central point. There was no communication possible along each of the three battle fronts, and the lay of the land and many small streams caused each battle line to be split into several segments. The result was that blocks of Confederate soldiers, each with three separate commanders from whom they could receive no orders, were going against coherent blocks of federal troops each under their own local commander. It was a melee on the Confederate side, and the federal troops were able to take advantage of this and route them.

Van Dorn arrived only a few days later, where he joined the regrouping troops in Corinth. Not a few generals questioned his battle strategy at Pea Ridge - even though their own strategy at Shiloh had been just as risky; at least Van Dorn had tried a proven military strategy. Moreover, since the Confederate troops had to rush into the battle before the reinforcements arrived, they had to engage the enemy before their own reinforcements - most of which were cavalry - arrived from the west. So they rushed into battle with a rash battle plan, only to still face a superior force when the reinforcements arrived the following day.

It seems likely that if Van Dorn had continued straight north to St. Louis, the 15,000 union troops under General Wallace would never have been sent to reinforce Grant's army in the first place, but would have been diverted to counter Van Dorn's Army. Since Van Dorn couldn't arrive in time to join the battle, they could at least have allowed him to carry through with his plans. Pea Ridge was made out to be a defeat and a flawed plan by General Van Dorn; when, in fact, it was a defeat only because his plans were gutted half way through. It was A.S. Johnston who made the strategic error, who lost the battle of Shiloh, and in recalling Van Dorn removing the last chance the Confederacy

had of securing Missouri to the South.

The way things turned out, Missouri never was much in contention ever again. It remained a part of the union, and formed a solid western front that the could hold with ease and have no fear of Confederate threats thereafter. Had Van Dorn managed to approach St. Louis and unopposed station his 17,000 troops in the vicinity - harassing supply lines and disrupting rail communications in the very hear of the North - it's likely he would have been able to get reinforcements from the many Indian tribes just to the west in Oklahoma, to supplement the Indians already under his command.

Much of this could have been done by the time the union troops under Grant arrived at Shiloh, chasing the Confederate troops retreating out of Kentucky. With Missouri at least partially under the Confederate flag (the Missouri legislature had voted to secede, and even though they were soon run off, the state could still be considered at least half in the Southern block of states), Grant would have not been able to follow through to the Mississippi-Tennessee border as that would expose his flanks. General A.S. Johnston would have been able to gather his strength, wait for Grant to send some of his troops to counter Van Dorn's move on St. Louis, then attack with superior numbers against a vulnerable enemy position.

This, at least, is the kind of case that would have been made on Van Dorn's defense at a military tribunal convened after Pea Ridge to consider relieving him of command for gross dereliction of duty. It was fortunate there was somebody like Lewis Erb, a.k.a. Colonel Clark, to argue his defense. Erb had been an officer in the Prussian Army, was highly decorated, and had himself been at the battle of Pea Ridge as part of the 1st Arkansas Mounted Rifles. He was a German and could therefore see the facts without any prejudice against Indians held by most Confederate (as well as union) officers who had taken part in the Indian Wars.

The very accusation against Van Dorn, misusing the forces under his command at Pea Ridge, was enough to serious tarnish his reputation. All of his decorations for bravery in the Indian Wars, his posting as

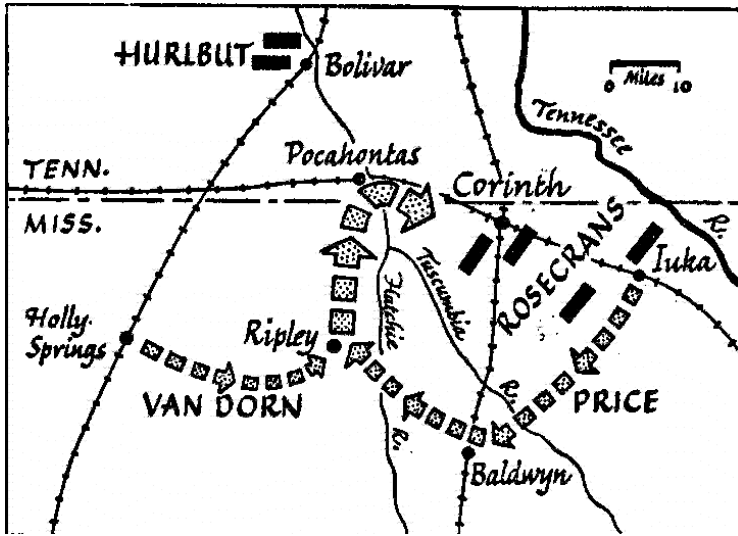
Cavalry Commander of the Army of Virginia second only to R.E. Lee, his success in countless skirmishes before the Civil War, and then before Pea Ridge, were instantly forgotten. Van Dorn became a pariah. There are those who say that his later murder was politically motivated, in retaliation for his failures on the battle field.

If the issues at Pea Ridge were not enough to destroy Van Dorn, the command issues that happened at his next battle at Corinth certainly were. Still, it could be argued that his plan of battle was sound and well within the capabilities of the troops under Van Dorn's command, but that the troops had lost the confidence in their leader because of the formal investigation into Pea Ridge. Whatever the case, after Corinth Van Dorn was relieved of command of the Army of Mississippi, which - to add insult to injury - was given to General Pemberton, a man with no combat experience whatsoever and a native of Philadelphia. There could be no worse possible insult, for a native of Mississippi like Van Dorn.

It is to Pemberton's credit that he made Van Dorn his cavalry commander, recognizing perhaps that Van Dorn's flaws in the command of large armies of men (shared, by the way, with most of the Confederate commanders early in the war - including Stonewall Jackson, and R.E. Lee both of whom had quite major problems early in the war) was in assuming they had the speed of men on horse, when actually most were afoot. Still, after Corinth, his reputation was so black that if something had not been done to earn him a second chance, he would never have been offered the cavalry command by Pemberton.

It fell upon a second formal investigation held by the Confederate Army high command, presumably with some legal pretenses, and argued by an officer responsible for Van Dorn's defense. The stakes were high, and if anything the man who defended Van Dorn in the first tribunal would be even more vilified by the troops that Van Dorn himself, for convincing the authorities to let Van Dorn remain in command of the Army of Mississippi, to then botch things up again at Corinth. It's damn lucky for Col. Clark that he had a small contingent of loyal Indians to keep him safe from hotheads seeking vengeance for alleged battlefield failures.

The battle of Corinth happened in October of 1862. In the six months since Shiloh, the Confederates had set up at near Corinth, which is about fifty miles southwest of Shiloh and roughly half way to Memphis.



Corinth was a major rail junction, with lines going west to Memphis, east to Chattanooga, and south to Jackson, Vicksburg, Port Hudson, and New Orleans. It was an important strategic location for both sides.

Corinth was to be the last major battlefield command of General Van Dorn as an area commander during the Civil War. He would never again have any more than a fraction of the troops under his command, and was able to achieve success only by virtue of essentially disobeying orders to stay put, to make daring raids behind enemy lines. The huge success of these raids, militarily and strategically, was the only thing that kept him from losing his officer's commission all together. It's a tribute to his skill and leadership that, his reputation being as dark as it was, he managed to earn the trust of his soldiers to follow him on these raids - which were far more daring than those for

which he had been so severely castigated.

To put it in perspective, one of Van Dorn's subordinates was Nathan Bedford Forrest who became a famous cavalry leader on the basis of raids made while he was still under Van Dorn's command - i.e. Forrest became famous in the South, and feared in the North, by virtue of acts there were largely those of General Van Dorn, who got no credit at all. After Van Dorn was killed, Forrest did prove himself to be a worthy strategist; but a big part of a cavalry leaders success is from the mystique of prior successes. Arguably, had Van Dorn gotten the credit he deserved his esteem among the troops might have survived the setbacks early in his career, and he could have matured into as capable a leader as any in the Civil War.

Be that as it may, the albatross that stifled Van Dorn was his orders and actions at the battle of Corinth. He has variously been accused by historians since as being guilty of as little as mismanagement of his forces, and as much as cowardice by retreating from the enemy once his troops ran out of ammunition. Whereas A.S. Johnston had retreated at Shiloh for the same reason, none of his commanders were so accused. Ditto for virtually every general in the Confederate Army, upon numerous occasions at that. Yet, such was Van Dorn's reputation that sensible actions by a commander were used to defame his reputation - and not just at the time, but since.

Now, Corinth was under federal control and Van Dorn sought to regain control of the important rail terminal. A swift victory there would, again, leave the north wide open for a swift strike to St. Louis - although this time it would not be over land, but via rail as there was a major rail line, the Mobile-Ohio Railroad. That would put Van Dorn in the heart of Northern territory in days, not weeks as had been the case at Pea Ridge.

Public opinion was, at this point, slanted against both commanders now - Van Dorn and Price as well. (Even though Price had just managed a small but important victory at nearby luka, where he absconded with all the federal supplies.) They were perhaps driven beyond military necessity by the many ugly rumors going around about them; a solid victory would not recover their reputations - it would have to be a

stunning victory. Consequently, when an orderly pull back after the first day of the battle would have resulted in a good win and give Van Dorn an opening to accomplish his strategic objective of making a move northward to disrupt the federal's supply lines, the public opinion was such that he could not have made this move without incurring the full wrath of the public and the media. So it was a political necessity that he and Price pressed the attack for a second day, which proved disastrous with Confederate casualties of 4000 versus union casualties of 2500.

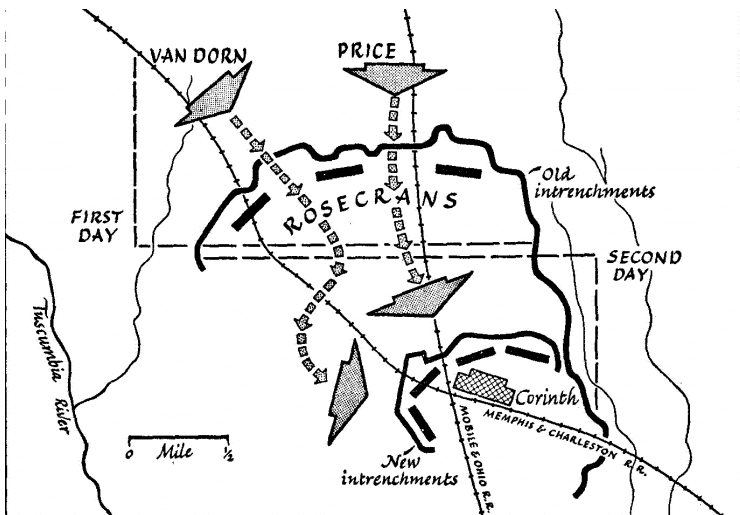
After Corinth there was a nationwide outcry for the immediate removal of Van Dorn. His military aptitude was questioned, but also his personal character. Virtually every newspaper in the South slandered him and only subsided when a military review tribunal was called, by Van Dorn himself. He was cleared of all charges, and in most instances commended for his military judgment. But the public opinion was so very much against him that it was a political necessity to remove him from command of the Army of Mississippi. All the while, the defeat at Corinth was more the fault of the media, by enflaming the people into a rabid, frothing outcry against Van Dorn and Price; forcing them into imprudent military actions.

It can therefore be said that, whereas at Pea Ridge it was imprudent orders by A.S. Johnston that stanchied Van Dorn's battle plan; it was the media that was to be blamed for the defeat at Corinth. The plan was sound, and very well executed by both Van Dorn and Price. Unlike the fancy double envelopment at Pea Ridge, the plan at Corinth involved a simple combination of forces, to take the federal forces under Rosecrans on.

Van Dorn and Price had 22,000 soldiers between them, versus 15,000 union troops under Rosecrans at Corinth and just to the south at luka. The latter forces were weakened because Price had stolen all their supplies on September 19th. Price and Van Dorn combined forces twenty miles west of Corinth at Ripley then drove to the north as though planning to taken on Hurlbut just across the Tennessee border 150 miles northwest of Corinth. The idea was to keep Hurlbut from joining forces with Rosecrans with this feint, then driving straight south (instead of north to Hurlbut) at Rosecrans from behind - the previous

assault having been by Price at luka, driving at Rosecrans from south of his lines at Corinth.

Rosecrans, with a large force to his rear under Hurlbut was not well prepared for an assault from that direction, certainly not for the combined forces of Van Dorn coming from 150 miles to the west at the rail junction of Holly Springs, and Price who was just engaged 50 miles to the east at luka. He would more likely have expected Van Dorn to combine forces with Price, and make an assault on Corinth from the south.



All this time, the media attention was so scathing on Van Dorn - and Price as well, having been "accused" of being a West Point graduate, which he had to tactfully explain - that their every move with their troops was front page news in the region. All Rosecrans had to do was read the newspapers, to see that Van Dorn was on the move - and Price too; and it was a simple deduction, to figure out what they were up to. Consequently, by the time Van Dorn made their move on Corinth from the north of town Rosecrans was dug in and reinforced, having

moved 8000 troops in from Jacinto and Burnsville opposite to where Price's troops had moved from luka.

By the time Van Dorn and Price turned south toward Corinth, off their feint north toward Hurlbut, Rosecrans was actually moving north from Corinth on his position with a force that was superior by over 1000 soldiers. Which is exactly what Van Dorn wanted, because they had left their entrenched positions at Corinth, to both the north and south of town, and were engaged in hastily assembled positions ten miles north of Corinth as they rushed north to Hurlbut's aid.

Both Price and Van Dorn broke through Rosecrans's lines in the first day of fighting, and Rosecrans retreated to positions around the city of Corinth itself after nightfall. They were confident of a victory the next day, and renewed the battle the following morning, unaware that Rosecrans had brought in all his troops from the south and now had as many soldiers, if not more, than the combined Confederate army. Stopping here would have been a clear Confederate victory; now having control of the federal troop's supply lines from the north (and there were precious few supplies, since Price's raid to luka) but needing an overwhelming victory because of the media, they pressed forward the next day into heavy resistance and had to fall back.

Now it was more that the media who wanted Van Dorn's head on a platter, buy influential politicians. The Mississippi senators even said he was the "source of all their woes," that wherever Van Dorn goes "disaster is prophesied." They claimed he was drunk on duty at Corinth, accused him of whoring, negligence, and of having no map of the country (Van Dorn had spent all his life in central and north Mississippi, having been born a few day's ride to the south of Corinth). "... not even an acquittal by a court of angels would relieve him of these charges" it was said. That such a huge, nationwide uproar erupted spontaneously even before the blood of the battle had subsided, is testament enough to the infamy with which Van Dorn was generally held as he led his men into battle the day before.

Had such not been the case, Van Dorn would likely have stopped after the first day, having achieved his objective of securing control of the rail

terminal of Corinth. Rosecrans was crippled in Corinth itself, with a large, under provisioned force and not rail access for further supplies from the north. Van Dorn could have left Price to hold Rosecrans in check, then made a trip by rail to the north for exactly the raid that he - and the military leadership back in Richmond - had planned. The media and politicians had no concept of strategic military objectives; in any event, they were so very obsessed with getting rid of Van Dorn at all costs that they caused his defeat themselves, just to get their way.

Well, by the time the second investigation into Van Dorn's military affairs was over with and a formal report filed with the Department of the Army, it was early December. We Indians with Colonel Clark had been in Richmond for the hearing - which was held after the fact; i.e. General Van Dorn had been relieved of Command of the Army of Mississippi right after Corinth, in the middle of October. To judge by the public's attitude toward it all, the investigation was to determine if Van Dorn was fit even to command General Pemberton's cavalry units at Vicksburg; the public was so acidic toward him. Van Dorn was known far and wide within the military as a first class cavalry officer that his alleged faults as an area commander were forgiven and he retained his rank and the retained command of the Mississippi cavalry detachments.

Suffice it to say that this was an exceedingly unpopular decision with the media, especially in Mississippi; so you can see why Colonel Clark was himself subsequently excised from the public, and historical, record. Go give you an idea of the general scorn felt toward Van Dorn at this point, his replacement General Pemberton was hailed as their savior - even though he had just been run out of Charleston by the people for conduct unbecoming a southern gentleman; even though he had no military experience; and even though he was born in Philadelphia. On all three counts he was generally felt to be so far superior to Van Dorn as to be their saint in shining armor by comparison.

The residual malice is so bad that to this day Van Dorn's own birth place, Port Gibson, uses as its claim to fame not the fact that he was born there, is buried there, and that he died defending Port Gibson and Mississippi; but that General Grant refused to burn the town to the

ground when he made the second campaign on Vicksburg, "because it was too pretty to burn."

You will soon see why an apparently evil man named Lewis Erb who rode a horse named Leivathan and consorted with a bunch of Red Stick Indians posing as his body guards and assistants were the only ones on either side of the Mason Dixon line willing to step forward in defense of General Earl Van Dorn's honor. The reason is that the people and politicians of Mississippi were actually by far the least of Van Dorn's enemies.

Four

The whole community had been holding it's breath ever since a courier scurried into town with news that President Jeff Davis was coming to Vicksburg. It was widely known, the strategic importance the President placed upon Vicksburg. He likened it to Gibraltar, the legendary cliffs overlooking the entrance to the Mediterranean Sea. Vicksburg was the Gibraltar of the South, was what he said.

Mr. President Jeff Davis arrived with his entourage on a rainy, soggy day. Far from being made despondent by the weather, the President was exultant. Virtually beaming from his mount as he led the small cadre through Vicksburg, and to the home of a most prominent citizen who was a gambler and Mr. Davis didn't approve but they were good friends for some reason so they stayed at his house but nobody was supposed to know; anyhow.

A cavalry troop accompanied the President, and the commanding officer was Colonel J.O.B. Clark. They were the Missouri Volunteers. There was a peculiar affinity between President Davis and the cavalry Colonel, often commented on by those privy to their conversation. It was widely rumored that Clark was a bastard son of Davis, as Clark hailed from the same part of Louisiana near St. Francisville as did President Davis.

It was only a rumor though, because no one in his right mind could entertain the remotest possibility that such a kind, dignified, honorable elderly statesman as Mr. President Davis could possibly whelp such a rowdy, scurrilous, rebellious, eccentric young man as was Colonel Clark. Whatever their blood connection, there was no doubt a strong personal bond between the two men; the President finding inspiration in the Colonel's boundless faith in the South, and the Colonel suffering the President's patient instruction in high hopes of himself becoming a respectable Southern gentlemen some day before he was too old a man to enjoy the experience.

Young Clark actually was raised at the plantation home of Mr. Davis, Rosemond. Apparently when the boy, just turned eleven, had been ordered by the plantation foreman to do some task he considered

beneath him; well - with Mr. Davis watching from the porch - the boy cursed out the foreman in very scary adult language, tossed down his farm tool implements, threw a tantrum, and then stole his master's favorite mount and galloped away and across the river eastward upon the very next ferry.

The Master of the plantation was somewhat perturbed, but let the youth go with his whims. There was a letter from Natchitoches a long time after - as in years - and regular ones thereafter between them until the war started up and Clark showed up in Virginia and was commissioned into the army and was soon assigned the President's personal staff.

They got along well enough in Richmond, but Clark never stopped bristling for action. The friction between them would have started a camp fire in the rain, when they arrived in Vicksburg. At one point the young man hollered at the President himself; hell, if you think Vicksburg is so damn important why in damnation don't you move the seat of the Confederate government here.

That's not a politically wise idea, said President Davis after considering the possibility for a little while. However, he said, I shall do the next best thing - and leave you here, when I leave in a couple of days. Personally, I suspect the Union President Lincoln will come to identify you as the single most important strategic threat to their victory, and not Vicksburg. That's neither here or there; but I reckon it's sound policy, to put you two together and let the feathers fly where they will.

So, that's how Colonel Clark came to Vicksburg although it must be admitted that the proud city was more than a little dubious of what his capabilities were. Aside from having the confidence of the President of the Confederacy, quite frankly there didn't seem to be enough redeeming qualities in the fellow to suffer his bawdy, uncouth company.

When the President left Vicksburg a few days later, by all reckoning it was the last he and Colonel Clark saw of each other as the young man was alleged to later become a casualty of the war. Upon the end of hostilities, though, Jeff Davis himself returned to Vicksburg and spent the remainder of his days on a plantation not too far from town to the south, nestled in a crook of the Mississippi River that he loved so

dearly.

There were those in the town who felt President Davis was hoping the boy would return from his misanthropic adventures out in the wild west. Indeed, not a few of the townsfolk claim to have seen the Colonel himself on the road to Davis' place. Such being the case, only God knows what kind of foolishness they're up to.

Be that as it may, President Davis was known to have left a small sum with Clark to be used as wages for his detachment of troops. The whole town was scandalized when Clark went straight out to the river boats, gambled with the sum; doesn't help their hurt feelings that Clark tripled his money, because he right away gave the entire sum to a rider who ripped out of town only to return a week later with a scraggly bunch of slaves.

Clark greeted the slaves with great elation, vigorously shaking the hand of one particularly burly fellow who seemed to be a friend of his, going by the name of Catahoula. This Cajun appellation was because he'd one brown eye and one blue eye, which was a common characteristic of the breed of Louisiana hunting dogs called the Catahoula Cur. The slaves seemed quite bashful from all this attention, wondering what all the hoopla was about. Then Clark, with extreme panache, presented each and every last one of them with a certificate making them free men.

Well, that only made them all the more bashful looking. Too many awkward moments later, they all departed from public view - Clark to the two story home on the river front that was his headquarters, his new black friends settling in on the grounds of the very same house, not yet knowing but how to act as freed slaves with a benevolent white friend.

In the following days, these freed slaves were never far from Clark and his troop of cavalry; reconnoitering the area, running errands, and making themselves quite useful in many important ways. They were mostly things they had always done on the plantation, but now they were somehow not chores any longer, doing them as free men; with a purpose and a choice, which they chose of their own free wills. It was a

good feeling.

It didn't ingratiate Clark to the townspeople any, giving the run of the place to Catahoula and his boys. The rest of the slaves in the community were restless, made anxious by this new development - the Colonel seemed mindful of making black soldiers of Catahoula et al - and this opened up a whole ugly can of worms.

To be brutally honest, the slaves seemed to have more wherewithal to them than did the Colonel's troops from Missouri. That poor state, with stars on both the Northern and Southern flags, was ravaged by war and torn so ruthlessly by the North from her true Southern sympathies; well, the soldiers seemed desperate to have something solid in their lives and the Colonel seemed to be all they could hold on to, at the present time. The white soldiers took the Colonel's black freedmen in stride, and a peculiar camaraderie developed among them all. That only made the townspeople even more perturbed; but not nearly so much as did the very sight of the person of the Colonel himself.

Clark had a most peculiar affinity for buzzards. The big birds are awful creepy to begin with, despite their fulfilling a vital role in the overall scheme of nature, but the idea of a man taking a liking to them is just plain revolting. Yet, there was rarely a sunny morning when you couldn't find the Colonel, a buzzard or two in the neighboring trees with huge wings outstretched, taking in the sun too.

One poor soul had the misfortune of asking the Colonel if eagles were to his liking as well. Just trying to make polite conversation; the reply he got was anything but polite. The mere mention of eagles, and the inevitable connotation with the Union, was not something that happened again within the Colonel's hearing. The poor fellow was made to have his head shaved, like the bald eagle; and it was the middle of winter too when that happened, and he was cold.

It was his good fortune that this newly bald soldier - an Indian going by the name of Bearheart - had somehow read widely as an adult, and his knowledge of the Roman Empire paid off in helping to recover his esteem with the Colonel when he likened the vultures sunning themselves with wings outstretched to the Roman battle emblems that

they carried with them wherever they went. Naturally, the Romans emulated or modeled these Standards on vultures; what would you expect of a people nurtured on wolfs teats. This pleased the Colonel, who probably knew otherwise but admired the man's attitude; and the fellow got a nice promotion, but it was a while before he got much respect from his men; not until his hair grew back, that is.

Now, Southern people are kind and tolerant and accepting, especially of white men and often of freed black men as well; and the people of Vicksburg liken themselves to be good Southern people by all accounts. Having said that, and taking account of the many other beneficial attributes of good Southerners way too many to number, suffice it to say that the irascible Colonel and his band of misfits stretched the tolerance of the Southern people of Vicksburg to its limits. Far beyond the limits in fact, because the Colonel was a favorite of the President of the Confederate States, and President Jeff Davis was himself an ardent admirer of the city of Vicksburg. Lesser men among them had been excised for far, far less.

The short of it is, that the Colonel would have found himself and his men in very hot water indeed - perhaps even doomed to walk the gently beckoning but deadly sandbars across the Mississippi River - were it not for an unlikely event that shattered everybody's misconceptions and shook their very world to its very most primitive core. Everybody's world but Clark's that is.

This traumatic event was none other than the issuance of the emancipation proclamation by the President of what was left of the United States, Mr. Lincoln. Sure, it seemed to be inevitable; but nobody had taken the least bit precaution to prepare for it - other than Colonel Clark, that is. Perhaps that made the people of Vicksburg suffer even a greater shock, how an eccentric outsider had anticipated the situation and prepared for it most professionally right there in front of their very own eyes.

It was at this time that rumors surfaced again, about Clark being kin to President Davis. At least this idea made their embarrassment at being second guessed by him a little better, if perchance the man had high society blood in his veins after all and so had the gumption to prepare

for the unforeseen amongst the unseeing. Better yet, he was just acting on orders from President Davis himself. That theory made everybody more comfortable because nobody wanted to entertain the notion of Clark being a blue blood; much less conjuring the image of having to entertain him in their own homes at high society events of the season.

As things would turn out, Clark became a stable figure for the people of Vicksburg at this time of tribulation, same as he'd been for the forlorn soldiers of Missouri. He didn't seem to notice a thing about all of this, just went about his business as weird and super charged as ever. Perhaps that's what it means to be a Southern gentleman, to take the heat in stride without blinking an eye. If that's the case, then Clark will be pleased if by chance he reads these words, that he made the mark as a Southern gentleman. So he should be proud of himself and if by chance he is as deceased as they say, he should be able to rest in peace from now on.

WH Clark

Five

It was pretty clear to most slaves that they could lessen their individual burdens and accrue the benefits of responsibility and trust, if not freedom, by paying some attention to the white man's religion and behaving in a Christian manner. The Southern people were not themselves particularly rigid in their beliefs, but rather focused upon the individuals efforts to better himself. Thus it didn't take a whole lot for slaves to earn substantial rewards; indeed, Christian slaves were much prized among the slavers - especially the black slave owners, whom constituted about one in fifty of all slave holders.

So it came to pass that many slaves became Christians, and a few among them actually liked it. It was also a tradition for leading Southerners, sincerely believing it to be their Godly obligation and duty, to hold Sunday school classes for the Africans. This was particularly true of military officers with Southern roots. Even Stonewall Jackson, being a deeply devout individual, set the example in teaching Christian precepts to slaves, doing so throughout his distinguished military career. With few exceptions, his junior officers and admirers followed suit.

Sunday school class for slaves in early January 1863, at the Vicksburg Presbyterian Church, was being run by the ranking Confederate Army officer at the time, Colonel Clark. Following their lessons, a slave asks about the emancipation proclamation, put into affect on January 1 in the form of a speech by the Union President Lincoln.

Look at what's happened in the slave states of the Union. The plantations, having so much money tied up in slaves, have gone bankrupt. The freedmen who own the stores and business where the plantation owners spend their income have no customers. The freedmen are bankrupt. White and black man alike have no jobs. They are forced to join the Union Army, the only place they can make enough money to support their beloved families.

What happens to the slaves up North, in the freed states, asks a slave in the Sunday school class.

Most of them enlist in the Army because their rural farm skills are not in demand anywhere. These black men often times have no skill with guns. They cannot shoot or load either a long gun or a pistol. The Yankees send them to war anyway. The North overwhelms the Southern regiments on the battle field with sheer numbers. The black soldiers numbering over 100,000 in all are cannon fodder, nothing more. They die free men, leaving their families with no one to provide for them.

You all know we do not have any black soldiers because we believe every Confederate soldier must have the skill to have a chance to survive on the battle field. No man can learn the necessary skill with a long gun or pistol in a few weeks time, after enlisting. It takes years of hunting to be comfortable with such an unpredictable, unwieldy a weapon.

Sure, some free blacks in the Union get factory jobs. They make money, but doing mindless, menial jobs. They work sixteen hours a day, breathing wretched air black with smoke and soot. They live in ghettos in the big city with no running water, no privacy, and no rights. They are free men, but living in a hell hole. Would you rather that or your plantation homes, jobs, and responsibilities?

The emancipation proclamation was passed by the North because they needed more disposable soldiers on the battle field and dirt cheap workers in their factories to quickly build cannons and guns to be used against the South. Who's to say they will not revoke the emancipation once the war is won. It's not even a law for the North, just an order from the President. Laws in the North are revoked all the time.

Isn't that better than what's in store for us here in the South?

I believe not. The Constitution of the Confederate States has already made it illegal for any more slave trade with other nations, or even between states. Mind you, this is no presidential speech; it's written in plain language in our own Constitution - the highest law of the land, and irrevocable. Plantation owners will not be able to buy any more slaves, so when they need new laborers they will hire free men. Slavery will be history, with this generation or at latest, the next.

How can a good Christian such as yourself justify slavery over emancipation.

The South wishes to keep black men slaves until such time as they have the skill to own and operate a farm on their own. There are many skills you will need - with animals, tools, working the soil; as well as understanding of commerce and completion, and leadership if you have others working for you. Farming is a very complicated business, and it takes generations to learn well. We only ask you continue as is until the laws set up by our Constitution make you free men. Then you will have a good skill, and be able to raise your families by honestly working the land.

The South will make you better men, in the eyes of God and in the eyes of other men on God's good earth. You men would not be here today, seeking guidance and wisdom to grow and learn, if you did not share in the great Southern tradition of personal development. I would not be here today, representing all Southern gentlemen, helping you along the Lord's path if I did not wish you to become better, more ennobled men.

The North, on the other hand, does not need proud, independent, hard thinking black men in its factories. The North needs submissive, docile automatons to work for slave wages in abominable conditions in their horrific factories. You will not see any factory officers in Sunday school in the North. No sir.

Begging your pardon, Colonel. How is it that so many good Yankee Christians support this plan you say is theirs. You're implying the North is not a Christian nation, and that there are no good Christians there?

I prefer to think of them as misguided. Although it is somewhat disturbing to me, when I consider the motivation for all the Yankees gone to war against the South. We Southerners are defending our way of life, our liberties, homes, and families. What possible motivation could so many have to join the ranks of the North, other than being hopelessly unemployed as I have stated already as applies to the slave holding Union states.

If the North had set out to obliterate the Old South, they could not have hoped for a better resolution. The war is fought mostly by Southern soldiers against Union soldiers from the slave holding states along the border. The unimaginable number of casualties of late on the battle fields everywhere are predominantly soldiers of Southern descent. How better to decimate a nation than obliterating the entire class of men folk, drawn from all walks of life.

I shutter to think any nation could do such a thing. I almost prefer the theory that the Northern ranks were populated by soldiers anxious to conquer the South, and to free all the slaves to work the abysmal, moronic factory jobs that none of the Northern whites would do. With a new cheap underclass, the current working class of Yankees would become middle class stiff, with greater job security and a permanent body of workers beneath them.

It's a frantic move, but the times are frantically changing. Industrialization is proceeding at breakneck pace. People are horrified that the only good jobs available to them were on assembly lines. They then supported drastic measures to avoid this fate themselves, going so far as to enlist in the army themselves to secure sufficient African or Southern bodies to man the factories in their stead.

Their time was up, and the church full of slaves filed out into the bright sunlight. There wasn't one among them who was not deep in serious thought, so much so that several among them forgot to offer the Colonel standing at the exit door the customary parting. Far from being upset at this grievous breach of etiquette, the Colonel was quite pleased because he felt that these fledgling Christians were better men than when the lesson began. They were starting to learn the true meaning of that most sublime of words, freedom.

As the last of the slaves departed, the Colonel retreated back into the Church to prepare himself for the next Sunday school class. This one would be attended by his own soldiers, and by the soldiers of other officer's outfits. Soon the Church was full to bursting with the soldiers.

I won't lie to you men, the Colonel began to address his sober audience. With the recent announcement that all Confederate slaves

are freed men, the Union President has dealt our nation's confidence a most serious blow. Our conscience is suffering serious doubts, and I believe we will suffer the consequences upon the battle field.

In the days ahead, those among us with slaves back home will be fretting about their farms and the safety of their loved ones. Our officers, mostly, are serious minded and distant. Many wonder if they will have to return to their farms soon, if and when their slaves depart the premises. They are torn between loyalty to their nation and their men, and love of their families and their land.

It is a terrible, terrible thing this emancipation proclamation. But I believe, and the good African men who have just departed this very same House of God reassure my belief, that the slaves among us have come into a simple kind of honor all their own. They may hate us, their earthly masters, but they love the earth we have taught them to work even more. They have matured in these last troubled generations into good Christian men, trusting in the Lord, and beginning to appreciate the value of the wisdom and learning we white men have shared with them. They have accepted the burden of running our farms in our absence so far, and I believe they will continue to do so in this moment of tribulation upon us.

Have you doubt, men; the Yankees are coming to Vicksburg. Their emancipation has weakened our resolve, and they have shown in this obviously wicked deception of the emancipation just how much they lust to take this bastion of the South.

I will not lie to you. Our chances of keeping control of this blessed place indefinitely are not good. But try we must, in this tragic struggle of good versus evil; we must fight this righteous battle and with every bit of energy we can resolve. We must displace from our minds worries about our families and farms, and focus upon the coming conflagration.

The Lord has foreseen our predicament. He has written about it in Revelations. The battle of light and darkness is upon us. We stand here today at the place He called Armageddon.

The North considers the South a whore; alas the whore of Babylon. We

are two different peoples, for sure; the North aggressive, insensitive, relentless in the mindless pursuit of wealth; versus the South which is sensitive, thoughtful, loving of the earth and of our fellow men whatever their incarnation. We are like a man and a woman, unable to stay together in political matrimony because of unredeemable differences. The South parted with dignity and just cause, but the North cannot let go it's lust and it has abused and raped and ripped us limb from limb.

The North would have you all believe the Southern values are evil. They are misled by their own greed. The industrial revolution has opened for them a Pandora's Box of instant get rich schemes. They are frantic, blinded by the sheen of golden lucre wherever they may look. They have lost touch with their humanity, and the fact that we in the South have not, drives them insane. They want to wipe us off the very face of the earth. The South is a living testament that suffers their conscience to care, when they have lost the capacity to do so.

Vicksburg, as Lincoln has said repeatedly, is the pubic mound of the South. They are coming to ravage this place, and all the might of their armies on land and on water will be focused upon us. This emancipation has shocked us, a brutal slap in the face that has sent us to our knees - they think it is in despair; when, in fact, it is in submission to our Lord God Almighty.

We must accept our insignificance in the great scheme of God. Upon our knees we must take infinite pride that God has entrusted us with defense of this great place. He is our General, and has given us our battle order and it is our duty to obey to our best measure as men.

Truly God is upon our side. The institution of slavery has existed since the dawn of mankind. Ten million Africans have been harvested by the European powers in the last five hundred years alone. The North has more slaves in industrial bondage than the South has slaves on farms; and the North treats them far, far less humanely. The South is the first nation state in the history of the world to actually write within out Constitution a formal declaration prohibiting the trading of Africans across its borders. We are the first to recognize the inhumanity of slavery, and to take viable steps to put an end to it.

The European nations, several of whom had promised to aid our rebellion against the tyranny of the North, have now made clear they will have no part in supporting our noble nation. The European nations seek to preserve their institutions of slavery, refusing thereby to assist the Confederate States which has made clear our intention to end that institution within our borders. Shame upon the North for fomenting their citizens against the South, saying we are fighting to preserve slavery; when in fact the diametrical opposite is the case as far as they eye can see across the political landscape.

Has the North, in their emancipation declaration, freed their own slaves. No; they have only freed ours because they know it will hobble our economy and stifle the sense of noblesse and courage that has blessed our soldiers with victory time and again.

Does the North support the end of slavery. I say no; they are fighting to preserve it. Their free blacks are enlisted to support their armies on the battle field; and the cheap labor of free blacks in their factories is the salvation of their war effort. The Yankees have convinced the Northern people of color that they are fighting to free their Southern brethren; when in fact exactly the opposite is the truth.

There are among us many who believe that the South has no chance of winning this war. If indeed that does occur, I believe the North will then revoke the emancipation proclamation. It will thereafter be up to the South, and the majority block of votes we hold in the United States Congress, to push for the passage of a constitutional amendment banning all slavery upon this God blessed continent. Then, and only then, will our victory be complete.

No doubt the European powers will thereupon despise the United States for what we have done, depriving their own industries of their best and cheapest source of skilled labor. It is entirely likely that these same European powers will take upon themselves to conquer America, pulling the entire western world into such a bloody conflict as to make this here cultural revolution of ours seem petty by comparison.

Through it all - now as then - it will be the courage of righteousness of the Southern people that will extinguish the institution of slavery,

WH Clark

against the will of the North; indeed, against the will of the world. We will quietly persevere in dignified patience to ultimate victory.

Six

The morning after the Colonel's fiery speech from the pulpit, the slave quarters were abuzz. Some wanted to run away, but didn't want to run away to the North. Others wanted to be free, but to work their very same land as they were at now. Most didn't know what to think and just listened.

The one thing they all had in common was a high expectation that they would, within moments, be called to labor in the construction of Vicksburg's defenses. It was clear the Yankees were coming, and the Confederate army would be digging in to defend the city against a land assault.

As they excitedly carried on this newfound discussion about what freedom might mean to them and their families, they undertook the preparations for a day's labor as slaves. The children were bathed, fed, clothed, and buckled off to their mammy sitter. The men and their wives prepared their noontime repast, refreshments, and clothed themselves to wait at the ready for a holler outside their wood hut doors from a white overseer beyond.

They waited longer than usual, beyond when the sun was hot and the dew had evaporated from the grass. They waited some more. Slowly one or two crept outside to peer around, seeing only the big empty field with cotton stubbing the ground from last year's harvest. The area was as empty as a Sunday morning during worship service.

After a while a dozen of the eldest among the slave population got together and decided to strike out for themselves, to see what was amiss. They were half way afraid that the Yankees had attacked in the cover of darkness and killed everyone in town. So they tidied themselves. Just in case their new Yankee masters showed up; they wanted to make the very best first impression upon them.

This group of slicked up Africans, looking as sheepish and carefully dressed as if for a Sunday sermon, inched into town and drifted toward sounds coming from the forest edge. From the sound of it, trees were being felled, trimmed, and worked clean and straight into planks. The

Africans exchanged silent glances, as if asking who's doing the trimming and who's the working.

Clearing the last building of the city, the Africans got a panoramic view of Colonel Clark and his entire detachment - accompanied by more than a few of the ablest townsfolk - working; well like slaves, cutting back the forest, digging trenches, and otherwise creating defenses for the city.

Just a little bit afraid, the Africans took one look then swiftly backed right behind the house in reflex, as though caught skipping their chores. They were dizzy, trying to decide what it was they should do. It seems that they were being given a choice in the matter.

Hours passed. Colonel Clark and his work crew continued undaunted by the sweltering heat, the sun simmering overhead. They stopped neither for food nor for drink. Few words passed among them.

The church bell rang just then, and a small coterie of Africans entered the square a little bashfully, carrying baskets of food and great jars of water to the white folk. Most of the Caucasians ignored them completely, too shy themselves to take the respite offered them. Then Colonel Clark put down his ax, hobbled over to the highest nearby point away from all the people, and stood stock still with his arms crossed menacingly.

The white workers kept right on at their business, chopping and shoveling and wheel barrowing. They knew very well what was afoot. The black folks, however, looked curiously at the Colonel. Not a few among them were thinking he was suffering heat nausea and had temporarily lost contact with his already somewhat addled wits. At first they didn't notice a couple of black V's circling high, high up in the early afternoon sky. Then two birds became a few, then more and closer until their shadows were criss-crossing the red ground all around everybody.

The younger Africans had trouble holding back frightened screams. They dropped all the food and drink they were carrying and scurried off to the shelter of the city proper. You must admit, the sight of that many

ugly buzzards giving you the bird's eye with their grotesque red heads is pretty near enough to frighten the most stalwart soul. It's not a comfortable feeling, knowing you're seconds away from becoming vulture fodder.

Or so it seemed to the Africans. They felt kind of foolish when, after a little while in the safety of the town; they ventured out to see what was happening. Lo and behold, the Caucasians had put down their implements and were having a hearty lunch, exchanging polite conversation among them. It was, indeed, the very last thing in the world the Africans had expected.

All the while, the Colonel was eating a leg of roast lamb in one hand; as he walked among all the little groups of men having their lunch, picking up discarded bones or bits of chicken skin or crusts of bread and tossing them high in the sky where the buzzards assembled above them swooped down just as graceful as swans over a clear mountain lake, to pick up their own lunches on the fly.

Good Lord, said one of the older Africans; if this here is what freedom is all about I'm not really sure I want it or not. They all got a belly laugh out of that, attracting the attention of the soldiers. The soldiers gave a chuckle themselves, raising here and there a fist full of bread or roast chicken; in a cheerful salute to the fine repast prepared by the Africans, then settled back more serious than ever to consuming every crumb left in sight before the Colonel secreted them away for his black feathered friends.

As the soldiers were finishing up, the Africans - with occasional furtive glance skyward - rolled up their sleeves and scattered here and there, picking up stray tools and continuing on with the tasks begun by the soldiers and townspeople. Soon as the whites finished eating, they joined the group of slaves and leant a shoulder of their own, and the work got well underway in no time.

After a brief spell the Africans reached a rhythm and began all together to gently sing an ancestral tune from back home in Africa. The whites lost a little of their own pace then, but soon picked up the rhythm and hummed along as best they could. The vultures, meanwhile, set down

with much fanfare upon the uppermost branches of the tallest nearby trees, watching the activity below with a spot of disappointment in their beady little eyes.

The Yankees are coming was in everybody's mind.

Late that afternoon a cold front blew through the region, and temperatures went from cold to much colder in Vicksburg. The work crew were all about ready to call it a day when General Pemberton showed up on horse, with a small detachment. They waited in the center of the clearing for a while, the General pacing his horse back and forth impatiently. It seems he'd expected to be greeted, by somebody or other.

One of the black men finally told Colonel Clark, who instantly dropped what he was doing and ran out to greet the General. The Colonel braked to a halt, saluted, and spoke a few words up to the General upon his horse; the senior officer acted as though he would have preferred no reception at all. There was Clark, stripped down to a dirty gray cotton sleeveless under shirt, grimy suspenders holding onto this Confederate uniform trousers smeared with dirt and mud clear up to the knees.

Looking himself over in reaction to the General's disapproving gaze, the junior officer identified himself and begged the General's pardon they were just trying to get started on preparations for the defense of Vicksburg against a land assault by the North. The General reluctantly returned the salute, then got down off his horse and Clark gave him a short tour of their activities. The General seemed impressed, mostly by the white and black men - and black women - working side by side.

Colonel Clark and the General were walking back to his staff officers, who had waited all this time patiently, while inspecting the environs with their binoculars. As they approached the Colonel stepped out, apologizing for his unkempt appearance, reaching out to introduce himself to the other officers of his rank.

Suddenly, hand still out stretched, the Colonel collapsed. The officers around him ducked, believing a bullet had struck the Colonel but there

was no sound of gunfire and no sign of impact upon the Colonel's person. Not quite knowing what to think or do, they just stood around almost casually, talking amongst themselves just as before.

Breaking with all known Southern protocol, a buxom young black woman rushed over to where Colonel Clark lay, pushing forcefully aside the docile senior officers as she knelt down and inspected his condition. Gently the slave girl rolled the Colonel over onto his back, loosened his belt and shoe laces. The white man was breathing regularly, but sweat was roiling off his brow. The afternoon was so chilly that steam could be seen rising from him, he was apparently so very warm.

The General asked what seemed to be amiss. Recollecting her place, the girl stood straight up and, looking down to her shoes, self consciously peering across her heaving breasts plastered with sweat to her thin shirt; explained in broken stressful phrases to the Confederate General that the Colonel seemed just to have passed out but was otherwise in good working order.

The Colonel's Sergeant Bearheart arrived at the group just then, took one look at the Colonel and tactlessly pulled the General aside to talk with him. Happens all the time, General Sir. He just blacks out right in the middle of something or other. He kept rambling on to the annoyance of General Pemberton, who started shuffling his feet and being otherwise impolitely distracted. The black woman had returned to the Colonel, getting down on here knees and taking Clark's head and shoulders in her lap, gently sponging the sweat from his brow with a soft cotton cloth.

Same sort of thing used to happen to Julius Caesar, the sergeant was saying. Black outs. He'd be gone somewhere for a while, then return just fine. Happened when he was with Cleopatra on their risqué sortie down the Nile - other times just before battles - and once in the Forum itself, in Rome before a meeting of the Senate.

The words were soon lost to the General, the sergeant noticed and shut up. They all stood around Colonel Clark like so many vultures, wondering just what it was that was going through his head just now.

WH Clark

Seven

Three men are in a small caravan. Desert dunes stretch as far as the eye can see, in every direction. They're on the threshold of a big sand storm. It threatens in the distance, a terrestrial tsunami stretching many kilometers high; all the way up to the stratosphere it seems. The robed travelers have taken a short cut, leaving the safe haven of the Nile River. They are ten long kilometers from the Nile, becoming disoriented; desperately seeking shelter. Their names are not important. The date is 10,000 years past. They are near what later became known as Abydos, the sacred burial grounds of Pharaohs of the Old Kingdom.

It is the great Whirlwind says one. It's the end of us, my brothers; says another. Then we go with God. It is a good way to go; I for one welcome it.

There's a break in the wind driven sand, and one shouts into the wind; he spies a small boy atop a dune several hundred yards ahead. The boy disappears immediately, but the traveler leads them to the spot where he was. The others are doubtful. It's a mirage.

The travelers argue, whether or not to follow the ephemeral boy. They must find shelter soon or else. How can this boy survive in the desert - surely he will lead us to shelter. A glimmer of metal in the distance reflects a stray sun beam, convincing them all the boy is for real. They step smartly on, invigorated by hope.

Dusk is near, and it's difficult to follow the boys' hasty retreat in the stifling haze of sand. They are silent now, each one privately trying to sort out his own increasingly scrambled senses.

The three travelers follow a massive dune down and down until there is darkness. The sun is now obscured by the artificial horizon. They are silent, but afraid. Their animals are uneasy too. They are camels, used to the brutal whiles of the desert. This storm is different. They sense it. It seems the end. The boy is lost now to all eyes, peeled despite the slashing sand of the storm, seeking some small sign of his passage.

Just as the travelers were going to turn around, the straight line of a carved stone surface is in the sand before them. It's no mirage. It's a massive stone portal. They approach with relief. The animals break unmasked into a gallop. They smell water. Their riders sense safety, and they all make urgent way toward sanction.

As they approach and the massive stone surface is clearly evident, adrift in the dunes; the three travelers stop short. The small boy is in the portal. He has a powerful bow in his arms. He struggles to hold the heavy weapon targeted on the travelers, but manages to convince them his aim is true enough. The sharp arrow menaces from trembling, small arms.

The travelers call out; we come in peace, in their language. The boy is silent. The three travelers inch a little closer. All together, calling out their message of peace. The boy motions them closer; then stops them and when he recognizes their robes horror creases his countenance. He lets loose an arrow. The powerful discharge knocks him back on his rear quarters. The arrow whistles past the prey, into the shrieking wind blown sand.

The boy scrambles back onto his feet. The weapon reloaded, he stops the travelers only a few paces away now. He calls them hateful Hebrews. They step back a pace warily. The boy utters vicious words of hate and bile, far beyond his innocent years.

Yes, we are Hebrews. But we have no issue with you.

Hebrews killed my whole tribe. They took everything. I hate Hebrews. I hate you.

We are not of that tribe. We are not warlike. We are traders. We hate those Hebrews too. Say the brothers three, one after the other. The boy follows them each in turn, concentrating mightily upon their every physical nuance and vocal inflection. If the boy fancies any hope they are sincere, it doesn't crack his ineffable resolve.

The boy stands silently for what seems the longest time. His rigid stand does not waver, and he is not convinced by their placations. We only

seek shelter from the storm. May we enter your abode? The eldest brother implores on behalf of them all.

The animals may go inside. There is plenty of room. You Hebrews remain outside in the storm. God will judge you with His Whirlwind; ordering their compliance with the compound bow.

They comply, now more horrified by the strange boy, than by his deadly weapon. It is something they have never seen before. Technology, and those who master it, scares them. The boy sees this, and uses it to keep them at bay. It seems to amuse him, the strangers observe. This only makes them more terrified, this wise young boy holding three powerful nomads at arms length, wind howling all around and darkness cloaking the chaotic atmosphere all around them.

One traveler comments softly to another - look at the boy's eyes. They bleed. I think he can barely see us, and that is why he stops us. We should speak more kind words to him, and try to make friends. Yes. What the eye cannot discern, maybe the other senses will accept.

The men approach closer to the shelter, holding tokens of food out for the boy. The boy suddenly backs into the man made cave, disappearing from the sight of the travelers. They timidly cross the threshold after him, reckless heart beats later.

It is many moments before their eyes accustom to the darkness. The animals have long since accommodated; and they are heard lapping up water from a pool at the perimeter of the cavern. The air is moist with humidity, in stark contrast to the excruciatingly dry place they just left. The temperature is cool, sending random shivers down the traveler's spines. The shivers are not altogether caused by the temperate air, but by their frazzled nerves too.

One traveler lights a torch with a spark made after cracking again and again, two stones of flint. They see in the flickering light, the boy has disappeared. The cave is massive, and they walk carefully around to explore. The animals pay them no heed; they're no longer afraid.

The walls in this, an outer chamber are covered with writings and

drawings. It is in a language very similar to Hebrew, and they can make sense of the symbols. The writing is amateurish; evidently the work of the boy. It tells his story. The dancing light from the torch mesmerizes them, and the three travelers forget their fears.

The boy's name is Geb. They say the word out loud. The juxtaposition of symbols is not familiar to them. The name comes out Job.

The three Hebrew travelers never did see the small boy again. The storm lifted a few days later, and they got on with their business ~ less one camel and most of their food; presumably taken by the boy who called himself Job, who made fast his escape sometime during the long stormy night.

Nor did the travelers ever get into the inner chambers of the cavern. The boy must have closed some kind of secret passage, they surmised. There clearly were more chambers, as in the heart of the night aerie sounds could be heard emanating from the meters thick stone wall. It was an unearthly sound, and they were glad to leave it behind when they hastened out of the place the moment the storm cleared.

In the years after, when they put the whole event down to verse, they fictionalized the boy named Job - and the mysterious creature too; they called it Leviathan. As for the mysterious below ground structure, many thousands of years later it became known as the Osireion at Abydos, although its association with the Book of Job was never surmised by either historians, scholars, or theologians.

Eight

The Confederate Colonel awoke with a start, sitting bolt upright but then running into the slave girl's arm across his chest. Looking down in surprise to see the strong dark arm holding him down, he looked a little confused, then realized what had happened, relaxed and lay his head back upon her lap. Eyes wide open and alert now, he looked up to see the heads of half a dozen senior Confederate officers looking straight down at him. He smiled shyly and said Hi, how's it going. He waved with his free arm. The black girl pinched his side to make him behave. He winced, tilted his head up and looked at her face.

It was then they all noticed the Colonel's eyes, the black dilated pupils rimmed with a crimson canal of blood. They were shocked, and stepped back. The General backed right into the sergeant, who had remained at the outside of the little circle of officers, eavesdropping. The General turned to see him, with gravity. Reacting to the stress of the General's unspoken reprimand, the Indian sergeant reacted instinctively - by blabbering on.

Colonel's eye's always like that, blood shot. Especially from the wind and more so from dry weather. He's not drunk or hung over or full of opium. Just sensitive eyes. Is why he wears those fancy tinted glasses all the time. I promise. I'm not kidding. Ask him your own self. He blacked out for real. He's not in a drunken stupor. We all have seen him working non stop for the last fourteen hours, straight and sober as a preacher. He's a righteous man and a God fearing, tea totaling Christian soldier.

The General raised his hand to shut the verbose sergeant up. Then he waved the others to open up the group so the Colonel could get up. The black girl hefted the Colonel smartly up, surprising him with her strength. She made as if to pass him off to the sergeant, but the Colonel held fast to her shoulder, feigned momentarily weakness, and motioned her to help him back toward the city.

They ambled back to town, for all practical purposes looking like a weakened man being trundled off to bed. Once they were out of ear sight, though, the Colonel struck up a small conversation with her and

they exchanged polite pleasantries. At one point about half way to town the Colonel reared back his head as if to laugh uproariously at something she had said; before he could do so she pinched him hard, the head snapped back forward and fortunately nobody was privy to their private moment of hilarity.

In their wake virtually every man among them had long since stopped working, drifting toward the group of staff officers as the Colonel lay prone, then recovered moments later. As the slave girl helped him out of their midst, this unconscious moment toward front and center stopped cold. Nobody moved, so surprised were they at this turn of events.

The soldiers returned to reality first, accustomed as they were to surprising things from the Colonel. They got busy and started gathering up their tools and cleaning up after the hard day's work. The black slaves followed suit. Dusk was falling quickly, so that a man arriving on the scene would hardly have distinguished the white man from the black, they were all so grimy from their labors and were helping one another as if equals.

By the time they reached his headquarters building the Colonel was drifting into love, despite his best efforts not to do so. It had been years - no, decades - since anyone had shown him the least bit of compassion, hard as it was to survive a boy in a man's world; much less a castaway child of a powerful land owner. The young woman who had tenderly administered his illness was strikingly beautiful, with deep gray eyes and aquiline features. Her strength and inner grace calmed him despite his racing heart.

Shaking his head to clear these thoughts away, the Colonel reached toward his favorite rocking chair as she crossed the threshold into his headquarters, and she carefully guided him toward it and a little bit regretfully helped him down and let go of him.

The Colonel felt her warmth leave and the chill of the place replaced it. She curtsied, avoiding eye contact, and asked his permission to leave. He didn't say anything; being so motionless that she then looked to, to see if he was OK. He caught her eye and asked politely if she could

please remain long enough to build and light a fire in the large stone hearth taking up one whole side of the small room. She smiled just a little too quickly, but tended efficiently to the task, humming softly as she did so.

The fire safely ablaze, she glanced around and spied a heavy wool blanket and brought it over for the Colonel. He was staring soberly in the fire, but looked up with a shy smile as she approached him. It was then she noticed his blood red eyes. Breaking step as though stumbling upon an unseen ripple in the heavy oak floor, she crept closer to be sure if this was a trick of the fire, a reflection. It was not, and she was afraid.

She made as if to say something to him, but he was once again blacked out and lost to this world. She touched him tenderly to be sure he was not asleep, then accepting the simple fact of his torpor, put the blanket across his shoulders then sat down on a foot stool before him and waited for the condition to subside.

Listening to the crackling fire and feeling its warmth, she considered the depth of feelings she seemed to have for this man, whom she saw for the first time only this morning. It was a little bit scary because she had been warned about coveting the white man and succumbing to the authority he sometimes plied with devilish skill. The thought of this man affecting such guiles made her chuckle - no man who befriends a catch of vultures could possibly circumscribe any woman's natural defenses, black or white.

In the old country, back in Africa, the people are not as limited in their view of the soul as these white new world Christians ~ good hearted they may be, if shallow in some ways spiritually. The magic of life is that life carries through generations, and those who share a love or deep friendship in one life find swift affinity in subsequent lives. She was young yet and not well learned in these ancestral magical ways, but this psychic connection was instinctive and required no instruction.

Her suspicions were confirmed, when soon the Colonel awoke and at her brave insistence recollected for her what had transpired during his time away. He told her in a soft voice punctuated with a sigh now and

again, moving her to eventually grasp his hand tenderly in hers as the story went forward.

My Pharaoh - my love - spoke the princess. You are dying. He was silent, and she feared for him. Then he opened his eyes, and she knew it was the end for him. They were solid blood, so darkly and completely as to seem the pupils were awash in the crimson fluid. The princess bowed her head and wept. Emerald tears glistened down her visage.

Still Pharaoh did not speak. But he did smile. He reached toward her, leaning forward slightly from the throne; he tilted her head up with a gentle prodding of his beloved's chin. When he spoke it struck darkness to her very soul.

No, dying I am not. But I have this afternoon learned something that makes me wish it so. A most ancient evil is alive. Darkness is upon us all. I am afraid.

But you are a God, she implored. Only Ra is greater than you, and then only during the light of day. You are Ibis, vulture god of the underworld. Before you there can be no evil. She said these words boldly, but he discerned a timidity in them. It made him sad that she would lose here God this day, and so ruthlessly.

Princess - hah! - it's comforting that you believe me a God. Alas - if you knew how the very sight of you makes my heart pound in my ears; how so very weak I am made by your love. Twenty years of bliss I've had being with you, and still I am struck low to see you; more so, to suffer you any harm to body or mind. Well, you would think me not your God at all, but your slave.

But your eyes. Your are afflicted by some extreme thing. Are you not blind. Do your eyes not bleed. Surely no mere mortal could suffer such a thing and live to behold the living world again. Tell me, my Lord - if you do indeed love me.

She took a potsherd with which to scrape herself. Curse God and die she screamed bloody hell. Pharaoh watched impassively. Such a wild creature. He loved her the more for it. He looked her straight in the eye;

unflinching. The Princess relaxed.

I have been to the religious festivals this day. I went as a commoner, without all the usual pomp and circumstance. I have been in the deep desert the whole day light. It is why my eyes are that way; they will recover, in good time.

I saw the priests. They brought the Ark to the festival. The people suffered a religious fervor. It was real. I know, because I felt it too. I have felt that way once before, long long ago. Before I came to this place. Before I became your Pharaoh.

This is who you are, said the Princess then. He knew that she was referring to his eyes, and the mystery that shrouded his past. She had such a sublime gift with words, saying volumes with a mere sprinkling of syllables. Of course, too; they knew each other so very well that little more was needed to communicate, at a level few have ever known.

Yes, beloved. The past I have sought to bury in the desert far, far away from here is back to haunt me. My heart is heavy to think of it again. Forgive me but I fear my very soul will wither and die, if I must bear this terrible burden alone.

My Lord, bowing her head with a submissive pride; you honor me with your confidence. With a shallow curtsy, the Queen of Egypt renewed the Pharaoh's belief in this people of the Nile whom adopted a lost child and elevated him to their most high place.

How I treasure you, Princess of mine. You have such a power over the soul; I am awed. In these few stultified moments, you've salved my conscience. The great burden, albatross to my spirit, is no more. As we speak, it flutters away a butterfly with nary a care in the world. Folding his powerful arms across his broad chest, he leans back upon the throne, and gazes calmly at the prostate woman before him.

She smiles a little while later, tilts her head a slight bit higher to catch the Pharaoh's eyes with her own. Their eyes meet, and he motions her to climb the two small stone steps of the throne and there be seated with him. She hesitates, then gracefully climbs up and arranges herself

sideways across the seated monarch's lap, her eyes inches from his.

A terrible sadness overcomes the Pharaoh and tears glisten his cheek. He tells her about himself, his people, and their fate...

My boyhood name was Kase. When I came to this land of yours on the Nile, barely a man; well, I knew I would one day ascend to a place of great authority. It was my fate, and so I knew it would be. Pharaoh Kase seemed not a name worthy of the Kingdom so I called my self Kasekhemu. It helped, being a small boy, to have a big name.

The Princess smiled, then reached up and gently closed his eye lids as she could see it pained him, the blazing red eyes. He continued that way, although the tears were sporadic, if not steady thereafter.

It's no secret to me, Princess; that you dislike the moisture in our palace here. It's one thing to love the Nile more than life itself; but surely to have it flowing swiftly through the place itself ~ I know you believe me a little bit daft, having designed it thus. Alas, as you can see - blinking open his eyes, and shocking her with the glistening redness of them - a day in the extreme dryness of the desert has nearly rendered me blind.

Pharaoh went very still then. He was lost to her, as though his soul had departed his body but leaving the physical body alive and functioning. He returned to her many anxious breaths later, but it was as though he had been elsewhere all the while for he spoke thereafter as though he'd been telling the story all along; but to another. She heard only the end of the story.

.. After many, many days and nights of travel only my father and I remained. Behind us stretched a bloody trail of corpses adrift in the sand, bereft of their blood. It is what sustained my father and I, the last hope of a lost People to transcend the tragedy that befell them; to survive, and to tell others of their plight.

We never did reach the Nile, although at the very end we rejoiced to feel the moisture of it upon our faces. My father had traced the path of the now dry aqueduct that served our land. He hoped for respite in the

castellum, the source of water. We were less than a day's travel from it when he collapsed and could go no more.

I awoke the next day beside him. We shared the last of our provisions, had our last supper; and then he unsheathed the sharp black flint blade from the leather strap at his hip. Unbuckling the holster, he gently fashioned it upon my own leg. Then he handed me the knife itself, handle first.

Many long moments I did as he beseeched me; as so many before had done for us two. I slit his wrist and took what moisture remained within his poor body unto my own. We talked until the very end when weakness overcame him and he closed his eyes and died. He told me to go to the castellum, to wait there in the cool stone structure. God would provide for me from there.

I did as my father asked, and came upon the castellum only hours before it was to be covered completely by the drifting sand. It was indeed cool and moist inside, and there was plenty of water to slack my black tongue and burnt lips.

For many days I stayed there, spending hours each day moving sand away from the opening to keep the castellum assessable. Then I wander the dunes in search - of something. I knew not what; the Nile at best, travelers even. Hallelujah, but three Hebrew camel drivers showed up, just as my strength was spent.

I stole one of their beasts, some of their food, and escaped that place in the darkest part of the night. By dawn I was at the Nile. Never in my life had I seen such a valley all full of water. Surely there must be a God after all, thought I. The conviction has been with me ever since.

A few days later I wandered into your village, parched from the sun and nearly insane from loneliness for my family, and my land. The rest you know; because you were the little sister, of the kind shepherd who took me in; taught me your language, and passed on his trade for me, that I might provide for you and the others upon his passing.

Indeed, the Princess sighed; how you spoke of the Nile as a blessing of

WH Clark

God at the end of your journey - so were you to me, a savior and
godsend.

Nine

I am deeply ashamed, blurted out the Colonel, to have told you this vision of lust and delusion. I beg your forgiveness for I have lost my senses. I implore you to share this with no one, as my condition has already cost me the respect of my General and your people, if not that of my own soldiers who are accustomed to my strangeness.

I beg of you, on behalf of the overwhelming love I have for the South; to keep this episode between us, that I may assert the utmost leadership and skill in defending this great city Vicksburg against the evil North; and in so doing prolong the life of this great land, if only for a few more precious months.

The Colonel was literally on his knees before her, whom he had placed in the rocking chair and wrapped with the self same blanket that she had laid upon his own chilled shoulders. Much to his surprise - but maybe not, given her bold and precedent breaking behavior thus far - she spoke out to him with great conviction.

Colonel, sir; you may be suffering a bit of puppy love but the roots of your affliction are as true as can be. My people, not too far removed even now from our own precious roots in the heart of Africa, tell a story very much the same as yours. In our view, your visions are not palsies of the mind but connections to your own past lives. This profound experience, driven as you are to defend the fortress of Vicksburg against the onslaught of evil, has drawn from deep within your soul a parallel episode in your own past life - indeed, it exists also in the collective memories of my own African tribe. Ours is a story you will want to hear. It would be my honor to share it with you now.

Thirteen thousand years ago the high Sahara Plains in central Africa were a lush, green paradise. They had been so for many millennia, and supported a plethora of wildlife as well as an advanced human culture. They were predominantly a rural culture, but they had one large central city where all industry and science was centered. Only a small fraction of the total population lived in Hamunaptra, but their learning was shared by all the villages scattered over thousands of square miles.

They had a rudimentary alphabet, but sophisticated language skills. Their arts and crafts were practical, if not advanced; although their skill in stone working was unexcelled in all the ancient world.

Beginning about eleven thousand years ago the world's climate changed and the tropical rains fell less infrequently upon the high Sahara. The lush, green paradise became dry at its edges over the next hundred generations. As the habitable land shrank, the entire animal and plant population was concentrated in an ever smaller area. The people did their best to save all the species, domesticating as many as they were able.

The rains became so undependable that around ten thousand years ago the people embarked upon their most ambitious stone construction project ever. They built a massive aqueduct, tapping the Nile River aquifer many days passage toward the rising of the sun. This project threatened their first ever contact with other civilizations, but they managed to keep the contact to a minimum, until the entire aqueduct was buried safely under the desert away from the primitive but inquisitive tribes settled along the Nile river basin.

This underground river supplied enough water to Hamunaptra that the people there lived comfortably, and surrounding rural communities learned to conserve what little water they had to eke out a tentative existence. The climate continued to become more arid, though, and the encroachment of the desert was relentless. Worse, a small but extremely belligerent Hebrew tribe along the Nile discovered their secret, and made regular forays to try and destroy their water source.

A few generations of war ensued, but eventually a measure of peace was arranged with the warrior Hebrews by sharing with the something they treasured beyond all else - wisdom, and knowledge. Eventually the most sacred literature of the people of Hamunaptra were passed on to the Hebrews, and became known as the Torah.

As the Sahara became more and more inhospitable, small groups of the people migrated to other parts of the world. They brought with them, mostly, their skill in working stone. Wherever they settled, they built lasting monuments - from south America to central Asia, they

settled and left their mark upon the world.

It was obvious the desert would win the struggle, and the people of Hamunaptra were realistic in their expectations. Most notably, as the animal population suffered from lack of resources, they built mighty arks and transported as many of the creatures as they could, down tributaries to the Nile basin. Their garden of Eden was going fast, but they managed to salvage the animals, creating a vast diversity of wildlife along the Nile in the process.

Ultimately, what remained of the civilization was obliterated almost over night. Something happened, and their underground river was destroyed beyond repair. Overnight the thriving city of Hamunaptra became a parched desert. A million citizens died within days. Those who survived - mostly upon the flesh and blood of the fallen - were blinded, the tear ducts of their eyes having degenerated after millennia of living in their humid, moist land.

One foray after another ventured from Hamunaptra, seeking safety beyond the desert. None reached safety because they were blinded in the desert, and lost their way. One last expedition numbering many thousands set out, determined that at least a few of their number would reach safety. Of them, only the boy Kase and his father reached the safety of the castellum.

Upon arrival at the castellum, Kase found what had excised their water supply. Massive blocks of granite blocked the outflow of water from the castellum. Unable to engineer even a whimper of water from the inner sanctum, Kase spent what time remained of his young life, to set down his story upon the walls of the outer chamber.

By the time the three Hebrew tribesmen found the boy, he was stark raving mad. The Hebrews deduced that some creature on the far side of the granite walls, making aerie sounds uncomfortable to the ear and unsettling to the psyche, had caused this extreme mental malaise. For seven days and nights, they nurtured the boy back to physical health; then counseled him back to mental health over the course of many more days.

Never had they seen any human suffer from such extreme mental trauma, especially at such a young age. They were so mystified that they encoded the tale and included it in the Torah handed down to them by Kase's people. They attributed the boys spiritual illness to a creature called Leviathan; which they had never seen themselves, but later generations of Hebrews saw it, and added the details that now exist in the Book of Job.

Kase went on to become Pharaoh Khasekhemy, the first monarch uniting Upper Egypt. The Hebrews continued to ply their trades, wandering around the area. Some of their tribesmen heard about the castellum, and the strangely powerful creature held within. They found the place, made their way into the inner chambers, captured the small aquatic creature, and created a scheme to use it's power to induce a religious fervor upon unsuspecting believers. In this way they were able to build a large power base of faithful believers.

These priests built a dog kennel sized Ark of the Covenant, within which they carried Leviathan to religious festivals all over the Nile basin. It was to one of these festivals that the Pharaoh went; and where he suffered the beginnings of the mental malaise that had stultified him as a young boy.

Panic ensued in the royal palace. Terrified priests, themselves far advanced in mental degeneration after years of close proximity to Leviathan; confessed all to Pharaoh, who seemed to know all, all ready. Khasekhemy took advantage of this perceived omniscience and used it to enforce his will upon all his subjects. A huge percentage of his people had been afflicted, and they had to find some way to make them well again.

For the solution, they turned to the old stone working skills developed by the people of Hamunaptra. Pharaoh surmised that intense physical exertion made people well again, and massive construction projects were set in motion to keep the population physically active all year round. Those of higher intelligence were assigned skilled trades, sufficient to repair their mental faculties.

It was many years before the system was finally in place, and

encouraging signs were evident. Pharaoh Khasehemy was well advanced in years by this time, and confident of his legacy he devoted himself to one last project; a memorial to the people of Hamunaptra. Several thousand meters from the castellum, now buried and removed from all written or human records (any priest with knowledge of the place was killed), Leviathan safely inside for eternity; a Hall of Barques was created, still in clear evidence even to this day.

A dozen massive river barges with all their accouterments - the Arks used to transport the animals from Hamunaptra and its environs - were set in place. Subsequent generations have been challenged to explain them; an impressive collection of highly engineered water craft situated ten kilometers from the Nile right in the middle of the desert.

It was several more generations before the after affects of Leviathan subsided in the general population, and the nation wide pyramid and temple building projects were scaled back or stopped all together. Life continued at a modicum of normalcy for two millennia, until around 1300 BC Seti I discovered the castellum, and the curse of Leviathan was let loose upon the world once again. The Hebrews captured the beast, carried it away in the Ark; celebrated with it as the "Golden Calf" upon Mount Sinai following their Exodus. Then, they set it free.

The rest is written in your own white history; if not quite complete or factual.

WH Clark

Ten

The following day the black slaves awoke as usual before the first blush of dawn. Again, there were no white slave owners to usher them off to their chores. This time, they were all quickly off to the battlements, arriving before dawn itself.

Much to their surprise a great fire was roaring in the middle of the area they had cleared the previous day, made up of the limbs and slash of the trees they'd felled. Using this fire to light their work, the Colonel and his men were already working furiously. The slaves arriving on the scene thought it a vision of the devil, these fiendish white men working at a break neck pace, the dawn's early mist softening their rapid and deliberate movements.

The slaves made a half circle at the town side of the growing clearing, already with trenches and embankments marked out with stakes and string, and rubbed their aching backs and limbs. Accustomed as they were as slaves to hard physical labor, theirs was a far gentler labor on a farm, working the earth at a leisurely pace. The slaves were a little bit ashamed that these white soldiers were apparently in far better condition than they. Accustomed as they were to being humiliated, this was just a little bit more than they could take. Freedom was starting to look mighty good.

The slaves felt a little bit better when the white townsfolk began appearing, moving even slower and more accusingly than they had. They all - blacks and whites - just stood silently watching the soldiers, expecting them to collapse any minute - most believing the Colonel would be the first to drop - but they were sorely disappointed. It was a bonding experience, though, and before long they woodenly bent to their labors and soon the soreness was worked out of their muscles and things were well underway.

The Colonel's lady friend was last to arrive on the scene. If anybody but the Colonel noticed they didn't say so. She took a roundabout route to near where he was working away. Then, feet apart and hands firmly planted upon her hips, she scolded him loud enough for most of the people nearby to hear, to stop exerting himself so mightily else he

collapse. Mark my word you'll not get my tender ministrations if you collapse again, not after asserting yourself so furiously like this. Kicking dirt at him, she sputtered away in a righteous fury.

The soldiers among them fought back smiles. They were all most impressed when indeed the Colonel did himself slack off for a break, accepting a steaming cup of coffee from the same black woman. She was herself quite surprised that he minded her, and as soon as he took the beat up tin cup of coffee from her, she hurried off to work in the trenches not wanting him to notice her feelings.

The rest of the day the Colonel circulated among all the workers, giving directions, where to dig what, how to stack and bind logs, and other such military matters. The black slaves were extremely quiet, despite themselves soaking up the skills imparted to them by the Colonel and his men. The soldiers were quiet too, unable to figure out how to express their sincere gratification to the black slaves for lending them a hand in this labor that was so very important to them.

Everybody was quiet but the Colonel, that is. Like a honey bee flirting from one flower to the next, he danced among them all lifting spirits, giving instructions, and applying his own strong muscles here and there when no one much was looking. It was clear to all that his heart was soaring, so much joy he took in being with all these fine Christian people who were so selflessly helping him in his humble pursuits on behalf of the good Old South.

In the days and weeks to follow the battlements grew with skill and verily exuded power. The slaves and soldiers began to take great pride in what they were doing. Something else happened, almost imperceptibly. The Africans, unaccustomed as they were to this type of work, soon wore out their flimsy cotton farm clothes. Most of the replacement clothes they got were bits and pieces of old uniforms, some Northern but mostly Confederate. These uniforms were made of rugged wool and withstood the rigors of the tasks done wearing them.

Even as the whole group of workers began to appear physically as one, the slaves often times having upon their person a more complete uniform than some of the soldiers, there also developed a hierarchy.

The Colonel, naturally, was in command but he learned to delegate tasks as the General began to expect more of him. Sergeant Bearheart was the natural second in command for the soldiers; but the surprise was that Lina Mae was a natural for leading the blacks, freed and slave alike.

The Colonel, after much thought and a little casual reconnoitering among everybody to see how they felt about it, encouraged this in Lina Mae and before she even realized it herself, he was giving her orders for the Africans and she was expertly carrying them out. Secretly, the Colonel suspected that she really was a Princess in real life; it was certainly a role that befitted her shoulders effortlessly, and one that her people accepted without question.

The idea of a woman in command was a little unsettling to the townspeople among them, and they told the Colonel so. Lina Mae was not far away when the group of farmers approached Colonel Clark with this issue. Much to her surprise, the Colonel immediately sent them straight away home, saying he sure as hell didn't want anybody working on his battlements who didn't love the South as much as he. As they were walking away - almost running after a few seconds - he literally chased after them with his saber drawn, waving high in the air, shouting how his Africans were better workers anyway and loved the South more than they even though they'd nothing but grief since being slaves.

The towns people all returned over the next few days.

The Yankees were coming.

WH Clark

Eleven

Lina Mae had become somewhat domestic with Colonel Clark, living in his quarters, preparing his meals, and by some accounts sharing his bed. They were both discrete about the matter, so that only his troops and her Africans knew the arrangement. It was a difficult situation at best, so it was with increasing concern that she paced the floors of their second story bedroom the day after he ran off the townsfolk with his sword, her man did not return. God help me if white folks are capable of lynching their own kind...

She felt even more apprehensive when, looking out the windows, torches were seen scurrying around the soldier's compound. Something was afoot. She stayed glued to the window hoping every occasional passerby was her man; fearing a knock upon their door that would mean doom, from a posse of angry whites. Her fingernails were all but chewed away from the anxiety, when at last a step sounded on the stairs and the Colonel bounded into the room.

Lina Mae made as if to light a candle to greet him, but he swiftly blew out the match and whispered her to silence. He bade her to get her clothes on, and carry some instructions to her Africans. He was by all accounts in very big trouble, as the towns people were all in a drunken rage over his antics the previous afternoon. He gave her a document, his last official act as an officer of the Confederate Army; freeing her and all the Africans. He had the authority to do this, despite their being owned actually by others.

They'll be furious, she retorted. They already are, he replied. They'll lynch you, she stood her ground. Let them try, he stood his ground. Yes, Sir. She said, and bundled out of the house with her orders. There's no telling what transposed in the slave quarters in those early morning hours, except that none of the slaves showed up for work the next morning. Quite a few of the horses were missing too, and the towns people assumed the soldiers had taken them out into the forest to forage. In any event, the whites were all gathered before the Generals headquarters, frothing at the mouth petitioning vengeance for their tarnished Southern pride. It's just as well they were not privy to

what was happening inside because it would only have heightened their sense of outrage. Perhaps rightfully.

I'm sorry Mr. General Pemberton, Sir. I may be disobeying a direct order. So be it. Arrest me. Court martial me. I will not surrender my saber. It was given me by President Davis himself. I would rather die than surrender my saber.

The General was lambasted. Maybe the word was flabbergasted. Either way, it was totally incomprehensible to him that any officer had the sheer unmitigated gall to threaten honorable, hardworking white Southern gentlemen - much less, with his military sword drawn. Little matter this junior officer had the ear of President Davis, he was way out of line. Besides, he and his men were superfluous now. Reinforcements were on the way; disciplined, orderly soldiers with a Southern sense of priorities.

Colonel Clark left the room swiftly, because indeed the General gave the order to have him arrested but Clark was gone before they could catch him. The Colonel ran down the stairs, out the front door and in the same motion yelled at his men to saddle up they were getting out of town right this very moment hurry.

It's kind of hard to say why they all followed his orders. Clark never instilled much discipline in them, but gave orders that they obeyed of their own free will. It was much to his credit that in the short history of the Missouri Volunteers cadre under his command, nobody ever once hesitated in the swift abeyance of one of Clark's commands. This time was no exception.

To rush away from a full General shouting death by the firing squad at dawn, right into the face of the 20,000 reinforcements en route from Jackson, was sheer suicide. They would all be arrested, and shot for desertion. The charges against them were legion - aiding and abetting slaves, theft of slaves, disobeying direct orders, aiding and abetting the enemy; and so forth. Even their horses knew it was suicide, the odds were so much against them. Yet, much to their credit too, the horses never hesitated either. Oh, add horse theft to the list of charges; one more capitol offense.

Thus it came to pass that horses and the men atop them were ready at the bit the instant their Colonel cleared the porch of the General's headquarters building, and jumped at full run straight upon his already running steed.

They were way out of town by the time the Confederate General, in exasperation, urging in an overly loud voice - actually, ordering on threat of disaster, to get and right now arrest the Colonel. They all had been standing upon the porch and watching thoughtfully as the Colonel's battle flag bounced into the distance, hoof beats loud and clear all the way down the short brief stretch of mud and dirt fronting the would be Yankee lines that he and his men had prepared with such skill and determination.

Apparently the 20,000 reinforcements, by this point in time within sight of Vicksburg itself; on the self same road from Jackson to the east were as unprepared for this eventuality, as much as the Confederate General had been. They were all Confederate soldiers, you know. The officers of individual detachments soon got direct orders via courier from higher ups, how to deal with this untoward situation, to chase down and bring the Colonel and his men in - dead or alive. As fate would have it, Clark and his men were clean past the troop's rear lines long before they were ordered to fire upon them with deadly force.

The senior officer staff of the two Confederate forces, the remnants of defending troops and the regiments of reinforcements, met in Vicksburg immediately therein after, but are known to have avoided mentioning Clark and his men. Instinctively they avoided any consternation among their troops that might ensue, from this situation that was so offensive to all their common West Point sensibilities. General Pemberton was sanguine enough in the briefing to imply that Colonel Clark was off to get more reinforcements. They all knew full well that wasn't the case, but admired the General's composure for belittling him so subtly. So, in acquiescence of their Yankee military nobility and crude sense of southern honor, they put the matter aside and got on with the business of defending Vicksburg.

Besides, a man like Colonel Clark would not stay hidden for long, and

would soon be put in the brig and shot at dawn, as required by the Southern code of conduct. President Davis, would not take the news well, but the senior Army staff didn't much care; it was honor above all else.

Once Colonel Clark and his men were long past the last stragglers of the Confederate reinforcements headed to bolster the defenses of Vicksburg, he called a halt and they dismounted. Walking their horses off the road, covering their tracks as they did so, they moseyed into the deep forest cover and made toward a small clearing by a stream that was known to the Indian sergeant from his reconnoitering in recent weeks.

Horses and their riders dowsed their thirst in the stream. The Colonel had them all sit down for a spell to conserve their energy. There they sat for hours and more, awaiting signs of pursuit by the regular army soldiers in Vicksburg. They were all in a state of quite high anxiety, especially since they came to realize the price upon their heads was now as high as that on the Colonel's own; they jumped with fright when a sharp crack sounded way too near, indicating the approach of man or men.

The Colonel was the first to stand up; and as all faces turned to him for direction, he motioned them to silence and to stay calm, also seated. They did so, but their weapons were drawn and ready.

The first person out of the woods was Lina Mae. Scanning the troops scattered around the small forest clearing, she spotted Colonel Clark - then ran unashamedly straight up to him, with a strong embrace; and a quite long, steamy kiss.

The rest of the Africans were soon to follow, completely outfitted as soldiers - with experienced mounts, rugged saddles, trail blankets, rifles, pistols, and lots of powder. Their uniforms were unexpectedly in order, and just as unexpectedly the white soldiers arose from their repose and greeted them all with a spontaneous handshake for everybody, and a tidy little hug for the black African women soldiers among them.

The Colonel was beaming. Lina Mae was soon beaming even more, as he pulled a small gold band from his trousers pocket. Bending down upon one knee, waiting there tactfully until he had everyone's undivided attention, he proposed to Lina Mae to be his wife. She blurted out yes, shed a passel of tears, and they were there on the spot married before all those who mattered to them - and before God too, of course.

It was getting sort of dark by this point in time and somebody said they should distance themselves further from the road before night fall, to make their camp for the night. The Colonel put his sergeant in charge, and he managed to get things going in the right direction.

Just before they all got up to leave, the Colonel called them to order. He first promoted Mrs. Clark to the rank of Captain, making her his executive officer and second in command; the sergeant was made their chief of staff, over black and white men and women alike, and all together they were henceforth to be known as Clark's Raiders.

After not a few cheers and hallelujah's Colonel Clark motioned them to silence, and gave a short speech. If we are successful on the field of battle, in defending our South against the Yankees, no one will know. We will not appear in any newspaper report or history book. Our family and friends will never know what we have done; other slaves will not get inspiration, or whites the means to lessen their prejudice. There will be no fame, just lots of infamy.

We all have a price on our heads now. The South would just as well kill us as the North. The South for violating virtually the entire Code of Conduct; the North for being Southerners. Having black soldiers, and women soldiers, made them pariahs in the South. The Colonel being the bastard son of President Davis made them instant targets of derision in the North. Having blacks and whites under the very same command, at all levels of rank, made them hateful to both North and South.

Hell, the list is too long to enumerate and it's getting dark and time to follow the sergeant's orders. I just want you all to know, if by chance you aren't here in the morning I will understand. If you go, then go with God and know that there will always be a place here for you.

WH Clark

Come dawn, they were all still there - if anything, a few more than before. There were far worse dangers out in the deep dark forest than having a price on their head.

The Yankees were coming.

Twelve

In the following days the Colonel ran his men - and women - soldiers through the paces, to see what were their capabilities. The ex Missouri Volunteers he already knew were good marksmen, trackers, and all around soldiers. The Colonel was more interested in the blacks, and how they might fit into the order of things.

The rigors of the Colonel's boot camp tried the blacks to their limits of tolerance, so much so that the Mrs. rolled him over late one night and told him they were on the verge of mutiny, or running to the North. She didn't think he heard a word he said, but the next morning when she got up at the rooster's first crow, he was gone and a message was scrawled on a scrap of paper held down with a rock in the middle of his bed roll. She got dressed in a hurry, and rushed to carry out the Colonel's orders. Something was going to happen, dramatic like she just knew it.

So there they all were assembled in a small clearing, two lines of twenty bodies each in single file, facing one another a few paces apart. The whites on one side and the blacks on the other. The white soldiers stood smartly at parade rest; the blacks did their best but fidgeted a little bit especially from the mosquitoes. Every man and woman among them had their rifle, most also had pistols and knives in their belts.

Everybody was starting to wonder where the Colonel was, although I don't know why because he was chronically late; but eventually he did show up, barefoot and toting a mess of fish for breakfast. He set the trout line down as he approached the assembled group, looking every bit the country hillbilly who hadn't seen a living soul in too many years to count accurately.

Lina Mae observed, though, that his posture straightened a bit to see them all, and his gait was sure and confident. He'd made up his mind about something, and she was itching to hear it. He told each column to take a step forward; they did, and then for each to shake the hand and introduce him or herself to the person directly in front. They did.

From this point forward, he told them, the two of you will be a fighting

pair of soldiers. You'll eat together, sleep together, and especially fight together. You will fight together orders of magnitude more efficiently than either possibly could alone, because I'll show you how. By this time his XO was behind him whispering something in his ear. He nodded sternly then stepped aside graciously, bowing slightly and with a swish of his arm he beckoned her front and center to address the group herself.

There are a few white men paired with African women. If this is a problem for either of you, please move to another place in line and find a match you are comfortable with. One African man backed completely away, and then dashed into the woods leaving one white soldier unpaired. She motioned him to stand across from the sergeant. No sooner than done, the Colonel walked swiftly behind the soldier and yanked his hat off. A bun of dark brown atop her head came all askew, and long silken hair cascaded down her shoulders.

Bingo. Sergeant you're luck is changing at last ~ you're partner is a white woman soldier.

Any objections, Mrs. Colonel Clark interrupted his levity. There were none, and the deed was done. The Colonel then explained that he had observed the Africans, although not experienced with shooting rifles or pistols or riding horses or most any other military activity; they were quite dexterous with their hands. He then told the ex-Confederate regulars to train their counterparts in rapid loading of their weapons.

The Africans looked a little disappointed. The general idea, the Colonel addressed the Africans directly, is that our very first objective is to try and steal, borrow, or buy as many rifles, pistols, and muskets as we can get our hands on. You men and women will have maybe up to a dozen weapons each that you will be accountable for - to clean, oil, and transport as well as load under battle conditions. You will do so, permitting the experienced shots to fire many rounds in rapid succession, all the while you load new charges in the spent pieces. This will allow the almost continuous discharge of carefully aimed weapons at the enemy, making it seem to them for all practical purposes we are a much larger and deadlier force than we actually are.

Lina Mae added, without priorly consulting her husband, that any African who can prove his or her marksmanship will have equal time shooting as loading. Quite a few among the Africans were eventually able to shoot very well; all the women, and a few of the younger men. The Colonel nodded his approval of Lina Mae's policy, then padded right off to get some breakfast, grabbing up the bunch of fish as he left the surprised group of soldiers.

The recruits were all sitting around the open campfire having fish, baked potatoes, and corn for a hearty breakfast. The Colonel had to repeatedly tell the Africans to slow down. The chores can wait; in fact, there are no chores. Unlax. Enjoy you food. You're free men and women now, and its impolite to wolf down your food and to avoid altogether casual conversation.

As most of them finished up and poured themselves a cup of steaming hot coffee, they started peppering the Colonel with questions with such relentless insistence that he finally threw up his hands and motioned them to silence.

I'm sure all you are anxious to grab yourselves some glory, to get on with learning what you all need to be fierce and famous soldiers. I regret to inform you that you will not be fighting that kind of battle; not if I can help it. Our job is to collect enemy intelligence for General Pemberton. We will engage the enemy only in self defense. Your most important job will be to stay alive so you can pass on whatever you have learned.

Why all the hoopla with pairing up, learning to load and shoot asked one of the veteran soldiers. They all nodded agreement.

Our job, once the Yankees are in this area, will be as follows. You all will be divided up into groups of four pairs each, which will thereafter operate as a single squad. If by chance one of the group attracts the attention of the enemy, you will run away from them leading them in hot pursuit to a previously arranged location. There all four pairs will assemble and form a skirmish line across the length of tree line normally occupied by a full brigade of Confederate regulars. At that time, as the enemy approaches in a presumably small number, you will

open fire with everything you have and pellet the enemy scouts so fast and so furious that they immediately pull up short, fearing they have stumbled into an enemy of much superior numbers and firepower than they.

At this time, the Yankees will turn about and return to their headquarters, calling up reinforcements and return to your position. But the four pairs will long since have gone, having returned safely to our home base to be debriefed and receive new orders. Once I am convinced of your coolness under fire, I will also show you how to back off of your former position, thereby observing from a distance the number enemy who show up, where they hail from, their regimental colors, and how swiftly their response time was - indicating the proximity of their own central headquarters.

All these things you will observe, record, and bring back here to me. I will assemble the information, comment upon it, and deliver it promptly to General Pemberton. This information will be vital in the defense of Vicksburg, and will save many Confederate lives while at the same time making the lives of the Yankees far more unpleasant.

Somebody asked how they will know where to reconnoiter as a unit, and when will they know to do it. Why, the assembly will be on a weekly basis on a regular schedule, or the following day after any individual unit is heard to engage the enemy. We will all be operating close enough together to hear such a sudden, momentary engagement echoing through the woods. Our meeting place will never be in the same location, but at such a place as identified by a posse of vultures circling overhead. Wherever they are, there I shall be beneath them.

There were no further questions, so they divided into five squads and under the able instruction of the senior veterans, began their education in using their weapons, and passing hand signals between them to avoid detection.

Thirteen

In the fall of 1862 the armies of the North and South were fully extended, each readying to implement a sophisticated set of lethal strategies. After a series of furious battles, the armies of both sides were experienced, wary, and led by generals whom had risen to command by virtue of their success in many hard fought minor engagements. Both sides were at the top of their game.

The forces of either side were amassed at strategic points along a line from Vicksburg straight across to Washington DC. In the next nine months major engagements would happen at each of these points, in rapid succession, if not simultaneously. In Virginia there would be Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, and then Gettysburg spaced at approximately two month intervals, each involving well over 100,000 combatants. At the other end of the battle line was Vicksburg, where two major campaigns would be carried out, one in December of 1862 and the other in the following June.

Meanwhile, along the line between these two distant points each side had 100,000 men aligned on the border of Tennessee. These two closely matched forces held the middle of the battle front, with the Blue Ridge Mountains from there to Washington DC to the east and hilly, heavily forested terrain to the west and Vicksburg.

The weakest defensive points for the South were the two ends. The Army of Virginia protecting Richmond was much more secure in its strategic position. With the Atlantic Coast to the west they could not be outflanked; to their east were mountains, almost as impenetrable. Vicksburg, on the other hand was infinitely more vulnerable. It could be approached not only by land from all directions, but by water from the north and south via the Mississippi River, most of which was under Union control.

Confederate President Jeff Davis often referred to Vicksburg as the Gibraltar of the South, a very sage description. Vicksburg, along with Port Hudson about half way to the Gulf of Mexico, formed a fluid Maginot Line preventing any northern incursion across the Mississippi into the heart of deep south. The Mississippi River was a mile wide,

with strong flow and treacherous undercurrents; it was virtually impassable with the enemy in control of the waterway.

Two other strategic points along this line, Baton Rouge and New Orleans, were already under federal control but the Union couldn't get any troops down there because the upper Mississippi was denied to them by Vicksburg. So there was a huge opening in the South's defenses on the lower Mississippi River, and the North was aching to take advantage of it post haste.

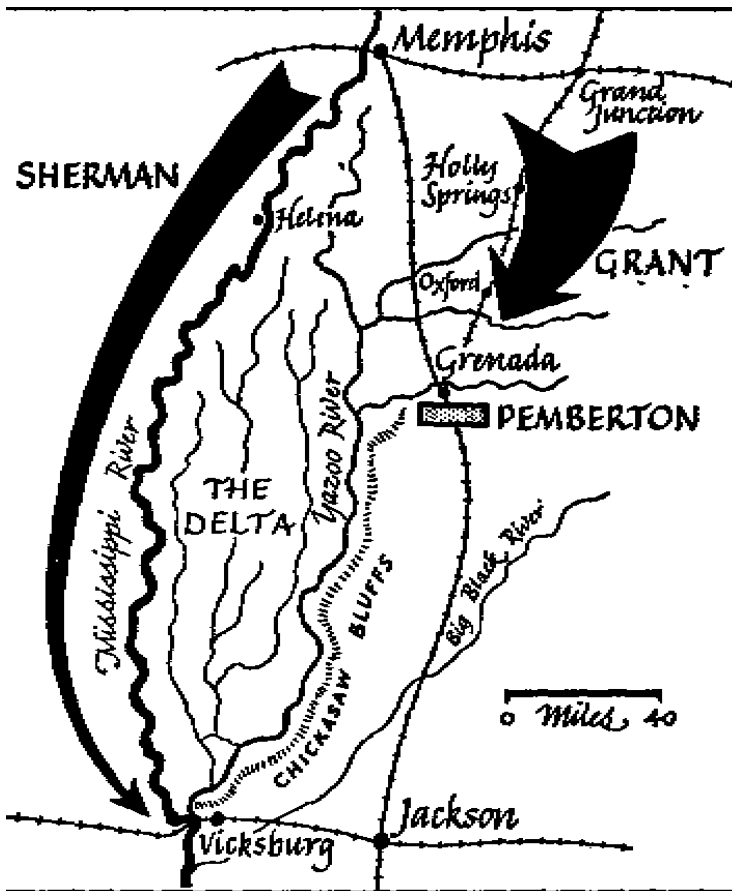
Baton Rouge and New Orleans had been captured by General Butler and Admiral Farragut a few months previous, quite easily in fact. Farragut had then sailed right past Port Hudson to Vicksburg (the cities, from the Gulf northward were N.O., B.R., P.H., then V), where he was turned back after a short engagement. The Confederates' plan was to purposefully play possum, expose to the North an apparent Achilles heel and then lie in wait for them to fall for the ruse. That is, Port Hudson was at full battle strength all along, and Baton Rouge was soon to come back under Confederate flag - but not until after the North had committed itself.

The North began amassing forces immediately after Farragut's expedition. By the end of the year Grant had 40,000 troops in northern Mississippi, with another 32,000 in Memphis and Helena. Admiral Porter, meanwhile, had assembled a large fleet now docked at Memphis capable of transporting all the latter troops down the River to exploit the flaw in the South's defenses.

The plan had been cooked up by McClernand, a former Illinois Congressman and lawyer friend of President Lincoln (they both hailed from Springfield). He wanted to secretly assemble a massive force in Memphis, to rush down the River, overwhelm Vicksburg, and quickly thereafter take the rest of the Mississippi River southward. He'd gotten President Lincoln's approval to solicit another 50,000 volunteers from their home state of Illinois, and he had 2/3's of them assembled and outfitted in no time.

There had been enmity between Grant and McClernand, so it was with mischievous glee that when Grant got wind of McClernand's plan he

ordered Sherman to Memphis to take charge of the fleet and the partly assembled secret army, and to instantly head south. McClelland was at that time in Illinois rousing the volunteer army that would win him the glorious military victory he needed to bolster his national political ambitions.



Thus Grant, intending to march on Vicksburg with his 40,000 man army, now had a second force of nearly equal strength at his disposal. He ordered Sherman to make an immediate assault on Vicksburg, landing his troops to the north of town; and Grant himself was to make a simultaneous maneuver by rail from the north, offloading his troops for a frontal assault on Vicksburg from the east.

Grant was confident that Sherman would overwhelm Vicksburg's small garrison, having three times as many troops. Grant would occupy the 20,000 man Army of the Mississippi then positioned near Jackson - 100 miles from Vicksburg, running perpendicular from the north-south Mississippi River - so they could not come to the city of Vicksburg's defense. If Sherman failed in his objective, then they could join forces and totally overwhelm the enemy at that time.

This strategy was further bolstered by McClelland, soon to learn of all this and in his political ambitions eager to participate in a victory at Vicksburg, however it might come about (theoretically he could claim to be Grant's superior officer). If their campaign stalled, because of some unforeseen circumstances, McClelland would have another ten to twenty thousand volunteers within an arms distance to provide the coup de etat. Finally, there were another 15,000 troops under General Banks with ready transportation to Vicksburg from the south via Admiral Farragut's fleet of ironclads, rams, and barges.

The North was throwing everything they had at Vicksburg, developing a plan to assault the city on all sides at the same time. Moreover, the attack was planned to occur on Christmas Eve, to hopefully take out of play the much vaunted Confederate esprit de corps; Southerners being devout Christians to a man, the North was hoping they would be disinclined to make war on that Holy Day.

It was a brilliant plan, especially the secret fleet and army assembled by McClelland. Grant may not have known about it until the very last minute; then certainly the Confederates were not aware of it. Although it must be said that all this was happening in Memphis, formerly a cultural bastion of the Cotton South.

The North's objectives were to take Vicksburg with all the forces in the

region. Less casualties, they would still have 50,000 troops ready to move against Bragg, then at Chicamagua 150 miles to the northeast, facing an army of equal strength to his own under Rosecrans. Grant's command would easily outflank Bragg, and the Yankees would have perhaps 75,000 troops left to rush up to Virginia in a few days time to overwhelm Lee's already outnumbered army, then jockeying for position near Fredericksburg.

The war would be over in a matter of weeks.

WH Clark

Fourteen

Redemption is a subtle but extremely important part of the Southern way of life. Nowhere is this ideal better exhibited than in the three men selected to defend Vicksburg by Confederate President Jeff Davis. In any other culture, before or since, these three would long since have been delegated to the rear echelon. They had all shown themselves to be abject failures, one morally, one politically, and the other on the battlefield. Their only redeeming quality is that they instilled faith in their followers. And since folks down South value leadership above all other virtues, their flaws were forgiven and they were reassigned to the three highest levels of military authority, at arguably the most critical point in the South's entire line of defense. It was clear that the only possible hope of success was, at Vicksburg even more than at any other battle site, the inexorably human qualities of character, courage, and charisma.

Joseph Johnston had the character, and was placed in overall command of the Trans Mississippi Army which included the Army of Mississippi at Vicksburg and Bragg's Army of Tennessee at Chickamauga. President Davis hated Johnston's guts, had done so forever it seems. But the soldiers admired him greatly and he was a defensive genius. Perhaps spitefully, Davis assigned no soldiers to Johnston but gave him the titular control over two armies already with their own generals, both generals of whom were themselves somewhat irascible, if West Point classmates - Bragg and Pemberton.

John Pemberton had no military experience whatsoever, but Davis put him in command of the Army of Mississippi, firing a native of Mississippi in so doing, Earl Van Dorn. Pemberton had just been literally run out of Charleston, the very heart of the South where the first shot had been fired in their harbor at Fort Sumter. He was a northerner by birth, lacking in the Southern skills of tact and tolerance by nature, and despite an overwhelming enthusiasm for the Southern cause he became insufferable to the citizens of Charleston and they ran him off. Pemberton's new job made him responsible for all of Mississippi and that part of Louisiana east of the Mississippi.

The previous commander was Van Dorn, who had suffered two horrific failures in two important engagements with the North. He had attempted sophisticated military maneuvers with poorly disciplined troops, and they suffered the consequences. Clearly Davis would rather an inexperienced military man to be in charge of the region, now that the North was readying a massive assault on Vicksburg, than a man who had so disgraced himself on the battle field. Pemberton, perhaps grateful for the trust Davis had placed in himself; showed an equal measure of trust in Van Dorn, whom he made his cavalry commander.

Between them, these three men had a total of at most 32,000 soldiers. Moreover, Johnson had a history of appropriating troops from subordinate commands to add to his own and, having no men at all in his current assignment, it was a foregone conclusion that the 20,000 troops at Jackson were as much his as the novice Pemberton's. The North had a force of almost three times that much bearing down upon them, commanded by some of their most talented leaders - Grant, Sherman, McClelland, Banks, Porter, and Farragut.

The North had a clear and pressing mandate: take Vicksburg. The South, meanwhile, was severely divided. President Davis believed Vicksburg had to be held at all costs. Johnston felt otherwise, believing the emphasis should be on keeping armies intact rather than cities under their control. Johnston would, given half a chance - and he so attempted before the second Vicksburg campaign in May of 1863 - have combined Bragg's and Pemberton's forces, leaving Vicksburg to the enemy without any fight at all.

As it were, Johnston would have little input into events, other than the aborted attempt to evacuate Vicksburg just before Grant besieged the city beginning in May. It was all up to Pemberton. Johnston's role was to act out a drama for the North, which was always leery of having Bragg's force come straight away from Chickamauga to their exposed flank, thus mindful that every maneuver made in Mississippi would have to be done with overwhelming numbers.

The mere fact that Johnston was a defensive genius was enough to cow the Yankees into extreme caution. So effective was Johnston in

this that the Yankee's first assault upon Vicksburg failed in December; but, with relatively few casualties, it wasn't for six more months that they managed another campaign, one which completely avoided confronting the front of Johnston's defensive line from Vicksburg to Chickamauga. In so doing, the three Northern armies and two Northern fleets were made to undergo an extremely convoluted campaign, just to manage a frontal assault to the east of Vicksburg against an elaborate wall of defenses that had been steadily improved from January through May.

Johnston bought Pemberton the time to make Vicksburg defensible. It was up to Pemberton to hold Vicksburg and keep the western flank of the South's line of battle for as long as practicable. He and Van Dorn did so with admirable skill. Moreover, recognizing that the North's next step upon taking Vicksburg would be to turn and flank Bragg's troops at Chickamauga, Pemberton was able to break the siege with the North taking no prisoners, but releasing 30,000 men on their word; most of whom presumably a few months later took place in the battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga.

As predicted, the North attempted to roll up the South's line of battle, west to east. Gettysburg was lost at the same time as Vicksburg and Port Hudson (circa July 4, 1863). The western flank collapsed from a sharp point into Pennsylvania, into a rounded defense through Maryland. Likewise when Vicksburg fell, the South was ready at the defensive, the Army of Tennessee holding that flank admirably. The mad dash didn't take place, down the Mississippi into the heartland, because most of the North's troops were needed for a frontal assault upon the Army of Tennessee.

As expected, Sherman made straight into the heart of the South. It was Johnston who opposed this march, back stepping with a masterful defensive technique all the way to Atlanta. A series of engagements along a line from Nashville to Atlanta were largely indecisive. Sherman wouldn't commit to a full battle, and Johnston couldn't trick him into one. Johnston was relieved by Davis as he was readying to defend Atlanta, Davis being exasperated that Johnston could not overtly defeat Sherman.

The Army of Virginia, meanwhile, was slowly retreating to the south. Johnston and Lee were slowly converging, deep into the heart of the South. With each step back they were defending land that was more and more precious to the troops. The defensive front of the South became stronger and more dense with each passing day. The North's supply lines were getting longer, extending through enemy territory where guerilla raids were taking their toll. If victory did not come soon the North's resources would be exhausted, the patience of the Northern citizens long since frayed by sheer boredom with endless small battles that were much admired for their skill and finesse in the South; but criticized in the North for their being no glorious victory or bounteous booty.

The North was desperate, and they put into place an desperate strategy to keep the armies of Johnston and Lee separated. Sherman burned Atlanta, then separated his troops into two columns; each column of which spread out to their limit. Then, along a straight line of smaller cities from Atlanta to Savannah they burned two massive swaths each a hundred miles wide. Now, even if Lee and Johnston were to unite forces, they would have a rear vulnerable to supply disruptions and with no protection from trees or ground cover. Moreover, they were no longer protecting a strong core of economic, and political strength anchored down into Florida; this heart of the Old South was no more, quite literally. Four months later Lee surrendered the Army of Virginia at Appomattox Court House, in Virginia.

The Confederates may very well have won without Sherman's burning march from Atlanta to Savanna, and simultaneously from Columbia to Savanna during which he burned literally a third of the state of Georgia. A dozen major cities were torched, resulting in a massive humanitarian crisis with hundreds of thousands of Southerners homeless, without shelter, or food - right in the middle of winter. No Southern army could possibly have fought on in the face of such a debacle. Johnston's army disbanded on the spot and went to the aid of the countless civilian casualties, most of whom would surely have perished without their immediate assistance. All this happened from November through December 20, 1864. Merry Christmas, again.

There seems, despite it all, to have been no enmity between the

Generals of the North and the South. They were professional soldiers doing their duty, a very Southern kind of attribute. After the war, it is known that Johnston attended the funeral of Sherman. It was a noble deed, and speaks clearly to us now that Johnston did not hold the demonic March to the Sea against Sherman; instead, they both were just following orders. If blame is to be placed, it must be placed upon President Lincoln.

WH Clark

Fifteen

It was after the resounding defeat at the first battles of the Vicksburg Campaign that, a week later on January 1, 1863, the Union President announced the emancipation proclamation. Arguably, the President thought it was necessary to even further undermine the Southern mystique, that he issued the proclamation. It had been proven that a major offensive upon Christmas Day would not shake the rebel's resolve; more extreme measures had to be taken to undermine their remarkably strong psychology.

I believe it was the valiant defense of Vicksburg that freed the southern slaves, not President Lincoln's announcement. If Vicksburg had fallen, a huge force of 100,000 union soldiers would have swept east through Jackson, and across to Chattanooga. Bragg would have been outflanked and swiftly defeated. Then all that would stand between Richmond and the combined forces of Grant and Rosecrans would be; well nothing. Lee, faced with two massive armies each twice his size would have surrendered on the spot.

With all of this to look forward to after the Christmas victory at Vicksburg, Lincoln would probably never have delivered his emancipation proclamation. Lee would have surrendered the Army of Virginia within six months. As it was, the North had to prepare for a second series of battles in the Vicksburg Campaign beginning in May, 1863 six months later. Freeing the slaves would give them a huge boost in recruiting needed to man such an operation, while simultaneously building up all the other armies along the Blue Ridge battle front.

After Vicksburg held, the North faced the hard fact that the war could not be won without massive infusions of manpower to their armies, and the only source of these personnel was the African population - as much freed Southern slaves rushing North to join up and then fight the South, as freed black men in the North joining up to free their own fellow blacks in the North who were still slaves. Thus President Lincoln killed two birds with one stone, in freeing the Southern slaves and keeping the Northern slaves in human bondage.

Given the absolutely ruthless policy he authorized, if not ordered, in razing the state of South Carolina via Sherman's infamous March to the Sea, there seems little evidence to suspect Lincoln would have freed the slaves for strictly humanitarian purposes, without some compelling military motivation. With all due respect, the people would likely not supported it as a Christian act of kindness - the Southerners might have (and, in fact, did in the Confederate Constitution; and in their support of the Amendment after the war); but most definitely, not the Northerners.

In more practical terms, a victory at Vicksburg would have rocketed Lincoln's arch political foe McClelland into the national limelight; more so if the South's battle front had been rolled up cleanly in the following months. Lincoln would have a difficult time campaigning against him in the national election on the horizon.

Freeing the slaves at this time would not bode well in a political strategy against McClelland. Stopping the practice of slavery might have been a popular campaign plank while in the heat of war, as it made it easier for the common man to identify their Southern brethren as worthy opponents and needing to be defeated; but to do so with victory in sight would be political suicide. The general population was not so much opposed to slavery, just upon general principles.

Thus, the emancipation proclamation would not have been delivered by President Lincoln on January 1, 1863 if McClelland's lieutenants Sherman and Grant had occupied Vicksburg on December 25, 1862. It seems that McClelland, who was not ready to unleash his secret army when Sherman appropriated it by Grant's orders, would probably have waited until after the President freed the slaves, then made his move on Vicksburg. Then Lincoln would be in a completely indefensible position politically; as well as militarily, at least vis-a-vis McClelland - assuming he succeeded in conquering the rest of the South in early 1863.

Without the emancipation proclamation, and the subsequent major contribution of the Africans to a Northern victory - both on the field, and in the factories - the white population of the North would not have been able to distance themselves from their prejudice, to thereafter approve

a constitutional amendment eliminating slavery once and for all.

This is supported by the fact that only two states had, until 1860, taken the incentive to outlaw trade in slaves across their borders - Massachusetts and Virginia. Presumably, upon re-admittance to the Union after the cessation of hostilities, Virginia's stand would have been revoked in obeisance to the Union standard. At which time Massachusetts would stand alone on this issue, and unsupported anywhere. The people of America had bigger problems, especially in the savage Indian uprisings out west, to risk freeing an only slightly less belligerent population - the Africans - which was at their side, and not even at arms length like the Indians were.

Similarly, had the War of Southern Secession stopped prematurely, as postulated, the North would have no need of additional manpower to fight and overcome the Indians. They would already have available a large population of Southerners who had just put down their arms, and whom could be trusted to take them up once again to fight the Indians.

All things told, the bell would never have tolled upon slavery, at least not in America, had Vicksburg fallen during the first campaign. The United States having at the time the largest economy in the world (the South alone was the third largest economy), if African servitude had not been stopped there, it may not have stopped anywhere in the world.

WH Clark

Sixteen

The first Yankee assault on Vicksburg transpired over a large geographic area. It may help to picture it all in your mind as follows.

Imagine a large hard bound book and open it about a third of the way through, pressing the first half flat upon a surface, so that as the book is opened it forms a plateau higher on the right half. Vicksburg is at the exact center, situated upon a line of bluffs, thus formed. Memphis, Tennessee is at the center, top edge of the volume. Jackson, Mississippi at the center right edge. Port Hudson, Louisiana is at the center of the bottom, edge. Monroe, Louisiana at the left, center edge. These four extremities on a big plus sign centered at Vicksburg were all at or near major rail heads and thus important strategically.

Draw now a line from the top left corner of the book to Vicksburg, then to the bottom left corner. Although the Mississippi River generally runs north-south along the center of the book, at Vicksburg proper it makes a ninety degree bend following the two lines thus constructed, and at some distance on either side of Vicksburg it meanders back to its general north-south inclination. The line going directly north, in the vicinity of Vicksburg is the Yazoo River, a large tributary and site of a large port facility.

To the east of the bluff line is heavily forested land, with pines and hardwoods. The original name of Vicksburg was Walnut Hills, in acknowledgment to the thick grove of walnut trees shading the high bluffs with a panoramic view of not only the Mississippi River bend but the southernmost part of the Yazoo.

To the west of the bluff, across the mile wide Mississippi River is bottom land that is extremely fertile because of repeated flooding by the Mississippi, which leaves rich dark deposits as the waters recede, suitable for cultivation of cotton, corn, and most any other crop. These bottom lands are no longer forested, but have been cleared and are planted most often with cotton.

A few large plantation homes dot the landscape of the bottom land across the River, but many more large elegant homes are in Vicksburg

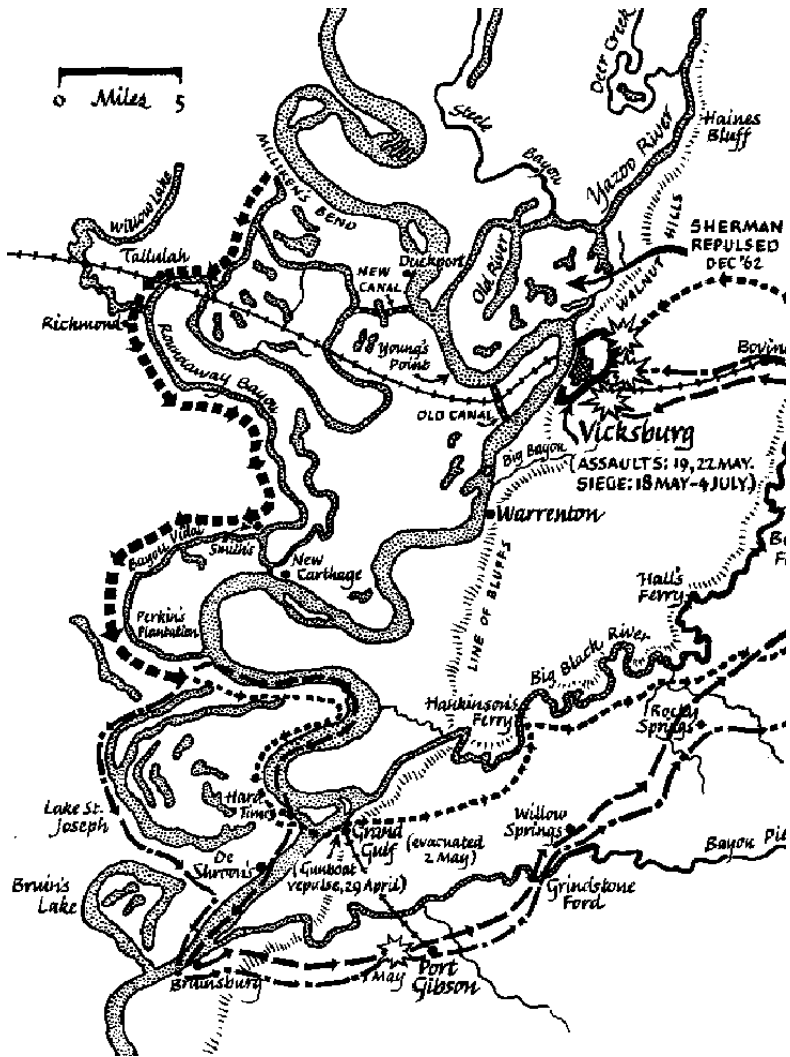
itself occupied by traders, slave owners, and by some gamblers. The harbor on the Yazoo is a busy port of trade for lumber, cotton, and other crops harvested in the region. The rail road passes through Vicksburg too, a line direct from Jackson to Monroe.

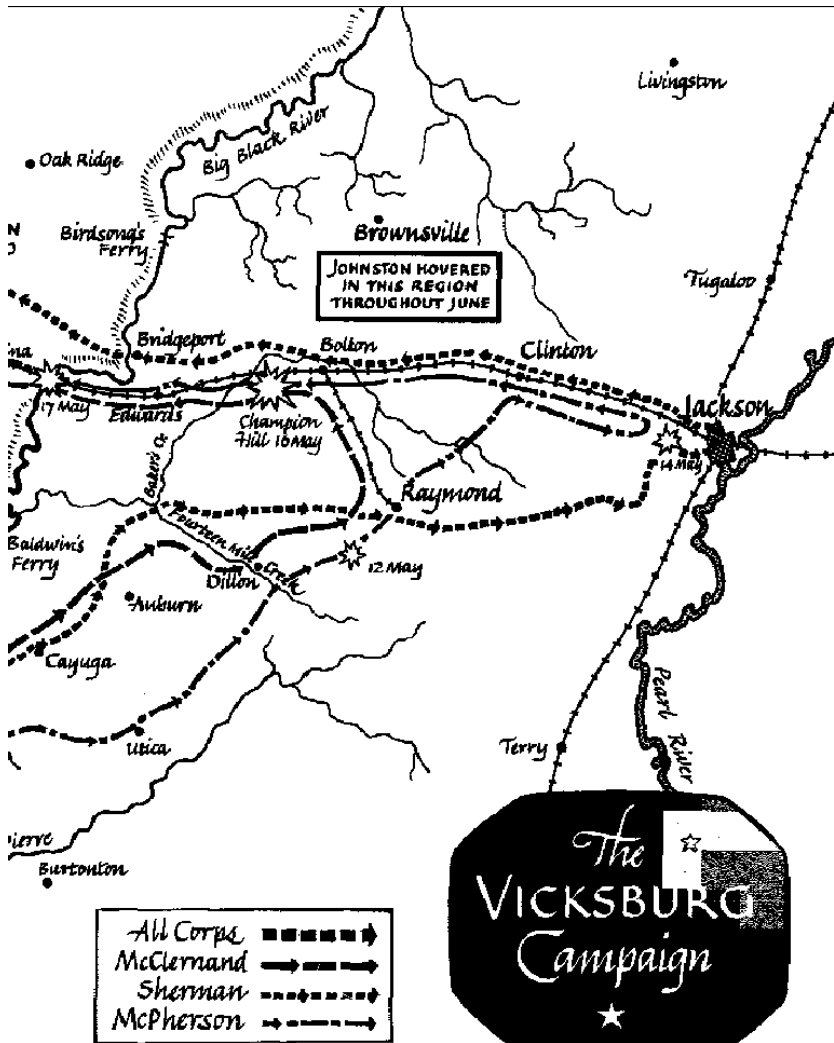
East of the bluff line, punctuated with veritable cliffs at Vicksburg, the land is hilly and drained by streams draining into the Mississippi or its major tributaries. West of the River the land is quite flat, oftentimes swampy and drained where possible by bayous. The eastern landscape is permanent; the western landscape is in constant flux as the Mississippi floods, slips, and moves into another profile; in so doing, leaving an echelon of crescent shaped lakes, streams, and pinched off sweeps of River in a matrix of rich dark soil in the complete range from lake to swamp to dry habitable land.

The V formed where the Yazoo empties in the Mississippi just above Vicksburg forms yet a third topological feature. The high bluffs form a fairly straight line northward, and the land east of these bluffs is hilly and heavily forested, but with standing water in low lying regions - some as permanent swamps, other areas soggy from water drainage from frequent heavy rainfalls.

The city of Vicksburg itself has a commanding view of the bend in the Mississippi, as well as direct line of sight for the straight stretches of River that adjoin the bend. Arterially placements have a three hundred foot drop upon boats on the River, which flows directly beneath the cliffs, seasonally varying with the sandbars.

The city has nearly as good a command of the approach from the Yazoo River to the north. The drop is not as steep, but is still precipitous at one or two hundred feet for the entire length. Between these northern bluffs, the River to the left and the Yazoo River a few miles to above, the land is soft in the dry season, swampy in the wet season, and coursed by several permanent streams all year long.





Seventeen

Perchance the reader believes mankind a more nobler and civilized entity, now than 150 years past. If the comportment of war is any indication, man has digressed very far indeed. At that time, especially during the Civil War, virtually every General on both sides in every clash large or small, led his own men into battle. The same can be said of their Colonels, Captains, and Lieutenants. It stands as mute testament to their bravery, as well as the high moral standards of all soldiers on both sides, that these officers suffered no worse a level of casualties as any other class of combatants.

In the modern day, were officers to lead their men into battle, the very first individuals to fall in every single conflict would be the officers. All guns would be aimed at them, and they would be ripped apart in the very first volley.

Other traditional rules of conflict were not so well followed, especially by the North during the Civil War. Their resorting to making war upon the civilian population happened upon a wide scale, culminating during Sherman's March to the Sea and subsequent actions in that theater of operations. The North also took unprecedented actions to stifle guerilla warfare behind their lines, especially in the border states of Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Arkansas - all of which were slave states, but which were officially in the Northern block. These same practices were implemented in conquered Confederate lands, as they were annexed by the advancing Union armies.

These laws, enacted initially by General Pope quite early in the war, treated the civilian population in occupied territories as hostiles. Their rights were diminished, they were forced to sign vows of allegiance to the North, suffering expulsion if they did not and charged with treason if they returned thereafter. The property of all civilians was appropriated for military use with only those who signed an oath of allegiance getting reimbursed. Finally, the death penalty was assigned to anyone caught communicating with the enemy.

Pope had the full approval, and support, of the federal army's Committee on the Conduct of War, in these and other similar activities

that were offensive to General Lee et al as uncivilized, even unlawful. Pope justified them as necessary to stifle guerilla activity behind his lines, and the President supported him in this - having revoked the right of habeus corpus - search without a warrant - for all Americans.

Modern historians make excuses for the way the North violated all the accepted rules of war, seeming to be almost proud of the way they introduced many modern tactics of war. Their widespread practice of justifying making war upon civilians only makes it that much harder to believe their analyses and factual presentations.

This practice of dispassionate justification on behalf of the North becomes all that much more glaring when it is realized that the South never had any such problems, not even in the free African or slave populations. In Mississippi, they were so uniformly loyal to the Confederacy that Grant operated in the area for almost a year, all the while assuming Pemberton had a force similar in size to his own when in fact it was from 1/4th to 1/3rd the size, depending on the time of comparison. Had Grant one inkling of intelligence indicating the great superiority of his numbers, he would have attacked en force and have won.

As it was, he did not reach Vicksburg until May at which time their defensive preparations were so advanced that there was no thought of a direct assault. He slacked off and set up a siege.

It is fortunate that none of the Union generals in the Vicksburg Campaign resorted to Pope's level of atrocities, thus it is possible to pick up and follow through on the dialog here assuming both sides behaved with complete honor in all things military. This is accentuated by the fact that General Pemberton refused to surrender his troops to Grant unless the officers could keep their swords and the soldiers return to the battle line once corresponding numbers of soldiers were enlisted by the North. These conditions were in fact written up in the terms of surrender, and followed scrupulously by both sides (the earlier fictional accolade to Southern Pride notwithstanding).

Eighteen

You can hardly imagine how General Pemberton might have felt, arriving at his new assignment in Jackson, Mississippi. Reviled in Charleston, he was welcomed with open arms by the people and the press, upon his arrival in early October 1862.

It must have been as clear then, as it is now, how vulnerable the South's defenses were along the Mississippi River. Yet the Confederate leadership were writing them off already as a loss, not even a regrettable loss.

Pemberton had accomplished a lot by the end of the year. Baton Rouge was back under the Confederate flag; the federal troops had simply evacuated the city, which was immediately re-occupied with Confederates. Port Hudson was strengthened too, and the South's back door was once again secure.

President Jeff Davis arrived in Jackson on December 19, then visited Vicksburg on the 20th and 21st, returning to Jackson to deliver a speech to the Mississippi Congress in Jackson the day after Christmas. Pemberton begged him for additional troops, to strengthen the garrisons at both Vicksburg and Port Hudson.

While Davis was in Vicksburg, they got word that Baton Rouge had fallen back into union hands, and that federal troops had landed just north of Vicksburg on the Yazoo River, where the Cairo had been sunk by a couple of underwater mines. It was clear the Union was soon to make a full assault upon Vicksburg, from north and/or south, and that their resources were far from adequate for the task.

All that Davis could offer was a cryptic message to the War Department that Vicksburg was in need of long range cannon. Coming from a West Point man as was Davis, this was an insult because the last thing Vicksburg needed was long range cannons. Their height above the surrounding terrain on the bluffs gave their artillery as much of a reach as was necessary, if not more so. Pemberton needed soldiers, not cannons.

President Davis' prejudice against Vicksburg was obvious now, and especially his animosity toward General Johnston, whom he had met at Chickamauga en route to Vicksburg, stopping there to inspect Bragg's headquarters. Vicksburg was clearly in imminent danger, but Davis was almost casual in his disregard of this threat to his supposed "Gibraltar of the South."

This incident illustrates a distinct dichotomy that had developed in the South. Had there been time and energy for political activity south of the Mason-Dixon line since the war began this dichotomy would have been evidenced by the emergence of two distinctly different political groups. It is, in retrospect, unfortunate that such political influence was not more pronounced, as it might have served to counter the military imbalance that made Vicksburg so weak in stark contrast to the overwhelming strength around Richmond.

The politics of the South existed in a full spectrum, following more or less the battle front line from Richmond to Vicksburg. It was based on the fact that the settlements in Virginia dated from the 1700's, whereas Mississippi was in many regards the frontier.

The upper classes in Virginia were the original slave holders, living in huge mansions, sipping mint juleps as their small armies of slaves worked the tobacco fields reaping in enormous profits. They lived a life of leisure, and considered themselves elite. This is the picture most people have of the Old South - vast fields of crops, large slave populations, and hyper rich land owners.

Vicksburg stood in stark contrast to this popular model. They were still in the process of clearing land, erecting buildings, establishing roads, railroads, harbors, and river crossings. There were slaves, and plantations, but the land owners worked just as hard as the slaves. They shouldered huge risks, purchasing slaves and hiring freed men, to sow and reap crops for which they had no idea if a market existed - and for which there was as yet no efficient way to get their produce there. The only way so far was to cart it all to Memphis, where the traders purchased it for pennies on the dollar. The wealth was made in Memphis, and other cities like it - Atlanta, New Orleans, Charleston, and the like.

The socioeconomic system was sharply divided in Mississippi and thereabouts. The hyper rich were in Memphis; the hardworking farmers and their hardworking slaves were subsisting by working hard to make enormous profits for the extravagant whites in trade hubs like Memphis.

Politically, the Virginia elite and their ilk in Memphis and Atlanta were Republicans in the modern day sense of the word. The small slave holders, black and white alike, the freed men, the rest of the middle class, and the poor white share croppers were Democrats. The latter perceived slaves, not as possessions to be bullied into submission; but as the paper thin margin separating them from free men, permitting them to remain independent farmers instead of peon factory workers in the north. Slaves had a far greater intrinsic value to them, than to the super wealthy.

Herein perhaps lies the root of the high antagonism that existed between President Davis and General Johnston; hence between Richmond and Vicksburg. Davis himself grew up on a large plantation in central Louisiana, near Port Hudson. It was traditional for the youngest sons of wealthy Southern families to go to West Point, and Davis was no exception. It was there that he met Joseph E. Johnston. It was also at West Point that he and Davis got in a fist fight over a girl. Johnston won both the fist fight and the girl, rumor has it.

Years later, when Davis was organizing the military forces of the new Confederacy, the five men to be given the rank of full general had Johnston second to last in seniority even though he outranked them all in the federal army, being a brigadier general and the others just colonels. Johnston wrote a long vitreous letter of protest to Davis, who curtly dismissed his appeals. This feud only grew in vehemence and intensity as the war progressed.

Ultimately Lee was the President's champion, given full authority to defend Richmond against the North. Lee, whom Davis knew and admired from their West Point days, was the epitome of the Southern gentleman. Johnston was the boorish outsider who hated with a vengeance but fought like a champion.

So much was Davis focused upon protecting the soft heart of his fellow

large slave holders in Virginia that, perhaps only subconsciously, he gave Lee the go ahead for a massive drive into Pennsylvania in mid-1863 which was Gettysburg; while Johnston had been begging him for more troops in Vicksburg since late 1862. This changed the entire face of the war, which heretofore had been a defensive one against invaders to protect their right to secession. After Gettysburg, this morally defensible strategy could no longer be justified. The cost of this aggression was the loss of recognition of the Confederacy as an independent nation by both France and England.

Had Davis been less of a slave holder and more of a president, he would have protected the South's less sophisticated states - sending troops to Johnston in Vicksburg and to Bragg for the Army of the Tennessee. These would have solidified the defensive front, as one bold affront to the North's aggression, standing strong but silent to protect themselves against the North's untoward invasion. This would have been the act of a commander in chief playing his part in a War of Secession. The invasion of Pennsylvania made it a Civil War, and justified in a single action the North's belligerent position to the rest of the world.

Again, had there been an active, influential political system extant in the South at the time, the debate would have been between two groups of ideological opposites and not two men sworn to a blood feud. Reason would have won over rage, and the South's limited resources would have been used in a manner consistent with the sage strategy of fighting to defend the South. Joe Johnston, by far the best defensive tactician on either side, would have gotten the resources he needed; and Robert E. Lee would not have gotten the go ahead to obliterate once and for all the North's constant threat to Richmond and the huge, elitist slave holding farms in the environs.

Later we will see that Davis not only didn't send Johnston and Pemberton the troops they needed, he also countermanded Johnston's orders. Before the second Vicksburg Campaign, in the spring of 1863, Johnston ordered the evacuation of Vicksburg. Davis, on the other hand, had just ordered Pemberton to hold Vicksburg at all costs. Pemberton abandoned the defenses, mobilized all the cannons and artillery, and packed everything and everyone on a train for Jackson,

then Chickamauga.

Grant's troops had, in the mean time, landed below Vicksburg and arrived just in time to stop Pemberton's escape and push him back to Vicksburg. With all their cannons displaced from their permanent mounts in the Vicksburg battlements in their escape attempt, Pemberton then had no cannons readily available to break Grant's instant assault upon the city. It was indeed a credit to Pemberton that he was able to retreat and dig in quickly enough to keep Grant from immediately overrunning the city. Be that as it may, most historians blame the subsequent siege and surrender on Joe Johnston and/or Pemberton when the truth of the matter is that the fault lies clearly with President Jeff Davis.

At the very time Vicksburg was besieged, Lee was leading over 100,000 soldiers across Maryland, and into Pennsylvania and Gettysburg. Joe Johnston, who hovered around Jackson all the while Vicksburg was under siege, could have easily broken the siege with as few as 10,000 soldiers. Yet, he could not take them from Bragg at Chickamauga because that would reduce their numbers so that Rosecrans would attack.

By the same token, an additional 10,000 soldiers at Gettysburg might very well have given the Confederate forces a victory. Had Pemberton managed his escape from Vicksburg, as Davis ordered, these troops would have been at Gettysburg. Yet, winning there would have meant little, because it would be at the cost of opening up the whole Mississippi flank to the North. The Yankees had almost 150,000 soldiers in the area, dwarfing the 50,000 Bragg had at Chattanooga.

There was absolutely no tactical advantage in winning at Gettysburg. Far from it, holding that area would require twice as many troops since the western flank was not protected by the Blue Ridge mountains, as was their habitual defensive stand in Virginia. Perhaps Davis would then have ordered Bragg's Army of Tennessee to protect their new western flank across the Maryland-Pennsylvania border, at which point virtually all the South's troops would be deployed for one purpose - to protect Virginia.

This picture is what would have emerged in the minds of the Southern generals immediately following Gettysburg, if not long before during the planning process. Not only was there a negative tactical benefit in victory; but the whole idea of attacking into Pennsylvania was wrong.

Why not attack Washington DC. It would take fewer troops, and result in a clear tactical and moral advantage. Losing an assault on Washington DC would have far greater benefits than a victory at Gettysburg. The North would feel itself vulnerable; they would pull troops from the west - and their fleets from the Mississippi, to support and perhaps evacuate the civilians down the Potomac. The North's defenses would be weakened, giving Johnston the slight edge he needed along the Mississippi River front. As a defensive genius, for Joe Johnston, the North losing 10,000 troops in the region would be just as good as his receiving 10,000 troops as reinforcements.

There are quite sinister implications, to the South's assault upon Gettysburg. It could not have been done simply as a directive by Davis, but must have had the full support of all the generals involved in the assault - Lee, Longstreet, Hood, Hill, Ewell, Early, and Johnson to name just a few. Why even attempt such an assault with 50,000 troops against the North's 72,000 especially when the only result would have been glory. Alas, the South, lead by West Point graduates, was unable to capitalize on the vulnerability of the nations capitol - unable to overcome a conditioned loyalty to the North, drummed into them at the Academy and in years hence in the Mexican-American and Indian wars.

A tactical feint on Washington DC by the Confederate troops retreating from Gettysburg would have made the campaign into a strategic victory with some tangible benefit. Yet, Lee et al didn't even do that. It looks almost as though they were as loyal to the union as the federal troops themselves. Why not. Deep down the North had no qualms against slavery. The Virginians even less so. Slavery made their Tobacco South rich, gave them bounteous leisure, influence, and political power. The Cotton South saw the Africans as human beings with a tangible value only infinitesimally less than poor whites; versus the 3/5ths value assigned them by the Virginians.

The debacle of Gettysburg conjures other dastardly possibilities. The war was being fought along a battle front with Yankee slave states on one side - Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri, and Arkansas; with Southern slave states on the other. Increasingly the soldiers on both sides were all from the South. Southerner was killing Southerner. The one important strategic result at Gettysburg is that it resulted in the greatest possible number of casualties on both sides, while gaining the least possible tactical advantage.

The war was becoming a genocide upon the Southern people. This would no where have been more clear than in the far west, as seen by intelligent men responsible for the defense of the Southern flank of the Confederacy, needing only a nominal amount of resources to be able to fulfill their tasks with ease; yet, denied these small resources, they look east and see their leaders squandering enormous reserves in manpower, supplies, strategy, and national esteem in seeking to obtain objectives of zero significance as compared to their own responsibilities which were of enormous tactical as well as strategic significance.

Clearly if the Cotton South was to survive, it would have to be done without any assistance whatsoever from the Tobacco South; indeed, the Virginians seemed as much their enemy as the Yankees at this point. Caught right in the middle, and standing idle and rested through this whole period of almost two years time, was the Old South and Army of Tennessee. It was this group of brave Confederate soldiers, along with the remnants of Pemberton's Army of Mississippi, that formed the retreating front stalling Sheridan's drive toward Atlanta with such exquisite effectiveness. Under the command of Joe Johnston, they were the Old South's best and brightest hope. Even at that late stage of the war, victory was still very much a possibility; the well-rested Army of Tennessee along with the 30,000 troops Pemberton was able spring from Vicksburg were by far the largest and best single fighting force left on either side.

Months later, spirits were extremely high in the Southern ranks following Johnston's nearly continuous series of small but skillful victories against Sherman. Then with Atlanta at his back, digging in for the kind of defensive battle at which he had always excelled - and

which he had never, ever lost - President Davis suddenly relieved Johnston of command. The Confederate troops, whom adored Joe Johnston and would have followed him to hell and back, were totally devastated. Sherman quickly broke through the deeply demoralized Confederate lines, and the hopes of the Old South were gone with the wind.

Nineteen

Upon this whole complicated tapestry of Souths, soldiers, and strife there arrives an individual quite distant from it all. Pemberton was a northerner by birth. He was a West Point classmate of Bragg's, but had not yet seen any action. He had been in Charleston since the beginning of the war, and was very much "without polish" as the locals put it - so much so that they marshaled great political influence to have him removed from their midst.

Being somewhat removed from all the innuendoes woven into the Southern panoply, Pemberton seems to have seen the situation with clarity. His first acts were to secure all the forts possible on the Mississippi - Baton Rouge and Port Hudson. He kept Vicksburg as long as practicable but with the fall of Gettysburg, arranged to have his 30,000 men released from the siege to then bolster the lines of the South's next line of defense, at Chickamauga - which they did so honorably, six months later.

It might even be argued that these 30,000 men gave Johnston the edge to counter Sherman's determined move into the deep south after Chickamauga and then Chattanooga.

Without them the federal forces would surely have won more readily, at the loss of more Southern lives. If so, then Pemberton may have played an important role in giving, in Johnston's masterful retreat, the South its last and best chance of victory. It is unfortunate that his accolades are never noted in history books; perhaps because the history, written by the Yankee victors, is remiss to explain how one of their own could play such a pivotal role against them. Or perhaps because the South was equally unable to rationalize how an uncouth outsider could have been of such great benefit to their cause.

This is as good a place as any, to comment upon that personal characteristic which the Southerners in Charleston so disparaged, in Pemberton. He lacked "polish" and neither knowledge of nor adherence to the Southern social niceties. These were unpardonable sins, especially in the deep South; and especially in Charleston, proud to be the place where the first shot was fired at Fort Sumter.

There was, during that era, and in the genteel society of the South as well as the genteel society of the North, a pronounced effort upon all educated and cultured individuals to live their lives along sort of British standards. They were polite, courteous, considerate, and snubbed those who were not. Indeed, all these powerful notions that infused especially the South, came from several uppity British authors widely read at the time.

A significant part of this mind set was the idea of bettering yourself, being good Christians, and doing right by the Bible. These notions were taken deeply to heart by the rural South, not having the many other distractions as existed within the industrialized North. The South's generals all resigned their commissions to be loyal to their states, their Confederacy, and to their roots. The South had done nothing more than secede, in reaction to a hundred years of increasingly hateful policies promulgated upon them by the North; the North had attacked them with great force. This was extremely offensive to the Southerners cultured sensibilities, their sense of honor, and their ideal of what is right and what is wrong.

Southerners fought to protect this delicate but tenacious system of honor and good deeds. Their concept of freedom was pure and unadulterated by economic or political mores. It was their God given right to secede, if only as an act of rebellion to drive home a point too subtle for the North to notice; and it was offensive to their very toes that the North should forcibly attack them without even trying to negotiate some common ground. Freedom to Northerners was a much more flexible thing, making practical allowances for real life conditions.

This divergent perspective on the world goes all the way back to the old world. Most of the North was populated by settlers from high strung, economically sophisticated English. Most of the Southerners were headstrong Irish, Welsh, and Scottish whom carried to the free world their almost genetic animosity to the English dating back thousands of years. The Irish were especially influential, or at least their philosophy was most adhered to. Fiercely independent, to the extremes of violence, they mistrusted authority in all its myriad manifestations. Religion was the very foundation of their existence. Their Jesus was a rebel, not a pacifist.

So it came to pass that the Southerners were fighting the war because they were deeply convinced it was necessary. It was the right and Christian thing to do. This feeling was shared by the Southerners on the Confederate side, as well as by the inhabitants of the states that were Yankee but still allowed slavery. On either side of the battle front were Southerners with rifles, firing them into the enemy because it was the Christian thing to do. Their motives were pure, their conviction strong, and they persevered for five blood years without blinking an eye out of cowardice or faltering faith.

The whole issue of slavery and all its economic, political, and social implications fueled the motivation of Southerners on both sides. The Yankees perceived this, and used it to draw volunteers from the border states. They were quite effective in this, especially after the emancipation proclamation.

With all due respect to the brave Southerners from the border slave states that stayed with the North, no self respecting son or daughter of the South could possibly war the Yankee uniform and stand there and fire at those under the Confederate flag. It simply was not possible emotionally, socially, or spiritually. Rural, country folk look out for one another - especially in any conflict with city slickers. They were fundamentalist Christians with unshakable faith; the Yankees were simply not. Money and wealth seemed a priority of most people in the North; not so, in the South - their emphasis was on doing good deeds, personal improvement, and being the best possible human beings.

It's the same old English versus Irish split, but exacerbated by vast distances and isolation which allowed the feelings on both sides to become extreme and accentuated. The only contact since independence between the two factions was via tenuous political machinations. There was continuous friction upon the national level, since before the United States was created as a nation. It didn't affect the citizens of the South until the North physically invaded the South and made as if to impose its will forcibly. That riled them up, and generations of resentment flared to the surface and burns strongly even to the modern day.

It was this resentment by which General Pemberton's efficient, effective administration of his duties in Charleston stimulated a social revolt to cast him out. In modern terms, he was discriminated against because he was born a northerner and despite being an ardent supporter of the South had failed to observe the simple rules of social etiquette.

Now, General Stonewall Jackson was just as taciturn and wooden in public; but he was an extremely devout Christian. Moreover, it was obvious to everybody that he tried very, very hard to learn the necessary social skills to fit in. By all accounts, he failed miserably, but the sheer act of trying so inexorably hard made him into a Southern hero, long before he became one in fact on the battlefield. The point being that no matter your shortcomings by birth, anybody is most welcomed into the highest social circles of the South just so long as he or she makes an honest effort.

The North, in invading the South, had previously made absolutely no effort at a tactful diplomatic resolution to their differences. The North had not the vaguest idea of just how extremely repulsive that kind of behavior was to the South, especially coming from those who should know better - respected, educated Christians elevated to positions of public respect and responsibility.

In any event, Pemberton was exiled from Charleston to Vicksburg. The people there, perhaps being a little less refined in their southern sensibilities, or more likely recognizing in him a sincere, deeply rooted devotion to the South; well, they made Pemberton feel welcome and needed. A local newspaper proclaimed the highest regard for Richmond, in finally recognizing their needs and delivering unto them General Pemberton. It must have been quite gratifying to Pemberton, his devotion to the South being a source of extreme angst and bile since he had crossed the line to stand with the South two years previous.

Pemberton was to make them proud.

Now, the reader - both Northerner and Southerner alike - will think I have greatly exaggerated the intensity of the Southern fighting spirit. Admittedly it is a difficult aspect of a psychology to depict to the

uninitiated, but if anything the presentation here offered is an unqualified understatement. It is less obvious in the soldiers than in the generals, and so that is whom we will look to for clues. It would certainly have been obvious to General Pemberton, upon arrival in his first field assignment.

With all this broad, sweeping talk of 50,000 Northern soldiers here and 20,000 Confederates here, it would be an egregious error to imagine these soldiers on an equal footing. Far from it, the Yankees had shoes, the Confederates most often not; figuratively as well as literally.

The Northern soldiers are almost always well equipped - complete uniforms in a good state of repair, shoes, tents, and sometimes even occupying encampments with some small luxury. The Confederate soldiers were poorly equipped - tattered uniforms in poor repair, tattered shoes if any shoes at all, sleeping under cover of trees without tents or any other such luxury. Most telling, half of the Confederate soldiers in any given engagement had no shoes.

There is nothing on earth that could make a man fight under such conditions if not something spiritual, emotional, and psychological as has been alleged heretofore. Surely it must be something akin to the Holy Spirit that strengthened Our Lord Jesus Christ, on bare feet and carrying as he did the cross of his much aligned humanity up to the Hill of Calvary there to be Crucified for his beliefs and for his assertiveness in following them.

Glory be to the valiant Christian Soldiers who defended Vicksburg.

WH Clark

Twenty

For all practical purposes, the North was not fighting one South but three of them - the Tobacco South in Virginia, the Old South in Tennessee, and the Cotton South in the far West. Given limited resources and conflicting needs, President Jefferson Davis did the best he could. If he underestimated the needs of Vicksburg, the North underestimated its strength.

It was clear to both sides that Vicksburg was the cotter key to the treasure chest of the Old South's immense wealth; and the burden to protect it lay squarely with the Army of Mississippi. The North was marshalling all its resources in the region; the South made ready to defend. A Northern victory in Vicksburg would allow Grant to rip the guts out of the South, and reap the benefits. A Southern victory would tip the scales, back to the other end of the battle front - to Virginia, and Washington DC. The stakes were enormous for both sides.

All eyes were on Vicksburg. An eerie silence transfixed the rest of the armies upon both sides as a month of peace transpired - presumably to honor the shared holidays of Thanksgiving and then Christmas - but to the east, the North's bold move unfolded, cascading from a fumbling series of troop movements by McClernand and Grant and culminated in a three pronged frontal assault upon Vicksburg on Christmas Day.

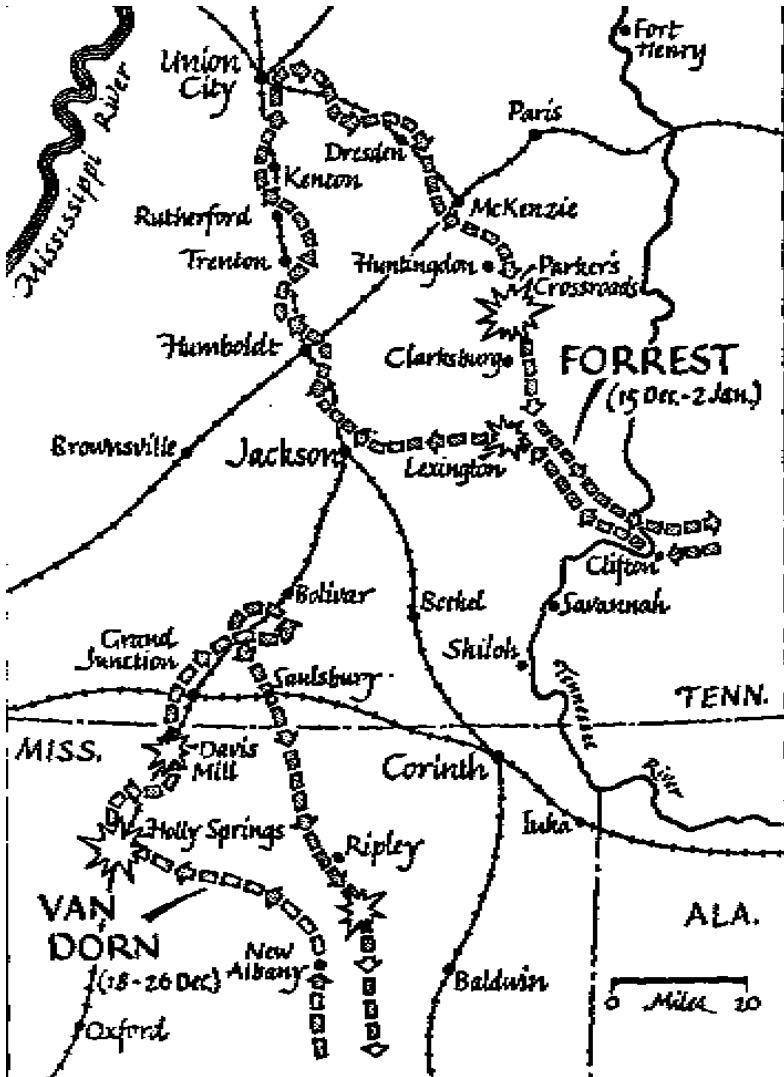
The moment of Truth was at hand.

General Pemberton had anticipated the Yankee campaign on Vicksburg, and both he and Van Dorn were well along in their own plans to defend Vicksburg. The week before, at the same time that the federal gunboats were sailing up the Yazoo River to establish a landing site for their amphibious assault, Pemberton was moving 20,000 troops to Grenada 300 miles to the northeast of Vicksburg into a nicely defensible position with the Chicksaw bluffs and impassable swamp to the east and steep hills to the west, straddling the railroad link from Jackson north. If Grant was to reach Vicksburg it would have to go through Pemberton first.

It was a bold, even reckless strategy. The union troops numbered

80,000 to the north in and around Memphis. If the activity on the Yazoo was a feint, and Grant came south with his entire force Pemberton didn't have a chance. On the other hand, he left only 10,000 troops in Vicksburg and they would have to hold off a second column of three times their number. It was an invitation to disaster.

A week before, Van Dorn had taken 3500 men up the railroad from Jackson toward Grant's army at Holly Springs. If they could take out Grant's supply lines from the North, by destroying the railroad junction and their supplies in the depot, it would immobilize Grant who would not thereafter stray beyond his supply lines. Moreover, the rail lines from Holly Springs east to Corinth then south to Jackson would be denied Grant, and he couldn't make an end run around Pemberton at Grenada straight from Jackson the seventy miles to Vicksburg. Van Dorn was on Pemberton's right one hundred miles east of Grenada, protecting Pemberton's flank with his cavalry and keeping Grant from looping around Pemberton's strong position.



Even as Sherman was leaving Memphis, out of communication with Grant, Van Dorn was deep in Yankee territory behind Grant's lines,

tearing up rail lines and burning supplies. He had left Pemberton's flank on his own incentive, and made a headlong rush behind Grant's lines to the railroad junction at Holly Springs. Grant was forced to wheel about, to protect his supplies and rail link to the North.

Van Dorn was back in position by the time Grant had secured Holly Springs, but all his supplies were burned. Moreover, once Van Dorn had destroyed Grant's rail and communications, Nathan Bedford Forrest made a second raid on the rail lines and supply depot a hundred miles north of Holly Springs, doubling the damage to Grant's provisions and communications. Cut off completely and without supplies, Grant was forced to return to Grand Junction (half way between Holly Springs and Jackson, Tennessee) and abandon the move on Vicksburg. He was less than a day's march from Pemberton at Grenada when he did an about face.

Meanwhile, Sherman reached the Yazoo River on Christmas Day, and his 32,000 troops made an assault on the Chicksaw Bluffs on the north of Vicksburg. Sherman was no more successful than Grant.

The troop barges were led up the Yazoo by Yankee ironclads. The Confederates had rigged a number of electric fuse mines in the Yazoo, most of which the Yankee's fished out successfully, but two of which detonated and instantly sent the U.S.S. Cairo to a watery grave. This slowed down their approach, but the remaining ships navigated up the Yazoo and without event and were able to disembark all their troops and equipment. The lack of Confederate resistance was disconcerting, but soon explained.

Upon landfall, the soil was uniformly swampy because of heavy recent rains. The streams were swollen and impassable so they union troops constructed a bridge, which happened not to be over the stream they intended to ford. Upon approach to Vicksburg a torrential rain began to fall, presenting them with a wall of mud to climb up to the city itself. Looking up from this morass the Confederate troops could be seen behind the ramparts - or at least the muzzles of their rifles could be seen, pointing almost straight down as they pelleted the Yankee foot soldiers with a powerful fuselage of metal. The leading federal troops were pinned down and had to be extracted, one at a time, and then

only after night fall.

To make things infinitely worse, a heavy fog settled into the Yazoo valley that night, during which time traffic at the rail head above in Vicksburg could be heard echoing thorough the Walnut Hills. The Yankees, already demoralized by the weather and the difficult approach to the city up steep hills, worried that the railroad traffic meant the Confederates were moving in reinforcements and artillery to repulse their sneak attach. (The rail traffic turned out to be a ruse. There were no reinforcements, from Pemberton or Bragg; the Confederates just ran empty rail cars back and for to simulate troop movement.)

The moment of surprise was clearly lost, and it seemed just as obvious that an approach from this direction would be successful only at great loss of life - if then. Sherman withdrew his entire contingent of troops, after suffering 2000 casualties, and upon reaching the Mississippi River fleet waiting at anchor, he was immediately relieved of command by General McClernand.

Sherman's amphibious landing had been a total waste of effort. It was not even of any use in keeping a part of the Army of Mississippi occupied, while Grant moved on Vicksburg from the north and east. Not that Grant needed any help.

WH Clark

Twenty One

Grant was distraught that his plans had been foiled, but his first priority was to secure provisions for his troops. He sent out every wagon available and told them to forage for supplies within a ten mile radius. Much to his surprise the wagons returned with more than enough to provision his 40,000 man army.

Grant learned that he could easily live off the land. He did just that for the Second Vicksburg Campaign, begun in May of the following year. He still did not move any troops over land, but floated them partly down the Mississippi River on barges at night; and partly over the bottom land between Vicksburg and Tulullah. They did an end run around Vicksburg, careful to stay out of range of Vicksburg's artillery, landing to the south and then approached the city from the east.

By this time, Pemberton was hurrying out of Vicksburg on General Johnston's orders. Grant cut off his escape, and Pemberton then retreated back to Vicksburg. Grant then left his commanders in charge of a siege, which took place from May through July 4, 1863 when the city surrendered with honor.

And so it is, that a northerner by the name of John C. Pemberton - in securing for his officers the right to keep their sabers - showed himself to be a true Southern gentleman of honor. Also, don't forget the dashing soldier from Mississippi named Earl Van Dorn who all by his own self saved Vicksburg, the south, and maybe even freed the slaves too.

Epilogue

In early May, 1863 Colonel Louis Erb, a.k.a. "Vulture Clark" was working late in his commanding General's office in Tennessee, preparing some orders for moving their cavalry detachment to Vicksburg. A physician, whom believed General Van Dorn was having an affair with his wife, snuck into the office and fired a round into Colonel Erb's brain, believing it was the General he was mortally wounding; then rushed out of the office, into his horse carriage, and away.

General Van Dorn was in a back room, and rushed into the office just in time to see the doctor fleeing out the doorway. He made as if to pursue the doctor, but Colonel Erb grabbed him and held him. It was then that the General saw his friend's injuries were fatal. Grabbing his hand firmly to empathize with his suffering, the two soldiers of the South shared a few last words.

The Colonel told Van Dorn that he should flee, letting everyone believe that it was he whom had been murdered. They had similar bodies and looks, and with a shot to the head nobody would know the difference. Van Dorn protested, that he was needed at Vicksburg and in defense of the South.

As quickly as he could, Colonel Erb told Van Dorn that his mission was already accomplished, that the slaves were free because of him and him alone. Moreover, the war had become one of genocide of the Southern people, and that the absence of Van Dorn's leadership would lead to a swift end in hostilities and a preservation of the South. Van Dorn was not convinced, having steadfast faith in the ultimate victory of the South - after all, the tide of war was clearly in their favor.

Then Colonel Erb handed him a telegraph message that had arrived that very morning from the Richmond headquarters of the Confederate Army of Virginia. Lewis Erb collapsed dead in his chair just as his General took the paper from him. The telegraph said that General Thomas "Stonewall" Jackson had died that very day, also victim to "friendly fire." Only then did General Buck Van Dorn doubt the

Confederacy would win, and he made his decision - to do as Colonel Erb had suggested, and to take his name and social position in Memphis thereafter.

And the poor man who has paid the price for all this with a reputation for infamy all these years since the end of the war, General Earl Van Dorn, becomes the hero he always wanted to be - by freeing the slaves all by himself, despite what everybody else wanted to do. So just like Job, he suffers through his fate with no ill feelings toward the Great Spirit, and after things get sorted out all is as it was meant to be in the first place.

Because well you can imagine, in the years after the war, how Van Dorn must have felt, all the ugly scandalous things people everywhere said about him, as he tended to his apple orchards in Cedar Gap, near Springfield Missouri and raised his family in a big house with twelve rooms he built there. At one point there were a dozen more homes, and businesses of all kinds, a 40 acre lake, and a park where there were sports and singing festivals every summer. There was a Presbyterian Church too, where Earl Van Dorn brought his four children, and invited his friends from Memphis to escape the hot, humid summers there. It became known far and wide as the Memphis Colony.

My father, William Howard Clark, with his mother and grandmother (who spoke only German), were the last to tend to the Erb apple orchards. Cedar Gap no longer exists as a community, just scattered residential homes standing unattached to their storied past. The small lake has been drained, the orchards gone to seed, and the place is all but forgotten. The only thing that remains of Lewis Erb's heritage is a spiritual singing festival every summer. He would likely say that was the one thing he liked the most, singing in the clean brisk woods surrounded by his friends and family.

WH Clark

Historical Note

There were seven Erb lines who emigrated to America in the late 1700's and early 1800's. Six of them ended up in Pennsylvania, where as devout pacifists they joined the Mennonites. The seventh Erb line was from Baden, Germany (the others were from Switzerland) in the Rhineland. Wilhelm Erb (1840-1921) was a famous scientist and neurologist, having the muscle reflex from tapping that special spot in the knee named after him, and many other muscular phenomena. These German Erbs were known to have emigrated to the Southern states.

The only Erb to have served in the Confederate forces (I have a picture of him in a Prussian Army uniform spangled with several decorations and medals) enlisted under the name Seigfried "Solomon" Erb. Given that all the rest of the family were Mennonites and objected strenuously to military service, it's understandable that he used another name. The official Roster of the Napoleon Rifles shows Private Erb enlisted at Fort Smith, Arkansas on June 15, 1861 at the age of 31. Again, this corresponds with the pictures I have of old man Erb. He was sick in hospital at Memphis in April 1862 and dropped from the roster on June 30, 1862 when the whole unit was re-organized and re-enlisted for "three more years or the duration of the war."

The unit fought the Yankees near Springfield - a state away - on March 7-8; then moved through Memphis and were positioned near Corinth by the end of April, arriving two weeks after Shiloh which was only a few miles from Corinth to the northeast. So presumably Erb was wounded at Pea Ridge, brought to Memphis after, but did not get back with the unit when a new roster was formed - meaning he probably rejoined the unit later.

Be that as it may, if Erb did have previous military experience in Prussia, and if his brother was as influential and as well known in international scientific circles as seems to be the case, it is not unlikely that Confederate regular Erb came to the attention of the Confederate leadership in Richmond, and he was assigned special duties after the hospitalization in Memphis.

The Napoleon Rifles were organized on February 28, 1861 and was one of the first Confederate units formed. They were attached to the 1st Arkansas Mounted Rifles throughout the war and surrendered with the Confederate Army of Tennessee in April 1865. They fought under Van Dorn's flag at his major engagements, at Pea Ridge (just south of Springfield on the Arkansas-Missouri border) in March 1862 and Corinth in October 1862. After that General Van Dorn was tasked to lead the Army of Mississippi and the defense of Vicksburg. The 1st Arkansas Cavalry fought in all the skirmishes leading up to the siege of Vicksburg, at Holly Springs, Port Gibson, Champions Hill, and Big Black River Bridge. They were in Vicksburg when the siege began, were paroled when the city surrendered, then returned to Arkansas where they scouted the state.

The 23rd Mississippi under Colonel William H. Brown also took part in the skirmishes preceding the siege of Vicksburg, against the union forces approaching from the North. They engaged the enemy at Raymond, the Jackson, and back stepped to Big Black where they joined the 1st Arkansas Cavalry who had been pushed there from the south. At this point, even though General Pemberton was begging for cavalry, Col. Brown and his mounted regiment were sent to Grand Gulf far to the south during Grierson's raid on Vicksburg from Baton Rouge, rather than joining the rest of 20th Mississippi in the defense of Big Black. They did not return to the area until after the siege had begun, at which point they were dismounted on the orders of General Joe Johnston, and assigned as infantry to be used in the relief of Vicksburg. When Vicksburg surrendered they were still infantry, and served in the fortified lines from July 9-16 defending Jackson from the Yankees.

So, it seems that one great great grandfather could have been behind the lines during the Vicksburg siege and the other was most definitely on the other side trying to lift the siege. The only real question remaining about all of this is not who's buried in Grant's tomb; but who is buried in Earl van Dorn's tomb in Port Gibson, Mississippi?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bill Clark was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. He attended LSU in Baton Rouge, then the U.S. Naval Academy, and finally the University of Texas at Austin. He has worked as a drilling engineer for Exxon in South Louisiana (he worked on exploration wells near Jackson, Mississippi and Port Hudson, Louisiana); as a Chaplain's Assistant in the U.S. Army, when he got the Army's highest peacetime award for turning in some drug dealers at White Sands Missile Range, New Mexico - the highest security installation in the military; and as a consulting engineer in Austin, Texas ~ building schools and hospitals, and publishing two textbooks with McGraw-Hill on energy conservation.

Bill Clark's maternal grandfather was founder and Dean of Forestry at LSU, Professor Ralph Hayes; his paternal grandfather was an Irishman from Cork County Ireland who married a southern lass of the Memphis, Tennessee Erb's - an influential antebellum family. His father grew up in Missouri, and graduated a rambling wreck at Georgia Tech. His mother was a southern belle in Baton Rouge.

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