

torian's diagnosis for Sherman's condition: "institutional-child syndrome"—the oscillation between gentle conduct and uncontrolled rage. Whatever clinical validity such a designation may have, the idea of a commander subject to temper tantrums at the head of sixty-two thousand troops is a distressing one—for that and all time.

Meanwhile, Sherman had delivered a highly charged order to those citizens who had remained in Atlanta. They must evacuate the city entirely, turning it into a military depot. They were free to go either north or south, "as their interests or feelings dictated." Profiteers and sutlers from the Northern side would be permitted no closer than Chattanooga. Sherman wanted to eliminate profiteering and to avoid exposing his men to endless solicitations from prostitutes, but, as usual, he also had a psychological purpose. He expected objections to his evacuation order, but, he wrote later, "I knew that the people of the South would read in this measure two important conclusions: one, that we were in earnest; and the other, if they were sincere in their common and popular clamor 'to die in the last ditch,' that the opportunity would soon come."

From this unusual order, a spirited correspondence arose between Sherman and Hood over the ethics of their respective methods of warfare. (The letters, carried across enemy lines under flags of truce, were widely published at the time in both Southern and Northern newspapers.) Hood acknowledged that he had no alternative but to cooperate in receiving whatever civilian refugees from Atlanta preferred Southern to Northern protection. But, with Victorian indignation and grand, orotund phraseology, he protested, in the name of God and of humanity, against this unprecedented measure, which "transcends, in studied and ingenious cruelty, all acts ever before brought to my attention in the dark history of war."

Hood had chosen the wrong literary as well as military adversary, for Sherman on the page, as on the battlefield, overwhelmed him with twice the firepower and twice the skill. Sherman pleaded with Hood not to appeal to a just God "in such a sacrilegious manner," for it had been Hood and his colleagues "who, in the midst of peace and prosperity, have plunged a nation into war—dark and cruel war—who dared and badgered us to battle, insulted our flag, seized our arsenals and forts . . ." On and on went the litany

of Southern sins. As for the unprecedented nature of his action, Sherman claimed that Hood and his predecessor, Joseph Johnston, had done the very same thing in evacuating Dalton, Georgia, and the towns south of it, and he said he saw no reason that Atlanta should be an exception. (Here Sherman stood on weak ground, for the scale of his Atlanta action far exceeded any Rebel evacuation.)

Then Sherman charged Hood with having deliberately placed Atlanta's line of defense so close to the town that every cannonball that overshot its mark had crashed into houses where women and children were living. Two days later, Hood, in response, complained that Sherman's artillery had continuously overshot his "modest field-works" by miles for weeks and weeks. "I have too good an opinion . . . of the skill of your artillerists, to credit the insinuation that they for several weeks unintentionally fired too high . . . and slaughtered women and children by accident and want of skill," Hood wrote.

In this correspondence, Sherman had begun to display a ruthlessness, a cold-bloodedness, and a calculation that would be at home in the modern world. Sherman ruined nobility, heroism, and decency in war and came to represent—by the old rules of warfare—the sort of officially dishonorable conduct that is now accepted as common practice. He devised a terrible way to make war—one that worked. He pursued abhorrent measures that seemed necessary. This is Sherman's legacy: not so much his practice of "total war" as his intellectual justification for it, his lack of remorse over it, his readiness to distort the record for psychological advantage. By denying any ethical gradations of warfare, he moved the argument into the abyss.

"You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will," Sherman wrote to the Mayor of Atlanta. "War is cruelty, and you cannot refine it; and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out."

In reply to a claim by Hood that Sherman was obligated to give Atlanta notice before he began shelling it, Sherman said, "I was not bound by the laws of war to give notice of the shelling of Atlanta, a 'fortified town with magazines, arsenals, foundries, and public stores; you were bound to take notice. See the books.'"

For one who at that moment was rewriting the books, this was a curious

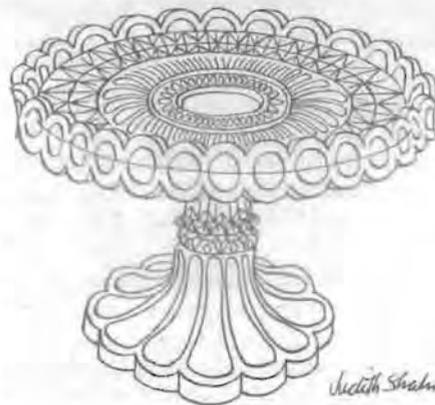
way to conclude the debate. Both men were writing not so much to each other as for history. Hood was writing to distract attention from his disastrous failures on the battlefield; Sherman was writing to justify the manner of his victories. Later, both included the entire correspondence in their memoirs. And here, too, Hood was hopelessly outmatched. The Sherman memoirs were greeted upon their publication, in 1875, as a work of literature, and in the twentieth century they were proclaimed to be among the finest military memoirs in American letters. Hood's memoirs were a dry, bleak little foray, defensive and incomplete. Ironically, in the late eighteen-seventies Hood, being somewhat down and out in New Orleans, solicited Sherman's help in getting the federal government to purchase his military papers. Hood wanted twenty thousand dollars for the papers, even though they had been appraised at twelve thousand. Sherman wrote to Congress on behalf of Hood, and urged that he be paid the full twenty thousand.

SHERMAN'S MARCH TO THE SEA. Sherman left Atlanta on a bright, bitterly cold November 16th, and his description of the army's mood as the smoldering city—burned the night before on Sherman's orders—was lost behind a screen of trees is perversely lyrical. The band played "John Brown's Body," and the men took up the chorus, "Glory, glory, hallelujah," singing it with a zest and harmony unequalled in his experience. "The day was extremely beautiful," Sherman wrote in his memoirs. "Clear sunlight, with bracing air, and an unusual feeling of exhilaration seemed to pervade all minds—a feeling of something to come, vague and undefined, still full of venture and intense interest." He sensed in his troops on that day a "devil-may-care" attitude, which Southern patriots no doubt as-

cribe to the men's visions of silver goblets and family jewels but which the General interpreted in strictly military terms: they believed they were headed for Richmond, by way of Augusta and Charlotte, to relieve Grant. Here, as usual, Sherman was busy promoting a ruse to confuse the enemy. He split his army into two wings, the left wing pointing toward Augusta, the right wing toward Macon, though he had no intention of attacking either place. For obvious strategic reasons, he needed to make contact with the Navy, which had effectively blockaded Southern ports through most of the war and had held Beaufort and Hilton Head, South Carolina, since late 1861.

Sherman's orders to the army had been issued a week before departure. The troops were to "forage liberally" in the countryside, with such foraging theoretically restricted to regular, well-commanded "parties." The orders specifically forbade trespass in dwellings and discouraged the men from using language that was "abusive or threatening." The soldiers were to leave the families they foraged from with a "reasonable portion" for sustenance afterward. The most important thing, Sherman wrote in his orders, was that "men, during marches and in camp, keep their places and do not scatter about as stragglers or foragers."

Through the first phase of the march, these orders stayed in force and maintained reasonable discipline. "Although this foraging was attended with great danger and hard work," Sherman wrote afterward, "there seemed to be a charm about it that attracted the soldiers, and it was a privilege to be detailed on such a party." To the end, though he admitted hearing stories of plunder, he maintained that the theft of jewelry was exceptional, and that instances of rape and murder were nonexistent. With some emphasis, Sherman related an episode that occurred near Covington, Georgia. He saw a soldier with a ham dangling from his musket, a jug of molasses under his arm, and honey dribbling down his chin from a honeycomb in his hand. Upon noticing the commander, the soldier mumbled the order about foraging liberally, but that did not save him from a dressing down. Such reproaches, however, seem to have been incidental, and it should be remembered that Robert E. Lee went into a rage at Sharpsburg on seeing a soldier with a stolen pig, and



ordered the soldier shot as an example.

During the March to the Sea, Sherman's army was spread across a wide front of up to fifty miles, rather than confined to a single column along one path, and there was good reason for this. Dispersing an army of sixty-two thousand in that fashion insures that everyone—except the civilians who are getting picked clean—gets a decent meal. When soldiers march in single file, the old saw has it, the first one gets the eggs, the second one gets the chickens, but what about everyone who comes after? One modern military historian has reduced foraging to a mathematical equation and compared Sherman's problem of feeding his men with Napoleon's. His conclusion is that in the lean, sparsely populated piney woods of Georgia an area five times as large as that covered by Napoleon's forces in Europe had to be scoured to sustain a comparable number of troops.

In Jones County, I came upon the only historical site on my entire journey that genuinely illuminated the Sherman campaign. It is the Jarrell Plantation, operated by the State of Georgia as a working farm of the nineteenth century. The Jarrell Plantation is a place where Southern myths, and a few Northern ones as well, are debunked. The plantation house is "plantation plain"—a solid, clapboard dwelling with low ceilings and exposed pine beams—and it has a certain forbidding darkness because of the big pecan trees that press in on it. It is a place not for hoopskirts but for work clothes, strong muscles, and ingenuity.

In 1864, John Fitz Jarrell was the fifty-four-year-old master of the estate. No aristocrat, he had carved out his place in the woods with unromantic hard labor. On six hundred acres, according to the 1860 census, he had forty-two slaves, ten milk cows, three horses, eight mules, thirty cattle, a hundred and forty swine, five oxen, and other assorted animals and birds (most of which are still represented on the site)—all in all, a pretty fair haul for a foraging party. John Fitz was his own skilled craftsman: farmer, mason, blacksmith, tanner, cobbler, weaver, distiller (of salt from seawater), ginner, carpenter, furniture-maker, hunter, fisherman, bridge builder, and Baptist preacher. (His sermons were as strong as his bridges, it was said.)

Although he was too old to fight himself, eleven members of his immediate family fought, and in 1864 he lost his wife and a daughter to typhoid fever—a terror as great as the battlefield. John Fitz had much to fear as the northwestern sky was aglow from the flames of Atlanta, seventy miles away, and these fears proved justified when Sherman's men undertook their six-day "rampage" in Jones County.

How terrifying Sherman's visit must have been, as his men discharged their official, authorized military business, is made clear here. John Fitz had buried his family gold and had driven his livestock down into a canebrake far from the house as the black smoke from neighboring farms foretold the approach of the Federals. He had just cured the winter pork after the



first frost, and had buried the meat deep beneath cane mashings about fifty yards from the house. The official foragers went about their business efficiently. The two-story gin house and the cotton gin were burned, with two or three hundred bushels of wheat. Barrels of cane syrup, then a staple of the diet, were poured out on the ground. John Fitz later found only one worthless horse down in the canebrake. His slaves rushed to the Yankee troops as saviors, but the hand of deliverance was harsh. One slave, called Prince Clark, informed his liberators that the cured meat was beneath the mashings, but the Yankees, unused to the exotic plant, took bayonets to the layers, became frustrated when the first layer uncovered no prize, and concluded that Prince was lying. So they took him to the barn and strung him up by his thumbs with his toes just reaching a nail protruding up from the floor below, and left him to be cut down by his master.

The interpreter of this "living history" at the time of my visit was the supervisor of the Jarrell Plantation, Martin Willett. Thirty-four years old, with a thick beard, Willett communicated a poignant nostalgia that made the site glitter. For audiences that ranged from senior Daughters of the Confederacy to junior Boy Scouts, Willett plied the skills of John Fitz Jarrell with cheerful enthusiasm and endless anecdote. As a bona-fide member of the General James Longstreet Camp of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, he staged an annual Confederate commemoration at the plantation,

in which he portrayed John Fitz. But his job, he said, could be "precarious and uncomfortable" when it came to relating history accurately—especially about Sherman. Diplomatically, he would try to caution a camp of Confederate reenactors that their outing was no excuse to be "redneck and racist," that their purpose was to enoble rather than defile the Confederate flag, but this could be an unwelcome message. Generally, his Rebels had trouble swallowing any interpretation other than that the Yankee march was "marauding to the sea."

Willett's attitude becomes the more surprising for the fact that he was once a cadet at the Air Force Academy and resigned from the Academy during the downslide of the Vietnam War. He applied for conscientious-objector status, describing himself religiously as a "hybrid Pantheist deist," and no doubt that designation hastened him into alternative service. He thinks of himself as "aggressively pacifist." His distaste for the modern idiom of warfare has been transformed into sentimentality about the Civil War. His modern pacifism and his chivalric longings come together in his love for the nineteenth-century Georgia poet Sidney Lanier. Lanier's thoughts on how Trade killed Chivalry, how Trade hatched John Brown and "broke the saintly heart of Robert E. Lee," have a strong emotional appeal for Willett, and so do some florid passages in Lanier's novel "Tiger-Lilies" which speak of war as the hardy "sin-flower" that has so many fanciers. In April, 1982, to his great pleasure, Willett was asked by the United Daughters of the Confederacy to deliver the commemorative address at the Confederate Cemetery in Macon. He chose to repeat, with his own emphasis, the address that Lanier gave on the same site in 1870. Amid the silence of the Jarrell Plantation, and with grand theatrical gestures, he delivered a few lines for me: "I know not a deeper question in Southern life than how we shall bear out our load of wrong and insult and injury with calmness and tranquil dignity that becomes men and women who would be great."

Macon is a delightfully well-preserved historical town, and it is so because Sherman bypassed it. There I toured the Hay House, reputedly the finest example of Italian Renaissance architecture in the South, whose catchy pamphlet uses the headline "SHERMAN MISSED IT—DON'T YOU!"

Indeed, Sherman missed everything in Macon except the Cannonball House, which fell victim to a single cannon shot in July, 1864, when General George Stoneman, commander of one of Sherman's cavalry divisions, was retreating from an abortive attempt to liberate Andersonville Prison. The ball is said to have come to rest at the feet of Mrs. Mary Holt, the wife of Judge Asa Holt. Today, the Cannonball House is maintained by the Sidney Lanier Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. I was greeted at the door by a woman who gave me a profoundly sympathetic look when I told her that I had come all the way from New York. She gave me a courteous tour of the place, including the kitchen and "servants" quarters in the back. There, along with some children's clothes laid out on a bed, a spinning wheel, and the familiar ragged battle flag and rumpled gray uniform, I found an old plaque that had once graced the front of the Lanier Hotel in Macon. This hotel, which burned down some years ago, was owned by the poet's grandfather, and it was where Jefferson Davis was brought after his capture, near Irwinville, Georgia, in May, 1865.

Historians generally believe that if Davis had not been so roughly treated in the first years after the war—he was jailed at Fortress Monroe, with his ankles manacled and a light kept burning in his cell day and night—and threatened with trial for treason he would never have been immortalized. Sherman himself was charged at one point with trying to engineer Davis's escape, and he wrote to his wife: "This clamor after Jeff Davis... is all bosh. Any young man with a musket is now a more dangerous object than Davis. He is old, infirm, a fugitive hunted by his own people." For the most part, however, Northerners went overboard in their effort to discredit Davis. A false rumor was broadcast far and wide that Davis was dressed in women's clothing when he was caught—a greater slur on Southern manliness cannot be imagined—and the *New York Herald* made the most of it. Davis's last free act, the paper asserted, was "to unsex himself, and deceive the world."

Rain poured as I drove from Macon to Milledgeville, a distance of thirty-five miles, spanning most of the breadth of Sherman's swath. The General had ridden with the left wing of his army and had given the command of the slower right wing to the

devoutly religious one-armed General O. O. Howard. Howard was probably the only racial progressive on the top Union staff. Later, he headed the Freedmen's Bureau and was one of the founders of Howard University. He was also an early and consistent voice of alarm over the depredations of Union troops. East of Macon, at Pitts' Mill, near Gordon, Howard officially reported abuses to Sherman on November 23, 1864:

I regret to say that quite a number of private dwellings which the inhabitants have left, have been destroyed by fire, but without official sanction; also, many instances of the most inexcusable and wanton acts, such as the breaking open of trunks, taking of silver plate, &c. I have taken measures to prevent it, and I believe they will be effectual.

A day earlier, Howard had issued this general order:

It having come to the knowledge of the major-general commanding that the crime of arson and robbery have become frequent throughout this army, notwithstanding positive orders both from these and superior headquarters [having] been repeatedly issued, and with a view to the prompt punishment of offenses of this kind, it is hereby ordered: That hereafter any officer or man of this command discovered in pillaging a house or burning a building without proper authority will, upon sufficient proof thereof, be shot.

Even after the army entered South Carolina, where the abuses became far worse, Howard carried on the crusade. He wrote to one of the generals in his wing of the "banditti" in the army—"thieves and robbers," who should be dealt with severely and summarily. But there were no executions. When a thieving soldier was arrested, he was freed by armed companions, who threatened the guard.

Several weeks before I arrived in Milledgeville, an old legend, about a magical Masonic sign, had received a pumping up on local television. The antebellum mansions supposedly spared



by this sign were the Greek Revival homes of Madison, set amid oaks and magnolias, and distinguished by fluted Doric columns. The legend pervades Milledgeville, and it lives in the official history of Washington County, to the east. By that account, when some Union prisoners were killed in Sandersville, Sherman ordered the town razed in retaliation:

Then old Brother Anthony, the Methodist preacher, went to him in the name of the women and children, declaring that those who did the atrocious deed were not even Georgians, much less inhabitants of Sandersville and Washington County. The stern commander was not moved. Brother Anthony pleaded in the name of the Christ, but General Sherman was not a Christian. He did not care if delicate women and little children perished in the cold. Finally, Brother Anthony tried a masonic sign. That had its effect. The town was saved and a guard stationed in every house, after everything of value and of comfort had been destroyed.

In Milledgeville, I sought out a historian, the late Dr. James C. Bonner, who had written about the March to the Sea and, by his own admission, had spent much of his career defending General Sherman. Dr. Bonner, who had been a professor at Georgia College, was a charming gentleman of seventy-eight years, and the very soul of Deep South courtesy; it may have been his courtly manner that led many of his fellow-Georgians to overlook his assault on the Sherman myth.

On an evening we spent together, Dr. Bonner was mildly incensed by the television version of the "sparing" of the Madison mansions. According to that version, many people were killed and many houses burned in or near Milledgeville. In fact, only four houses were destroyed. One belonged to Judge Iverson Harris, who had urged the planters to burn everything that the Union Army might subsist on. Another was destroyed after an Irish gardener fired upon the approaching troops; in the ensuing skirmish, the gardener became the town's only known fatality. Even the cotton warehouses went largely untouched in Milledgeville, probably because they were owned by a man born in Germany and one whose wife was a Northerner. The local penitentiary was burned, but Dr. Bonner attributed the deed to inmates who were trying to cover an escape.

And had many been raped? Clearly, rape is not the sort of thing that would be documented in those times, and when the crime occurred its victims

were overwhelmingly black. But it seems clear that the incidence of rapes was exaggerated by Southern writers. A South Carolina novelist of the time, William Gilmore Simms, represented the prevailing view. "Regiments in successive relays, subjected scores of these poor wretches [black women] to the torture of their embraces, and—but we dare not further pursue the subject," he wrote in "Sack and Destruction of the City of Columbia, S.C." "There are some horrors which the historian dare not pursue—which the painter dare not delineate. They both drop the curtain over crimes which humanity bleeds to contemplate." Despite such accounts, in all his research Dr. Bonner found only one documented case of rape: the case of a woman who went mad afterward.

Why has the Sherman myth remained so strong, I asked Dr. Bonner.

"Perhaps it's because people have a sentimental attachment to the romantic vision of the Old South as they think it existed," he replied, "and it contrasts with the drab reality of the present—something they may be ashamed of to some extent." In this, he went on to say, Sherman has become the scapegoat.

Still, Bonner lamented the loss of the old symbols. If the Confederate flag had become a symbol of racism to blacks, their interpretation was inaccurate, he felt. "The flag is the symbol of a gallant army fighting for what it believed in, right or wrong," he said. "It was adored by many people and has a highly sentimental place in their thinking."

AS I travelled through middle Georgia, I looked in small county libraries for literature on Sherman's march. The books are dominated by the horrors as they were experienced by white planters' families—particularly women. There are diaries of women who wrote passionately and in the finest detail about their ordeal. Along with Jefferson Davis's memoirs, these narratives are the well-spring of the Sherman myth. If the horrors dominate, then stories of slaves' loyalty to their masters run a close second. Such loyalty, however, is usually associated with the recovery of

valuable property. In the official history of Washington County, we learn of a slave who begged the invaders to spare his mistress's piano, and then, "with the help of other negroes who loved their white folks," hid the instrument, covered with quilts and blankets, in the swamp until the master and mistress returned. In Macon, at the Middle Georgia Historical Society, I acquired for six dollars and fifty cents a handsome volume entitled "Eneas Africanus," by Harry Stillwell Edwards, which was written in 1919 and privately reprinted in 1973 on pastel paper. It continues to have a brisk sale. Eneas, a slave and a "fast-

wandered the South for eight years, from Mississippi to North Carolina, in search of his master, the Major. He finally made his way back to Louisville, Georgia, in 1872, somewhat the richer—he was wearing a silk hat and a flapping linen duster—and there he found the Major. The reunion was warm, and so pleased was the Major to get back his silver and the bride's cup that he let Eneas keep the bagful of Confederate money. The author refers to Southerners who are "so kind of heart, tolerant, and appreciative of the humor and pathos of the Negro's life," and goes on, "Eneas would have been arrested in any country other than the South. In the South he could have traveled his life out as the guest of his 'white folks.' Is the story true? Everybody says it is."

These stories might seem difficult to square with more professional accounts, such as those Dr. Bonner related to me, of jubilant throngs of freedmen in Milledgeville. By the time Sherman's army arrived there, thousands of liberated slaves were following in its train. This was a matter of great concern to Sherman, for both military and moral reasons. Speed and mobility were essential to his strategy, and he could ill afford to concern himself with the feeding of so many "use-

less mouths." Moreover—a point that Dr. Bonner put delicately in his work but more bluntly to me—Sherman was deeply concerned with the effect on his troops of the proximity of so many black women.

From the second story of the Humphries House in Milledgeville, Sherman addressed a crowd of blacks, who were in high spirits. He pleaded with them to stay on the plantations rather than slow his army. But here, too, folklore intersects with history, and it is difficult to ascertain where truth lies. "Finish the story!" a friend of mine, the South Carolina novelist Elizabeth Boatwright Coker, said to me later. "He told them, 'Stay on the plantations... for they will soon be yours!'"

It is difficult to imagine Sherman saying such a thing, unless he was again engaging in psychological warfare, for the central irony of his position as the Great Liberator lies in his profound racism. To explain, I must go back in time to his life before the Civil War. Sherman had three extended stays in the South: in Florida in 1840-42; in Charleston in 1842-46; and in Louisiana in 1859-61. His two years in Louisiana were among the happiest of his life, and it is said that he picked out a magnolia tree there under which he hoped to be buried. He had assumed the superintendency of the Louisiana Seminary of Learning and Military Academy, which later became Louisiana State University. A marker referring to Sherman's presidency is still to be seen on the L.S.U. campus. During his Louisiana period, Sherman endeavored to stay aloof from the slavery question, but his views were naturally a matter of intense interest—the more so because his brother, John Sherman, was then a candidate for Speaker of the House of Representatives, and was perceived in the South as an abolition candidate, pitted against a Virginia rival. At a dinner in the Governor's Mansion, the subject of slavery arose, and this time Sherman could not take evasive action. He denied being an abolitionist and denied that his brother was one, and the severest criticism he could muster against the institution of slavery was that the legal condition of slaves needed to be brought "more near the status of human beings under all Christian and civilized governments." Domestic slaves, he said, in a compliment to his listeners, "were probably better treated than any slaves on earth," but he added that field hands

had a far harder time, for their fate depended upon the temperament of their overseers. His solution? He would forbid the separation of slave families, and he would repeal the law against teaching slaves to read and write, because keeping them illiterate only reduced their value as property. His mildly reformist remarks received polite applause from the guests.

Sherman's allegiance to the Union, therefore, had nothing to do with what he called the "dreadfully excited" question of slavery. Rather, he feared that the Southern drift toward secession presaged anarchy, and would prove the "European commentators" right in suggesting that the American Constitution was a mere "rope of sand that would break with the first pressure." His decision to leave the South came in January, 1861, after Rebels marched on the Union arsenal in Baton Rouge, compelled its surrender without a fight, and then distributed the arms to state arsenals. Among those was Sherman's seminary, which had been designated a central arsenal soon after its founding. When more than two thousand muskets arrived, packed in boxes with their "U.S." markings scratched out, Sherman considered himself a receiver of stolen goods, and he resigned.

Ambivalence may have been Sherman's strongest emotion. The South's grace and softness engaged his affections; at the same time, he was irritated by its seediness and by what he saw as the fatuousness and pretensions of its upper class. This affection and this irritation were crucial to his actions during the war, I think. His decision to leave was based on a high, even noble, point of principle—that secession meant anarchy—and this made him all the more dangerous to the South. But it had nothing to do with slavery.

In his memoirs, Sherman's view of blacks as an amusing, poignant subrace shows through. He takes particular delight in relating ethnic jokes. He laughs at the Negro's "simple" character and is amused when blacks flock to him shouting praises of "de Lawd" and "Abram Lincom." The idea of freedmen presiding over the great plantations of Georgia would not have pleased him. In any event, freedmen did not always respect his request to stay at home. Even when the pontoon bridge over the broad and swift Ebenezer Creek east of Milledgeville was pulled up immediately after the army crossed, leaving hundreds of Negroes

to the mercy of the Confederate cavalry, the blacks were not discouraged. Savannah became a refuge for thousands of blacks when Sherman liberated the city.

From Milledgeville, I struck out for Louisville, forty-five miles to the east, following the route of Sherman's left wing. I passed through Washington County, which proudly claimed to have contributed a greater percentage of its men to the Confederacy than any other county in Georgia, and through the county seat, Sandersville, whose courthouse Sherman had surgically destroyed after Wheeler's retreating cavalrymen fired from it upon his approaching columns. Not fifty yards beyond the new courthouse, the inevitable row of antebellum mansions begins. Most are in a somewhat woe-begone condition, showing that neglect and moisture and termites have devastated the Arcadian dream far more than Sherman ever did.

As one travels east, the country opens up, the piney woods giving way to long vistas across well-tended fields. Giant, seventeen-hundred-pound round bales of hay dot this landscape. As I passed the herds of cattle, the peach and pecan orchards, and the buff fields of soybeans drying in the November wind, I felt that I could understand the covetous feelings of Sherman's men toward this countryside.

SAVANNAH. In walking the squares of this city, one soon realizes that Savannah's historical fixations are with the Colonial period rather than with the Civil War, and the realization comes as a refreshing break from the seemingly endless parade of Confederate statues that were foisted upon Southern towns by the United Daughters of the Confederacy in the early twentieth century. James Oglethorpe, the Colonial founder of Georgia, suddenly commands the scene.

In reaching the sea, Sherman had achieved his strategic objective of



making contact with the Navy, which for most of the war had effectively blockaded the Southern coast. (Savannah had remained in Southern hands, having been protected by what Sherman called a perfect chain of five forts.) Militarily, Sherman considered his march a mere shift of base, insuring resupply, and assigned small importance to it when he later compared it with the forthcoming campaign through South Carolina. He regarded Savannah as his Christmas present to President Lincoln, and remained there for almost a month, consolidating his gains and planning his next, climactic move.

In the well-preserved Civil War forts around Savannah, several things caught my eye. At Fort Jackson, I found the first and only acknowledgment of the participation of blacks in the war. It was a display of a replica of the uniform worn by blacks in the First South Carolina Volunteers, a unit that enlisted in the Union Army in Hilton Head in April, 1862. And at Fort McAllister I found a display of weaponry relevant to the modern state of the art. During the Civil War, the rudimentary "land torpedo," sometimes called an "infernal machine" and now called a land mine, received considerable development, particularly by the Confederate Army, which was so often in a defensive posture. Once, Sherman came upon some soldiers gathered around a "handsome" Union officer lying by the road with one foot blown off. The officer had stepped on a mine planted in the road, and the sight threw Sherman into a rage. Because there was no active resistance at the time, and no warning had been given beforehand, Sherman considered the act an atrocity—not war but murder. He ordered Confederate prisoners brought forward, provided them with picks and shovels, and had them walk the road. The spectacle that followed amused Sherman: the Rebels first begged to be excused and then stepped gingerly down the road.

But Sherman's outrage was partisan, as men's outrage always is in war, for he, too, had been planting mines—in underbrush along the railroad as he tore it up, to discourage the Confederates from relaying the track. When the enemy used mines, it was murder; when he used them, it was warfare. Ethical standards for "civilized" warfare were withering away. This was Sherman's major contribution to total war—not the hardships he visited upon the families of Geor-

gia. If war is synonymous with hell, as Sherman claimed, what point is there in standards of civilized behavior? Ethics in hell? The very notion is grotesque. It is Sherman's philosophy, and his selective retaliation, rather than the locustlike desolation he visited upon the land, that make him important to the history of war. By the time he captured Savannah, the standards of proportional response and of indiscriminate protection of civilians had nearly ceased to exist. He had encountered virtually no resistance, and yet he had laid waste a thirty-five-mile-wide swath. When a rash Confederate soldier ventured a shot on his trains from a courthouse, the courthouse was burned. When a woman burned her corncrib, she lost her house. The "proportionality" of that retaliation is precisely the same, if of a different magnitude, as responding to hostile fire from a jungle rifle with a B-52 strike.

As for "discrimination," Sherman expressly set out to make war on civilians. It took someone who knew the South and Southern pieties well to understand just how effective making war on civilians, especially women, could be. It was said by historians that Sherman wanted to break "the will of the South" to fight, but his technique was to demoralize the people back home and let that have its effect on the soldiers at the front. Therefore, the idea of discrimination was dead by the time Sherman reached Savannah. His official order to the troops not to enter dwellings or commit trespass was hollow, lacking consistent action to back it up. Article I, Paragraph 52 of the Articles of War made it a capital crime for a soldier to leave his post to pillage, but to Sherman this principle had long since become outworn. In a letter written twenty years after the war, his lack of remorse is clear:

The Rebels wanted us to detach a division here, a brigade there, to protect their families and property while they were fighting. . . . This was a one-sided game of war, and many of us . . . kind-hearted, fair, just and manly . . . ceased to quarrel with our own men about such minor things, and went in to subdue the enemy, leaving minor depredations to be charged up to the account of the rebels who had forced us into the war, and who deserved all they got and more.

For succeeding generations of American soldiers, the effect was to trivialize, and thereby sanction, plunder. Sherman's advice to future commanders was to fob off on the enemy, as an example of psychological war-

fare, any charge of indiscretion by their own troops.

If the idea of discrimination was dead at Savannah, at least the pretense of protecting private property did not dissolve entirely until Sherman moved on into South Carolina. Across Georgia, the burning had generally been confined to military objectives. What is widely referred to as Sherman's "looting" applies primarily to the official foraging, which was fully justified even under the Victorian standards of warfare, and was an absolute necessity in preventing the "Moscow" disaster that Jefferson Davis had predicted. (Later, Sherman quoted Napoleon's maxim that an army moves not upon its legs but upon its belly.) But if over a period of five weeks an army is authorized to appropriate everything it can eat, and is given to understand that its mission is largely psychological, a mob spirit develops. If the soldier is told to requisition a widow's pigs and burn her cotton gin, how much more of an outrage can it be to take her silver goblet? And if he and his buddies steal many goblets over time and receive no rebuke, the consequence is obvious. From Savannah, Sherman wrote General Henry W. Halleck, the Army Chief of Staff in Washington, "The truth is, the whole army is burning with an insatiable desire to wreak vengeance upon South Carolina. I almost tremble at her fate, but feel that she deserves all that seems in store for her."

ON a bright Sunday morning, I drove down to Fort McAllister, not so much to look at its well-preserved Confederate earthworks (which Sherman's troops overran in handsome fashion after a fifteen-minute assault) as to meet Roger Durham, who was its superintendent. Among the younger clique of Civil War "interpreters," Durham had a considerable reputation. He had run several historical installations before he came to McAllister, in 1978. He is an energetic reenactor, and, when I went to see him, was preparing to restage the assault on the fort; in addition, he is currently writing a book about a Confederate blockade runner. A native of Illinois, distantly related to Abraham Lincoln on the Hanks side, Durham attended college in Wisconsin. And he is a Vietnam veteran, whose tour was at Dong Ba Thin, a small helicopter base near Cam Ranh Bay. Why should a Vietnam veteran want to throw himself so enthusiastically into the interpretation

of the Civil War or lose himself in literary pipedreams and by-gones? And why does yet another Yankee take on the trappings of the Lost Cause?

I was met by a bespectacled, bearded man of thirty-five in a starched khaki uniform, who was erect in his bearing, clipped and precise in his speech. In his cluttered office, the themes I had heard before reverberated: the precarious business of interpreting the Civil War and, particularly, Sherman for a Southern audience; the constant association of Confederate symbols with racism; the near-impossibility of interesting black visitors in the details of their ancestors' liberation. Sherman and slavery, he told me, were two subjects you could get into an argument over in the blink of an eye. "Some people don't want to be confused by facts," Durham remarked. "Sometimes it's better to leave them with their illusions. Better to keep your mouth shut than to try to change opinions."

It was not long before I realized that Roger Durham's embrace of the Civil War lay in the romance of soldiering, which he had never felt in Vietnam. It was not the cause of the Confederacy or the Union but the grand sacrifice—the nobility, even—of the individual soldier that moved him, and confused him as well. In all his Vietnam experience, he confessed, he had met only one American soldier who had the same "belief structure" as the Civil War soldier. With that one soldier he had logged many hours on night duty in the tower at Dong Ba Thin, discussing the military strategy not of Vietnam but of Gettysburg and Verdun. So it was that Durham derived profound pleasure from putting himself in "their place."

His own experience seemed banal by comparison, he told me. He had seriously contemplated exile in Canada, and his decision had come down to how he felt on the eve of the day he was supposed to report for duty. With an air of self-deprecation, he recalled watching a Tab Hunter war movie and being persuaded enough by it to show up the next morning. Once he was in the service, the war had always been a punishment rather than an honor. "Goof off and I'll send you to Vietnam" is a line that still rings in his head. Once he was in Vietnam, his enemies were the officers and the N.C.O.s, not the Vietcong. The soldier fought for his own survival, not for a cause. The prevailing attitude was: Do your time, look forward to

your R. and R., keep your head down, stay out of trouble, get out alive.

How different, how thrilling by comparison, was his vision of the Civil War soldier! "In an inferno like Gettysburg," Durham said, "there in the midst of the carnage, knowing the odds were against them, they stood in the front lines—nobody shirked his duty. Nothing was important but that moment. There was no future—only right now. They got behind one another, felt that somehow they might survive. Tomorrow? They would deal with that tomorrow. And after a battle they picked up their rifles and moved down the road to the next battle. If it had been me, I'd have said no, not me, I've done enough. So I find that kind of devotion mystifying."

His romantic vision of the Civil War soldier was as extravagant as his discounting of the experience of the Vietnam soldier. Perhaps contempt for the present must always be coupled with romantic notions of the past. That actual participants never hold the romantic view of war is close to the point Sherman was making in his "War is hell" speech, in Columbus, Ohio, in 1880. He was talking not to the ladies of Columbus but to his former soldiers. "The war now is away back in the past, and you can tell what books can not. When you talk you come down to the practical realities just as they happened. . . . There is many a boy here today who looks on war as all glory, but, boys, it is all hell."

Was the experience of the Civil War soldier really so different from that of the Vietnam soldier? Did a profound belief in the Cause really keep all those soldiers in the ranks? For me, the youth in Stephen Crane's "Red Badge of Courage" remains a point of reference. And an episode early in the war which is described by Sherman himself could just as easily have happened in Vietnam. It took place just after the Bull Run disaster, in July, 1861, at which Sherman commanded a brigade with distinction. He had been appalled by the laxity of the Union troops' discipline on the road to the battle: they strayed continually to pick blackberries and wade in streams. A great many of the early recruits had signed up only for a three-month tour, and they suddenly began remembering the exact letter of their contract. In the general chaos that followed Bull Run, discipline was the overriding concern. The whole military enterprise seemed on the verge of collapse.

One morning, after Sherman had reviewed and dismissed his regiment, outside Washington, he found himself near a drawbridge, and there he noticed a captain in a group of ragtag troops.

"Colonel, I am going to New York today. What can I do for you?" the captain shouted out cheerfully to Sherman, as if he thought that Sherman might like to receive a box of cheroots, which he loved.

"How can you go to New York?" Sherman answered. "I do not remember to have signed a leave for you."

The soldier responded that he didn't want just a leave. He had already served longer than the three months for which he signed on. He was a lawyer, he said, and he felt that he had neglected his business long enough.

The blast that greeted this must have started low and risen to fortissimo: "Captain, this question of your term of service has been submitted to the rightful authority, and the decision has been published in orders. You are a soldier, and must submit to orders till you are properly discharged. If you attempt to leave without orders, it will be mutiny, and I will shoot you like a dog! Go back into the fort *now*, instantly, and don't dare to leave without my consent!"

The captain returned to the fort, and the men around him scattered.

Later that day, Lincoln appeared in the vicinity in a carriage, accompanied by Secretary of State William Seward. "We heard that you had got over the big scare," Lincoln called out to Sherman, "and we thought we could come over and see the 'boys!'"

Sherman wanted "no more hurrahing, no more humbug," and he respectfully urged the President to speak to the men in a manner that would induce "cool, thoughtful, hard-fighting soldiers." Farther on, the troops gathered, and Lincoln, much to Sherman's pleasure, delivered a sombre message. Cheering started up at one point, and Lincoln checked it, saying, "Don't cheer, boys. I confess I rather like it myself, but Colonel Sherman, here, says it is not military, and I guess we had better defer to his opinion."

At another stop, Lincoln spoke again, and concluded his speech with an invitation to any soldier to appeal to him personally if he felt himself wronged. From the crowd, the captain from New York whom Sherman had earlier upbraided elbowed his way forward. "Mr. President, I have a cause

of grievance!" he called out. "This morning, I went to speak to Colonel Sherman, and he threatened to shoot me!"

"Threatened to shoot you?" the President repeated, surprised and stalling.

"Yes, sir, he threatened to shoot me."

Lincoln looked at the captain and then at the Colonel. Bending over toward the captain, he said, in what Sherman later described as a "stage whisper" loud enough to be heard by all, "Well, if I were you, and he threatened to shoot, I would not trust him, for I believe he would do it." The captain disappeared, amid cackles from the troops.

SOUTH CAROLINA. Heading north, across the red Savannah River and the vast wildlife refuge beyond it, which in 1865 was a grid of rice plantations, I set out for the baronies of Pocotaligo. South Carolina must have been very different from Georgia for Sherman—that I sensed very soon. In this Low Country, nobility was once a birthright. Around 1670, vast tracts were divided into twelve-thousand-acre baronies—meaning seigniories. Possession of two baronies made one a cacique; possession of four baronies created a landgrave. These unusual titles were designed to distinguish the Carolina nobility from the English nobility.

After dark, I reached the fork in the road where the choice was to go north to Columbia or cut east to Charleston. Sherman had made this spot his first objective, in order to confuse the enemy about his intentions. Throughout his great march, he had conspired to put the Confederates in a dilemma. He had marched toward Macon and Augusta, intending to go to neither place. Now he sent one wing toward Augusta and the other toward Charleston, while Columbia was his real goal. After Columbia, he would feint toward Charlotte, North Carolina, to keep a sizable Confederate force in place there, and would then wheel his armies east toward Fayetteville. This "indirect approach" (threatening two points simultaneously and thereby forcing the enemy to overextend his resources or abandon territory) is much admired by military strategists.

At a wayside store, a green-eyed man dressed in the long white robes of an African religious sect was peeling shrimp and watching a pro football game. He suggested that I drive down

past Garden's Corner and see the ruins of Sheldon Church. I had planned to do so, although not necessarily this late at night. Why, I asked myself, did Sherman's troops burn a church in the middle of the wilderness? The desecration of temples fell into the forbidden area of "gratuitous barbarities," expressly prohibited in all the contemporary doctrines of military ethics. Such profaning was declared to be a crime not only against civilization but against nature; it was simple, cruel mischief, for it could have no effect on the outcome of the contest. Even if one could imagine Sheldon Church being used as a clandestine meeting place for guerrillas, or believed it to be the place of worship for the most recalcitrant slaveowner, it would be difficult to consider it a legitimate target.

There, picked out by my headlights in pitch-darkness, amid live oaks draped with moss, were towering brick columns and crumbling tabby walls. They focussed my attention on the idea that upon moving across the South Carolina border Sherman's troops had stepped over the last ethical boundary. Just how far Sherman was now outside the confines of proportionality and discrimination is plain from the official correspondence. General Halleck, the Army Chief of Staff in Washington, had himself compiled the standard reference book of the day on military ethics, entitled "International Law, or Rules Regulating the Intercourse of States in Peace and War." In Halleck's text, which was published in 1861, noncombatants were protected, and had nothing to fear from the sword of the enemy. They would be treated as friendly as long as they abided by the exactions of the conqueror. The pillage and destruction of towns, the devastation of the open country, "ravaging," and "setting fire to houses" were termed odious and detestable, and the text continued:

But as the perpetrators of such outrageous deeds may attempt to palliate them, under the pretext of deservedly punishing the enemy, be it here observed that the natural and voluntary law of nations does not allow us to inflict such punishments.

By the end of 1864, Halleck had come a long way from his prewar moralizing. From Washington, he wrote a letter to Sherman in Savannah anticipating with pleasure the forthcoming devastation of the cradle of the Confederacy: "Should you capture Charleston, I hope that by some accident the place may be destroyed, and if

a little salt should be sown upon its site, it may prevent the growth of future crops of nullification and secession." Here was Sherman's certification. The resident ethicist had overturned his own laws of war. Official Washington sanctioned any punitive procedure that Sherman might devise. Behind Sherman's methods lay a general political complicity. Proportionality and discrimination were dead. If Sherman was now, as one writer described him, "a well-oiled machine with his screws loose," those screws had been loosened by the entire Union establishment, hungry for victory by any means.

In reply, Sherman promised to keep Halleck's "hint" in mind, but said he did not think salt would be necessary. "I look upon Columbia as quite as bad as Charleston," he wrote. After all, the Ordinance of Secession had been drawn up there. (Today, it is enshrined on a marble tablet in an honored place in the State House.) "I doubt if we shall spare the public buildings there as we did in Milledgeville."

It is a local conceit in Charleston, I learned, that Sherman went north to Columbia, rather than east, because in his four years of living in Charleston as a young soldier he had come to love the city. It is more likely that Sherman did not move on Charleston and ruin it simply because, from the military viewpoint, it was what he called a "dead cock in the pit," and he expected it to fall of its own weight—as soon happened, when its transportation lines to the interior were cut.

Along with his two years in Louisiana, Sherman's four years in Charleston, from 1842 to 1846, are, in my view, the key to his cruel campaign through the South. He was in his mid-twenties when he lived in Charleston, and it was there that his love and hate for the South's arcane ways developed. Charleston was then a city of thirty thousand, divided equally between whites and blacks. Many of the blacks were free, and as a result police power was enforced as if the city were under siege. A curfew for blacks went into effect at 10 P.M., when platoons of armed policemen patrolled the streets. Class divisions were sharper there than in any other place in America, with an upper class consisting of wealthy merchants, aristocrats, and literary people. Indeed, many Northerners considered Charleston the most overblown, overstuffed, pretentious, and defiant city of the South.

Sherman was stationed at Fort

Moultrie, on Sullivan's Island, six miles from the city. Every summer, genteel Charleston society shifted to Sullivan's Island to escape the dangerous "vapors and miasmas" that seeped out of the swamps: yellow fever, malaria, dysentery. The center of activity on the island was the Moultrie House, a hotel with grand passages, ornate draperies and chandeliers, an immense piazza for taking the sea air, and an even more immense supper room. Balls went on constantly until October, and the soldiers at Fort Moultrie were expected to attend regularly in dress uniform and to provide their band. Moultrie House became famous for flirtation.

The balls inspired both delight and disgust in Sherman. At West Point, he had graduated sixth in his class instead of fourth, largely because his attention to deportment did not match his academic diligence. This inattention carried over to the social scene. He liked dancing but was a bit of a wallflower. He liked intelligent conversation but did not suffer pretense. As a penny-pincher, he was overwhelmed by parties where buckets of oysters and cases of champagne and Madeira were consumed in an evening. After a year, Sherman wrote to his brother, "A life of this kind does well enough for a while, but soon surfeits with its flippancy—mingling with people in whom you feel no permanent interest, smirks and smiles when you feel savage, tight boots when your fancy would prefer slippers. I want relief, and unless they can invent a new Florida war I'll come back and spend a few months with you in Ohio." After New Orleans, he considered Charleston the most extravagant place in the world, and he had only contempt for the "worthless sons of broken-down proud South Carolina families," whose indolence had become legendary. "Carolinians boast (they know not what) of this state, this aristocracy, this age, patriotism, chivalry and glory—all trash," he wrote in a letter dated May 23, 1843. "No people in America are so poor in reality, no people so poorly provided with the comforts of life, and happy it is for them that nature has given them a mild climate."

AS I drove north, moving through the Low Country, the yellows, oranges, and browns of a late-fall landscape imparted a soft serenity. An occasional cotton field came as a surprise in terrain where drying soybeans, fields dotted with round bales, and

winter wheat had become the norm. From time to time, a huge tractor trailer passed, loaded with oak and hickory trunks, and I guessed that the timber came from elsewhere than the Rivers' Bridge swampland on the Salkehatchie. Yankee troops had waded through the three-mile swamp, sometimes in water up to their necks, and there one of the more notable skirmishes of the South Carolina campaign took place, between the left wing of Sherman's army and scattered Confederates. The firing was so intense that the trees were peppered with lead balls. Even today, timbering among the older trees there is unprofitable, for hitting one minié ball can shatter an expensive sawmill blade.

The towns north of Savannah on the road to Columbia—Hardeeville, Robertsville, McPhersonville, Barnwell, Blackville, Midway, Orangeburg, and Lexington—were consumed in a succession of fires. The lone chimneys left standing are referred to as "Sherman's toothpicks." The concept of foraging in tightly controlled, well-commanded parties had disintegrated as thousands of "bummers" left their regiments for weeks of rampaging. The army of sixty-two thousand had acquired thousands of camp followers. Sherman later declared his campaign through South Carolina to have been ten times as important as the March to the Sea. Another observer, a correspondent for the *New York Herald*, had a different ratio:

As for wholesale burnings, pillage, devastation, committed in South Carolina, magnify all I have said of Georgia some fifty fold and then throw in an occasional murder, "jist to bring an old, hard-fisted cuss to his senses," and you have a pretty good idea of the whole thing.

Sherman's doctrine of punishment had grown to disease the whole body of his force. The few mansions spared along the route had the Masonic story attached to them. When I arrived in Barnwell, dubbed "Burnwell" by the Union troops, a prominent building in the center of town was adorned with a huge Masonic symbol, as if to ward off any return of Sherman's evil spirit. Of all the towns before Columbia, Barnwell received the most grotesque treatment. It had the misfortune to be "conquered" by Sherman's cavalry under General Hugh Judson Kilpatrick, who was known as Kill Cavalry or Little Kil, and is said to have been such a hard rider that, though a di-

minutive man, he wore out more than two thousand horses on the March to the Sea. Many of the worst abuses against civilians were attributed to him. No other subordinate of Sherman's inspired such fear and contempt in the South. Sherman himself had described Kilpatrick as "a hell of a damned fool," but had added, "I want just that sort of man to command my cavalry on this expedition." Kilpatrick's official mission was to protect the left flank of the army against the only annoyance that remained—the Confederate cavalry, under General Joseph Wheeler—but he had, so the story goes, issued matches to all his horsemen in Savannah and exhorted them to maximum destruction as they moved into "that hellhole of secession." In Sherman's choice of Kilpatrick and in his failure to control his subordinate's excesses, the charges that he was guilty of war crimes are fully justified.

According to the account of a brigade commander under Kilpatrick, General Smith D. Atkins, of Illinois, Barnwell was systematically set afire, and as the flames rose Kilpatrick held a "Nero dance" at his headquarters, in the Hartley House, to which he invited all the ladies of Barnwell. "Regarding [the invitations] as orders, [the ladies] like sad ghosts went through the whirling mazes of the dance, while their own dwellings were in flames," General Atkins wrote. "It was the bitterest satire on social pleasure ever witnessed, and justly stained the reputation of Kilpatrick."

At the tiny Barnwell County Museum, behind the county library, I met Mrs. Hildegard Roberts, the curator, who pulled from her files a dog-eared monograph on the homes and churches of Barnwell that were lost. It had been compiled, she said, "lest we forget." After a brief chat, she took me out to the Hartley House, a two-story porticoed clapboard structure in a state of decline.

"So this is where General Kilpatrick danced while the houses of Barnwell burned," I said.

"Yes," Mrs. Roberts replied cheerfully. "But the Hartleys were very nice people, and they gave very interesting parties, too."

I PRESSED on to Blackville, ten miles north of Barnwell. Blackville was the strategic junction where the two wings of Sherman's army came



together, at the vital railroad link between Charleston and Augusta. With the railroad in his control, he ordered fifty miles of track torn up. He described this process with enthusiasm:

The track was heaved up in sections the length of a regiment, then separated rail by rail; bonfires were made of the ties and of fence rails on which the rails were heated, carried to trees or telegraph poles, wrapped around and left to cool. Such rails could not be used again.

The rails were called "Sherman's neckties" (or "Lincoln gimlets"), and, along with Sherman's toothpicks, they made a memorable calling card.

At Blackville, I visited the Jefferson Davis Academy, where, its brochure announces, education is based on Christian principles, and entrance tests are required to insure a "homogeneous" student body. Its mascot is the Rebel Raider, a plumed horseman after the fashion of J. E. B. Stuart, on a rearing steed with sword raised high. (The homogeneous Rebel Raiders never play the integrated Hawks of Blackville-Hilda High on the gridiron.) Under the stern glare of President Davis, whose portrait hangs in the headmaster's office, I met Bernard (Butch) Bydalek, a lighthearted Tennessean who taught history. In Bydalek's classroom sat twenty gangly examples of the modern yeoman class, wearing letter jackets, their hair teased and blow-dried, their faces happily expectant. Talking about General Sherman seemed like a free period to them. They gossiped. They giggled. They all talked at once. "Show your breeding!" Bydalek shouted at them, but the order was not obeyed.

Here the symbols of the Confederacy took a beating. The pupils associated the Confederate battle flag more with squealing tires and "The Dukes of Hazzard" than with the ragtag remnants of Wheeler's cavalry. The flag also meant beer blasts and racist jokes. It struck me as curious that in the midst of our discussion (slaves were a lot better off in bonds than free, one young woman remarked, because "at least then they had jobs") Bydalek said that he had marched with Martin Luther King, Jr., in Selma. Later, I asked him about this; for someone to land in a white Christian academy after that experience suggested either a gigantic retraction or a noble crusade. For Bydalek, neither seemed to be the case. He was doing his best, he said, to puncture his students' obsession with race. "I think I can be more effective in this set-

ting," he said flatly. But he made no pretense of having any heroic mission, and he has since left the school.

COLUMBIA. The afternoon was clear and warm—perfect for a leisurely ramble through the grounds of the State House. Six stars on the building mark the direct hits scored by Sherman's batterymen as they took the measure of the city from the far side of the Congaree. The markers were meant to perpetuate from one generation to the next the South Carolinian bitterness toward all things Yankee, but today the trajectory of those cannonballs passes over a robust city that has attracted many non-Southerners since the Second World War. The resolute efforts of the state to hold on to its Confederate shrines seem increasingly out of place and silly.

Atop the State House, the Stars and Bars flies beneath the Stars and Stripes and the state flag. Regularly, a black caucus in the state legislature pushes for its removal, but so far the push has failed. Before the north front of the State House, the Confederate soldier stands high on a marble shaft. On the south lawn, a huge equestrian statue of Wade Hampton, by F. W. Ruckstull, dominates the turf. You can tell that the sculptor, who lived in New York and Paris, loved the South, a Columbia paper once wrote, by the way a soft glow passes over Hampton's countenance in the twilight, showing Hampton "as he is enshrined in the hearts of all South Carolinians." The same sculptor executed a monument to Confederate women at the far end of the State House grounds. It is by far the most interesting statue on the grounds, for it is the antithesis of the heroic, motion-filled equestrian statue of Sherman in Manhattan's Grand Army Plaza, so magnificently rendered by Augustus Saint-Gaudens. In the latter, the winged angel of victory holding an olive branch leads the conqueror. Victor and Victim, Exhilaration and Condolence—an angel for every circumstance. In the Ruckstull monument in Columbia, the winged angel stands behind a seated figure of womanhood, holding a wreath of protection over her head. On each side of the seated figure is a cherub, one holding a bouquet of roses, the other a scroll bearing the name of South Carolina. Upon the pedestal are words that, despite their old-fashioned floridness, I found moving:

Their unconquerable spirit strengthened the thin lines of gray. Their tender

care was solace to the stricken. Reverence for God and unflinching faith in a righteous cause inspired heroism that survived the immolation of sons and courage that bore the agony of suspense and the shock of disaster. The tragedy of the Confederacy may be forgotten, but the fruits of the noble service of the daughters of the South are our perpetual heritage.

The burning of Columbia was very different from the destruction of Atlanta. Atlanta was a well-defended city in a state of siege; Columbia was full of elegant, troopless generals, as Mary Chesnut put it in "A Diary from Dixie." This may explain why one hears no lame jokes about Sherman in Columbia. Southern rhetoric held for a hundred years that Sherman's actions here were his greatest war atrocity—that, regardless of whether the commander issued any direct order, his guilt was unquestionable. To the extent that the world accepts a broad concept of command responsibility, Sherman must indeed be held responsible for not controlling his troops. If, for example, the American standard of guilt that was applied to General Tomoyuki Yamashita, of the Japanese army, in the massacre of Filipinos during the Second World War were applied to Sherman, he would certainly be found guilty. General Yamashita was executed.

But there is ample evidence that as news of the fires reached Sherman he exerted himself to stop them, even fighting the flames himself. "Sherman and the Burning of Columbia," a recent book by Marion Lucas, a South Carolinian, concludes that wind and liquor and flying cotton were the chief culprits in the conflagration, but, of course, liquor consumption is something that commanders can regulate. On the night the city burned, "liquors were drunk with such avidity as to astonish the veteran Bacchanals of Columbia," wrote William Gilmore Simms, whose own home was burned by Union stragglers. Sherman himself suggested that while a single malicious soldier may have started the burning, a "devilish spirit" grew as the fire progressed. To what extent had he contributed to that devilish spirit by his own wild statements? One finds the rationale for his utter lack of remorse after the war only one step away from Hiroshima: "Though I never ordered it and never wished it, I have never shed any tears over the event, because I believe that it hastened what we all fought for, the end of the war." Characteristically, Sherman tried to shift responsibility onto the enemy. In

his official report, he assigned it to General Wade Hampton, but in his memoirs he wrote, "I confess I did so pointedly, to shake the faith of his people in him, for he was in my opinion boastful, and professed to be the special champion of South Carolina."

BENNETT PLACE. Although my first impulse when I came upon the empty room in the new visitors' center was to be a museum director, it soon waned. I met with the superintendent and with the chief "interpreter" for state historical sites. They complained that the site had an "identity crisis" in relation to Appomattox, because Appomattox is so much better known.

After South Carolina, Sherman fought one last battle. At Bentonville, North Carolina, Johnston (who had resumed command from Hood) threw all his remaining forces at the invading army in a bold and well-conceived attack. The result was an indecisive affair, with Sherman fighting defensively as he awaited reinforcements. It was a battle of attrition. Its major consequence was four thousand more casualties. Afterward, while Sherman's troops were being resupplied and were getting ready for a final push to encircle Lee's army at Petersburg, Sherman himself journeyed by steamer to City Point, Virginia, for a conference with Grant on March 27-28, 1865. By chance, Lincoln was there, and the commanders had two conferences with the President. These guided Sherman's controversial role as a peacemaker at Bennett Place a few weeks later.

Sherman maintained to the end his contempt for politicians. He saw an anarchic strain in the American people which made governing them by demo-

cratic means virtually impossible. Perhaps that was the tyrant in him. Lincoln had done little from afar to soften his feelings. But Lincoln and Sherman shared one strong emotional bond. Each had had a son named Willie who died as a youth. Willie Sherman, age nine, had come to visit his father after the fall of Vicksburg, in 1863. He was his father's favorite, and he was also a great favorite of the troops; they referred to him as "Sergeant." At Vicksburg, he contracted typhoid fever, and he died a few days later in Memphis. His father never forgave himself for bringing the boy into "that fatal climate, and in that sickly period of the year."

At City Point, Lincoln was intensely nervous about Sherman's absence from his army at this critical moment, and beseeched him to return to North Carolina quickly. In passing, Sherman inquired if the President was ready for the end of the war. The kindness of Lincoln's response overwhelmed Sherman. It was as if the brutality of the warrior had been suddenly brushed aside by the charitable magnanimity of the giant before him—as if Sherman's great passion for total war had been magically transformed into a great passion for total peace. Both Grant and Sherman had supposed that one more major battle, between one of their armies and Lee's army or Johnston's, might be necessary. Lincoln pleaded with them to avoid the carnage if it was at all possible. By the account of a witness, Lincoln authorized Sherman to secure the surrender of Johnston on any terms.

This was general conversation, perhaps even idle chitchat—not a formal policy session. What Lincoln wanted most was for his military leaders to defeat the opposing armies and get the soldiers on both sides back onto their farms and into their shops. He, almost alone, was the voice of charity. The tide of retribution against the treasonous South was already strong, but it was also clear that there would have to be a social transformation of the region after the war. How to handle that transformation was a delicate political question, and by the time of the City Point meeting Lincoln had not declared anything definite. He was in the throes of political maneuver. He had given only hints about his approach to Reconstruction. Magnanimity for the suffering of the South would have to be balanced against punishment for overt treason. The South had to be restored to a sound



economic footing—without its crutch of slavery. The City Point meeting was a critical moment—far more critical than any of the three men could have imagined. In eighteen days, Lincoln would be dead. The possibility of misunderstanding was great, as Lincoln's instructions were loose, and avoided political subtleties, which he may have supposed Sherman and Grant would not understand or appreciate.

But to Sherman civil and military matters were often inextricably entwined. What was to be done, Sherman asked, with the political leaders, such as Jefferson Davis, who was then in Richmond? Should they be allowed to escape? If they were caught, would they be tried and condemned as traitors?

Lincoln replied that he once knew a man who had taken a pledge of total abstinence. In a visit with a convivial friend, he was offered a drink, and refused it, citing his pledge. So the friend proceeded to fix lemonade and, as he did so, gestured toward the brandy bottle, pointing out that lemonade could be made more palatable if it was sweetened with a little brandy. The flexible teetotaler replied that if it could be done "unbeknown" to him he would not object. Sherman inferred that if Jefferson Davis and the other political leaders should escape "unbeknown" to Lincoln the President would not object.

In his memoirs, Sherman recorded just how deeply he had been touched by this last glimpse of the President:

I know, when I left him, that I was more than ever impressed by his kindly nature, his deep and earnest sympathy with the afflictions of the whole people, resulting from the war, and by the march of hostile armies through the South; and that his earnest desire seemed to be to end the war speedily, without more bloodshed and devastation. . . . Of all the men I ever met, he seemed to possess more of the elements of greatness, combined with goodness, than any other.

On April 11, 1865, Sherman approached Raleigh and received news of Lee's surrender at Appomattox. In announcing the event to his troops, he said, "A little more labor, a little more toil on our part, the great race is won, and our Government stands regenerated, after four long years of war." The government regenerated after four years of war? The conclusion was hasty. At that point, a new spectre confronted Sherman. He could not compel Johnston to fight his vastly superior army, but neither could he catch the Rebel in the open country of the North

Carolina Piedmont. Johnston might easily disperse his army into guerrilla bands. (It turned out that Lee had considered and rejected this same possibility before he surrendered to Grant.) By Sherman's analysis, the Southern cavalymen were better horsemen than their Northern counterparts. Using hit-and-run tactics, bands of renegades might fight over the entire area of the South that Sherman had supposedly conquered, and prolong the war indefinitely. Thus, Sherman's position vis-à-vis Johnston was markedly different from that of Grant vis-à-vis Lee. Lee's army was trapped and surrounded. Johnston's army as a cohesive body was spent, but he was not compelled to surrender.

On April 14th, in Raleigh, Sherman received an invitation to talk with Johnston. On the morning of April 17th, he arrived at the Raleigh depot, where a locomotive waited to take him to the station in Durham, from which he was to proceed along the Hillsboro Road by horseback to the meeting. As he prepared to board the train, a telegraph operator rushed up to him, saying excitedly that an important cipher message was then coming in from Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton. Sherman held the train for nearly half an hour while the operator decoded the news of Lincoln's assassination. Upon reading it, Sherman turned to him and asked if he had told anyone of the content of the message. Receiving a negative, he swore the operator to secrecy and proceeded to the meeting with Johnston.

About five miles out on the Hillsboro Road, the commanders met, and they went together to a small farmhouse owned by a farmer named Bennett, half a mile farther on. The farmer was asked to retire to an outbuild-



ing. Once in Bennett's living room, Sherman handed Johnston the dispatch from Stanton, without comment. As Johnston read, Sherman watched him closely, searching his face for any hint, however remote, of prior knowledge, or possibly even complicity, in the plot. By Sherman's account, beads of sweat broke out on Johnston's brow. The Southerner proclaimed the act to be a disgrace to the age, and cried that the South had finally come to realize that Lincoln was the best friend it had. Surely Sherman did not hold the Confederate government responsible? Sherman replied that perhaps military men like him or Lee could not be involved, but he was not so sure of the politicians—Jefferson Davis and "men of that stripe." One ill-placed comment might infuriate his troops in Raleigh, Sherman warned, and "a fate worse than that of Columbia would befall the place." Johnston sought to assuage his adversary's agitation. Sherman had fought "hard and clean," he said soothingly, for ever since Sherman traversed the swamps of the Salkehatchie, building bridges and miles of corduroy roads, he had felt that no army like Sherman's had existed since Caesar's time.

In due course, the two commanders moved to the issue at hand. Sherman proposed a straightforward surrender along the lines of Lee's. Johnston was not quick to accept, underscoring the difference in his military situation. Still, he conceded, further fighting would be murder. He cited the sentiment that Napoleon expressed to the Archduke Charles Louis at Wagram: "The civic crown earned by preserving the life of one citizen confers truer glory than the highest achievement merely military." Then he made an offer of a universal peace: a peace that would embrace not just his own army but all the remaining Confederate armies; a peace from the Potomac to the Rio Grande. It must be remembered that after Appomattox a hundred thousand Confederate soldiers were still under arms, and Johnston had only forty thousand of them. Strong forces remained in Tennessee and central Alabama. None of these forces were hemmed in, as Lee's army in Virginia had been.

Sherman leaped at the idea. He spoke excitedly about his City Point meeting with Lincoln. He was, he proclaimed, abreast of Lincoln's views on the war's aftermath. It was as if Sherman suddenly felt possessed by Lincoln's spirit. The angel of ven-

geance would now become the angel of mercy. He would carry forward the magnanimous program of the martyred President almost as a mystical act. His new mission had an air of heavenly design: Sherman must now become Lincoln, before the vindictive petty politicians in Washington took the great man's place. I like to think there was more to it than that—that this was Sherman's single, fleeting chance for atonement. In one bold stroke, he could sweep away all he had done before, all that had been said of him as the barbaric warrior and all that would be said of him when history took over. He would go down as the great conqueror and the great peacemaker as well.

But, Sherman asked, could Johnston speak for Confederate forces other than his own?

Johnston promised to obtain that authority overnight from Jefferson Davis, who was in Hillsboro. Curiously, Sherman did not feel that he needed authority from Washington to speak for Federal armies in the field other than his own.

With universal surrender on the table, the two men parted. Sherman went back to Raleigh, and Johnston headed for Hillsboro. At Raleigh, Sherman drafted his announcement to the troops of Lincoln's murder. If one word from him could turn the city to ashes and render its population homeless, as he had warned Johnston, the words he did use were hardly detached: "We have met every phase which this war has assumed, and must now be prepared for it in its last and worst shape, that of assassins and guerrillas; but woe unto the people who seek to expend their wild passions in such a manner, for there is but one dread result!" What the result was he left to the imagination.

That night, meeting with his staff, Sherman seemed not to comprehend the consequences of the assassination. He had no impulse to wire Washington with the news of Johnston's overture and wait for instructions. He had become the civil government, Lincoln's government—a kind of twilight authority dedicated to a noble purpose of his own definition. From a military

standpoint, he wanted to hold Johnston to some surrender, any surrender, or at least hold him in negotiation, for he needed a few days to resupply his army. Later, in his memoirs, he asserted, as if for the record, "Without exception all advised me to agree to some terms, for they all dreaded the long and harassing march in pursuit of a dissolving and fleeing army—a march that might carry us back again over the thousand miles that we had just accomplished. We all knew that if we could bring Johnston's army to bay, we could destroy it in an hour, but that was simply impossible in the country in which we now found ourselves."

They had arrived at the moment when the organized Southern armies might have dissolved into guerrilla bands. With Jefferson Davis as the head of a fast-moving underground government, supervising harassing operations against the

occupying Union garrisons throughout the hospitable homeland, the conflict could have gone on indefinitely. If Sherman could make the populace, young and old, feel the hard hand of war, the populace in its turn could make Sherman feel the hard hand of occupation. Eventually, the Union would have had to come to an accommodation.

On the night of April 17th, the discussion between Sherman and his staff moved quickly to political questions. Should they permit the escape of Jefferson Davis, as Lincoln had wanted? Not only should they do so, one of the generals argued, but they should also provide a ship to take Davis and the other top Confederate political leaders from Charleston to Nassau.

Sherman and Johnston reconvened the following day at Bennett Place. Johnston had received authorization to proceed with a universal settlement. If agreement could be reached, the other Confederate armies would surrender on the same terms. But Johnston had a price. What assurances could Sherman give the Confederate officers concerning their political rights, Johnston wanted to know. Sherman cited Lincoln's amnesty proclamation of



December 8, 1863, which stated that, upon laying down their arms and swearing allegiance, men below the rank of colonel would receive a pardon and resume full rights of citizenship. Furthermore, at Appomattox Grant had extended the same amnesty to all officers. Johnston was skeptical. He sensed, better than Sherman, that previous promises given by the slain Lincoln might now be moot. The Confederate Secretary of War, John C. Breckinridge, from Kentucky, was summoned into the farmhouse. At first, Sherman objected, fearing that to deal with any political representative of the enemy would, in effect, legitimize the Confederacy, but Johnston reassured him that Breckinridge held the rank of major general. This satisfied Sherman. Before they got down to work, Sherman pulled a bottle of whiskey out of his saddlebag, and, by his account, the gesture brought an almost beatific expression to Breckinridge's face. Sherman was presented with a handwritten draft containing a long preamble and surrender terms that specified total amnesty for all civilian authorities, including Jefferson Davis. Sherman read it quickly and tossed it aside. It was too general and verbose, he declared.

Taking pen and paper and the whiskey bottle, Sherman withdrew to a small table and began to write furiously. I like to imagine him receding into a private world, the surrogate Lincoln, the merciless conqueror possessed by Lincoln's kindly spirit and perhaps by guilt for the desolation he had brought to the region he once loved. What emerged, as Sherman helped himself to the whiskey, were seven points. Besides the standard provision for disbanding armies and a provision reestablishing the authority of United States Courts were these five points: federal recognition of the Confederate state governments (in short, no Reconstruction); a guarantee of political rights and franchises (before the Union government had a chance to exclude the highest traitors); a guarantee of the rights of property (with no mention of slaves as an exception, although Sherman afterward said that this had been implicitly understood on both sides); distribution of

arms in state arsenals (which might easily be repossessed by recalcitrant Rebels if they regained political rights too easily); and a general amnesty for both civilians and military men.

Sherman finished his document with a flourish of satisfaction. Upon reading it, the Confederates "readily" accepted. Why not? One can imagine them exchanging euphoric glances and suppressing whoops of joy. The Confederacy lived, in all but name! The Old South endured!

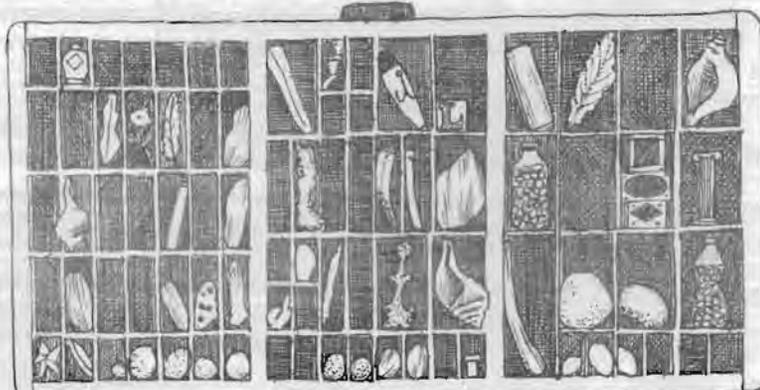
As the Southerners rode away, General Johnston turned to Breckinridge and asked, "What do you think of Sherman?"

"He is a bright man and a man of great force," Breckinridge replied, but then, reconsidering his compliment, he blurted out, "General Sherman is a hog! Yes, sir, a hog! Did you see him take that drink by himself? . . . No Kentucky gentleman would ever have taken away that bottle. He knew we needed it."

Years later, Sherman would be told this story, and it amused him. "Those fellows hustled me that day; I was sorry for the drink I did give them."

The war was over, but what had it been fought for? Lincoln wanted to be charitable after so terrible an ordeal, but would he have allowed the Union victims—soldiers and their families—to feel that their sacrifices had been for nothing? At Bennett Place, reconciliation and Reconstruction were opposites: to "bind up the nation's wounds" would be to leave the issues of the war unresolved; to tackle the remaking of the South immediately would be to prolong a de-facto state of war.

THE EMPTY ROOM. How could this peacemaking be made exciting? How might the Sherman parable be rendered into a display for a glass case or an "audiovisual" lesson? Sherman's pen or his whiskey bottle



Stuart Leeds

from the medical stores or examples of his frantic, illegible writing hardly seemed likely to ignite the public. His fall from grace when his lenient terms hit Washington is fascinating but not especially visual. Stanton disapproved the terms in a rage, dispatched Grant to North Carolina to relieve Sherman of his command, and then, with characteristic meanness, whispered to the press that Sherman had accepted a bribe of thirteen million dollars in Confederate gold for the escape of Jefferson Davis. But within a few days a new truce, along the lines of Appomattox, was arranged with Johnston. Grant returned to Washington alone. Stanton's remark about the bribe was discounted, and Sherman proceeded to Washington at the head of a triumphant army. His Bennett Place transgressions led to no permanent loss of stature.

Several weeks later, Sherman rode victorious down Pennsylvania Avenue. At the Treasury Department, he turned on his horse to behold the column of his men stretching to the Capitol, and described it as "simply magnificent," and he continued, "The glittering muskets looked like a solid mass of steel moving with the regularity of a pendulum. . . . Many good people, up to that time, had looked upon our Western army as a sort of mob, but the world then saw . . . that it was an army in the proper sense, well organized, well commanded, and disciplined; and there was no wonder that it had swept through the South like a tornado." How quickly, in victory, are the atrocities forgotten! At the reviewing stand, he achieved his revenge against Stanton for questioning his obedience and maligning him: he refused to shake hands with the War Secretary, and was satisfied that his rebuke was "universally noticed."

The newspaper clippings about all this could be displayed, but clippings are too static. Maybe the place needs a "sound and light" show, a peace reenactment, that would stress the modern connections: the degree of permissible terror against a wartime foe, the widening of the license of war, civilian versus military control over the armed forces (for, at Bennett Place, Sherman might have become another Mac-

Arthur, and a successful one), and reconciliation after a divisive war.

If anything was to be reenacted, I would want it to include Sherman's appearance before the Committee on the Conduct of the War at the time of his victory march in Washington. The committee called him as a witness to justify his actions at Bennett Place, but its real purpose was political. Composed of radical Republicans who were itching for the Reconstruction of the South to begin, the committee wanted to show that Sherman was directly following Lincoln's orders at Bennett's farm. The goal was to discredit Lincoln and the Lincoln impulse toward generosity. For the second time, Sherman got his chance to be a surrogate Lincoln, but he would not accommodate the committee. He had learned something about politics by now. He kept his testimony flat, and vague. The City Point conversations, he testified, were simply general, containing nothing definite.

But I think I know what was going through his mind and what he wanted to say to that committee. If I were staging the reenactment, my Sherman actor would get the following speech, which I've invented for him:

"Yes, having won the war, perhaps I was too anxious for the laurels of the peacemaker as well. You cried out for an angel of wrath, and I gave you what you wanted. As I piled one victory upon another, you placed me in the tradition of Caesar and Napoleon. Perhaps I wished too fervently to stand in the tradition of Lincoln. The last vision of him at City Point is etched in my mind forever. If I erred, it was because I tried to hold on to that generous spirit which was so quickly fading as petty, vindictive, scheming politicians took his place. Had President Lincoln lived, I know he would have sustained me." —JAMES RESTON, JR.

BLOCK THAT METAPHOR!

[From USA Today]

"As far as the schedule goes, we've got a laugh for the rest of the way," said Tigers manager Sparky Anderson. "We're over the hump. We were trapped there for awhile. They had us by the throat but we escaped the net."

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We'll be right over.