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THE MAKING OF A CAVALRYMAN: BENJAMIN H. GRIESEN
AND THE CIVIL WAR ALONG THE MISSISSIPPI, 1861-1865

by

Bruce J. Dinges

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IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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INTRODUCTION

Although the great Union cavalry raid from La Grange, Tennessee to Baton Rouge, Louisiana in the spring of 1863 has received considerable attention at the hands of historians, novelists, and even film-makers, no one has yet undertaken a comprehensive study of the life and career of the man who conducted what was certainly the most spectacular mounted expedition of the Civil War in the west. That Benjamin H. Grierson emerged from the literary outpouring of the Civil War Centennial without a biography is remarkable. The story of a penniless musician and unsuccessful merchant who, without benefit of a formal military education, emerged from the war as one of the Union's most outstanding cavalry commanders and then went on to lead one of the army's first black cavalry units would appear to hold an almost irresistible appeal for the popular imagination. Neglect of Grierson seems especially astonishing the moment one opens the first box of the cavalryman's personal correspondence. On page after yellowed page of often daily letters to his wife and family, the frequently lonely soldier, with unusual warmth and candor, chronicles the events and customs of a truly unique life--
a life that spanned eight vibrant decades of American growth.

This work is concerned primarily with the Civil War career of Benjamin H. Grierson, with particular emphasis upon the period between Grierson's entry into the service as a volunteer aide to General Benjamin M. Prentiss in the spring of 1861 and his appointment to the rank of brigadier general of volunteers during the siege of Port Hudson in June, 1863. Hopefully, a study of the means by which an untutored musician from the rural midwest achieved prominence as a successful and dependable military leader will shed some new light upon the volunteer system as it functioned in nineteenth-century America.
CHAPTER I

"I have often since wondered why"

At the end of a military career spanning nearly thirty years, Brigadier General Benjamin H. Grierson occupied his leisure moments delving into the turbulent legends of ancient Scotland. There he identified the origins of the Grierson family with the rise of the Clan MacGregor. Occupying a substantial tract of land in Argyle and Perth Shires, near Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond, the MacGregors boasted a heritage dating back to one Gregor or Gregarious, the third son of Alpin, a Scottish king of the ninth century. The central location of their landholdings embroiled the clan in innumerable feuds and border disputes, and compelled the MacGregors to participate in "nearly every war in which their country was involved."¹

The surname "Grierson" does not appear in Scottish genealogy prior to the mid-14th century. At that time, Malcolm Dominius MacGregor, Laird of MacGregor, granted his second son, Gilbert, the lands of Netherholm of Dalgarnochy, stipulating that Gilbert's descendants adopt the new patronym. On February 24, 1473, James III of Scotland bestowed upon Gilbert's grandson, Robert, title to the traditional family lands of Lag, in the county of Dumfries.
Robert Grierson subsequently married Lady Isabel Kirkpatrick, thereby adding the manor of Rock Hall to the family seat.\(^2\)

Sir Robert, the 17th-century descendant of Gilbert, towered amidst all these Griersons of Lag. Here, Ben perceived, was a man about whom the "terrors" and "superstitions of the times gathered"; a man who, at least in legend, "seemed to combine the chivalry and punctilio of a noble and gentleman of the old type with the attributes and sullen sternness [sic] of a savage." Along with John Graham of Claverhouse, Sir Robert Grierson played a leading role in the bloody religious controversies that ravaged Scotland throughout the 17th century. His character, in fact, proved remarkable enough to serve as the model for Sir Robert Redgauntlet in Sir Walter Scott's *Waverly Novels*.\(^3\)

Turning the pages of "Wandering Willie's Legend," Sir Robert's progeny succumbed to the spell of a fascinating portrait:

Far and wide was Sir Robert hated and feared. Men thought he had a direct compact with Satan -- that he was proof against steel -- and that bullets happed aff his buff-coat like hail-stanes from a hearth -- that he had a mear that would turn a hare on the side of Carrifra-gawns -- and muckle to the same purpose, of whilk mair anon. The best blessing they wared on him was "De'il scowp wi' Redgauntlet!" He wasna a bad master to his ain folk though, and was weel aneugh liked by his tenants; and as for the lackies and troopers that raid out wi' him to the persecutions, as the Whigs ca'ad these killing times, they wad hae drunken themsels blind to his health at any time.\(^4\)
The historic Laird of Lag hardly enjoyed so captivating a reputation as the fictional Sir Robert. Still, it is relatively easy to appreciate the legend's appeal to his 19th-century descendant—a poet/musician turned soldier, confronted with the daily monotony of existence at isolated frontier posts. Certainly Scott's romantic tales have captivated men of considerably less imagination than Ben Grierson, and even today the myth persists of an ancient Scotland, "picturesque in landscape," and peopled by an adventurous breed, crude and untamed perhaps, but nonetheless romantic and charming. This was the background against which Grierson viewed his ancestors. A Scotland, "poverty-stricken, generally lawless, still lingering in the Middle Ages in the seventeenth century," seldom intruded upon the world into which Sir Walter Scott transported his readers. Ultimately, the degree to which fact and legend intermingle in the Grierson genealogy seems less important than what that family chronicle reveals about its author, Benjamin H. Grierson. In essence, it displays a romantic imagination, perhaps coupled with a subconscious need to legitimatize a "non-professional" soldier's position within an increasingly exclusive peacetime military establishment. After all, a man whose forebears repeatedly rode to battle in defense of home and king, whose most memorable ancestor captured the imagination of Sir Walter Scott, whose surname dots the rolls of the Highland Regiments,
hardly need stand uneasy in the company of colleagues professionally trained in the art of war.

Few such legends, however, embellish the history of the Irish branch of the Grierson clan. If in Scotland the family genius seemed to shine brightest while engaged in martial pursuits or in the management of vast landholdings, in Ireland it more frequently found expression in commercial endeavor, and even in the arts. Those 18th- and 19th-century Griersons who did choose to follow the fife and drum could hardly be compared to the greatest Lairds of Lag. And yet, Bann carefully emphasizes, "their names will be found among officers and enlisted men in the English Army and Navy [as having] . . . rendered service throughout the extensive possessions of the British Government." A portion of the Grierson family first emigrated to Ireland sometime during the mid-17th century. Apparently not all of the members of the Scottish clan shared the Laird of Lag's Episcopal sympathies, nor were they comfortable under that unsettled state of affairs already known as the "killing times." Whether actual Covenanters, or simply among those who sought escape from the repercussions of the violent clash between militant religionists and James II's brutal lieutenants—with Sir Robert Grierson of Lag and James Graham of Claverhouse prominent in the forefront of the latter—these humble Griersons found the peace and toleration of Ulster infinitely more attractive.
than life in their traditional homeland.9

By the mid-17th century, the Grierson clan was solidly established in Ireland, having dispersed throughout Ulster and even as far south as Dublin. Captain John Grierson, Ben's grandfather, eagerly espoused the loyalist cause in the Irish Catholic Rebellion of 1798, and fought as a cavalry commander at the battles of Tara and Repih. Together, the Captain and his wife, Margaret Clare of Claremont, fostered five children: Benjamin Henry, Robert, Joshua, Susan and Margaret.10

Ben's father, Robert Grierson, was born near Dublin on August 23, 1789. As he approached maturity, Robert inclined toward a military career. Commissions in His Majesty's service, however, remained the almost exclusive privilege of the sons of wealthy or well-born Englishmen. An impoverished Irish orphan could entertain little hope of ever achieving the social or economic status requisite for admission to the rigid British military caste.11

While casting about in search of a means of earning a living, Robert Grierson's eyes turned toward America. Shortly before the War of 1812, he prevailed upon a family friend to grant him a berth on a transatlantic trading venture. Several months later, the youth caught a first glimpse of the North American continent from somewhere off the coast of Newfoundland. The subsequent voyage afforded ample opportunity to gauge the promise of this new land
as the merchant vessel, with its young passenger, visited ports along the Atlantic seaboard, from Boston as far south as Savannah.

After nearly a year at sea, Robert Grierson returned to Ireland. There, in 1815, he married Mary Sheppard and briefly settled down to the business of raising a family. Three years passed, and two daughters, Louisa and Susan, were born to the Griersons. But Robert's vision of America as a gateway to economic security did not fade. The birth of his second child convinced the twenty-nine-year-old father that the time was ripe to strike out in search of his fortune, before his family grew too large and he too old. Mary quietly submitted to her husband's decision and prepared to move her small household into the American wilderness. In the midst of a violent storm, on November 17, 1818, Robert Grierson, his wife and two infant children, bid farewell to their native land.

The turbulent conditions attending the departure proved portentous. During the next two months, the small emigrant family discovered first-hand the hazards of a winter voyage across the Atlantic. Storms and high seas repeatedly buffeted their small vessel. Only valiant efforts by captain and crew manning the pumps kept it afloat long enough to reach the island of Bermuda. There the ship finally foundered, and the Griersons patiently lingered for three months before obtaining passage on a
more seaworthy craft, bound for New York. On April 6, 1819, Robert Grierson once again set foot on American soil.

The young couple's elation upon the safe termination of their harrowing ordeal was almost immediately compounded. Soon after arriving in New York City, Mary gave birth to their first son, Robert. But, unfortunately, the joy of the moment all too quickly faded. Weak and sickly, the infant scarcely survived a month. Then, in August or September 1819, Robert Grierson—like so many of his countrymen before him—packed up the remainder of his family and moved on toward the western frontier.12

Pausing briefly at Philadelphia, Robert and Mary found the city still reeling from the aftershock of financial panic. Small industry had ground to a virtual standstill. Merchants apprehensively watched a steadily mounting tide of bankruptcies. Banks lay empty, their coffers drained of specie and credit available only at the most extravagant interest rates.13 However, the ominous economic conditions prevailing in Pennsylvania's commercial capital produced little hesitation in the aspiring entrepreneur's journey toward the Scotch-Irish settlements, already solid fixtures in "The Great Valley."

Choices in mode of travel in 1819 were limited. Access to the most interior recesses of Pennsylvania remained effectively confined to stage, horseback, wagon or on foot. In consideration for his wife, and given the youth of his
daughters, Robert Grierson moved his family westward by wagon, travelling nearly a month before reaching his destination on October 5. This final stage of the Grierson family's almost year-long odyssey from their home in Ireland could scarcely have been more comfortable than the turbulent Atlantic passage. And yet, their spirits took a certain cheer from the rustic countryside, with its "white, clean, cheerful-looking villages and towns." As at least one observer noted, the very landscape exuded "a pervading air of comfort and thrift"—traits calculated to touch a responsive cord in every Scotch-Irish heart. ¹⁴

By contrast, the Grierson's first glimpse of their new home could only have plunged them into a state of shock, if not outright depression. Already termed "The Black City," early 19th-century Pittsburgh confronted the traveller just emerging from the "picturesque and fruitful" countryside with an unappetizing vista of "dirty streets and dark, filthy looking houses stretching away in rows continuously ahead and enveloped in an atmosphere of smoke and soot which blackened everything in sight." ¹⁵ It was in this dark, dirty and noisy atmosphere of an emerging industrial city that Ben Grierson was to spend the first years of his life.

Despite the dismal, and even forbidding, physical environment, Robert Grierson apparently found Pittsburgh's economic atmosphere highly congenial. In relatively short
order, he established a successful and growing mercantile business. And there, during the next eighteen years, the once impoverished Irish immigrant "accumulated considerable wealth," in addition to valuable real estate holdings both in the city proper and across the river in Alleghany Town. 16

A portion of the business receipts maintained the family residence on Market Street, a narrow avenue situated in the commercial center of the city. On the north, the street flowed into a square containing a brick court-house and a semi-circular open-air market. At its southern extremity, Market Street abruptly terminated on the crest of a steep bank overlooking the Monongahela River. If the Grierson home was characteristic of Pittsburgh architecture in the early 1800s, it was a one- or two-story wooden or brick structure. And, since the city's residential plan divided property on either side of its narrow commercial avenues almost uniformly into lots that were both wide and deep, it seems probable that the family enjoyed the typical, if mean, comforts of a stable and a small backyard garden. On this modest estate, Robert and Mary brought four children into the world: John Charles, Robert Henry, Mary and, "at 3 o'clock in the morning of July 8th, 1826," Benjamin Henry Grierson. 17

Ben somewhat cryptically notes in his unpublished autobiography that shortly after the birth of the seventh
and last child, his father "for some reason . . . became dissatisfied with his surroundings."

Although he apparently never confided his motives in this instance to his youngest son, it is not difficult to discern at least some of the more prominent factors underlying Robert Grierson's concern over his situation in Pittsburgh. The size of the Grierson household had tripled during their nine-year residence in the city. Seven individuals--five of them growing youngsters--now occupied quarters originally intended for four. The narrow streets and small backyard scarcely afforded room for safe or pleasant recreation. Nor could Robert and Mary ignore the health of their children, living and breathing in a metropolitan area "so full . . . of smoke . . . that one cannot see from one end of a straight street to the other." 

Young Robert Henry survived a scant two years in this atmosphere--his father's second namesake to succumb to the American urban environment. Moreover, the children's education had to be considered. Even as late as 1829, no public schools existed in the city, and private institutions were of indifferent quality. All of these concerns must have plagued Robert Grierson as he pondered his future, and that of his family. In fact, it is entirely possible that Grierson never intended to make Pittsburgh his permanent residence. Most likely he belonged to that class of men whom Elizur Wright, Jr. found so characteristic of
"The Black City"—men "straining every nerve to get rich with the hope of spending [their] money someday or other in a place that is cleaner."²² If so, by 1828 Ben's father had made his tidy little fortune and could look to the comfort and well-being of his family. In any event, Robert Grierson decided to sell his mercantile business and, in the spring of 1829, moved to Youngstown, Ohio.²³

Nestled at the junction of Mill Creek and the Mahoning River, Youngstown originated in 1797 with the arrival of a New Yorker, John Young, and a small group of settlers. Although the Indian trade played a prominent role in the development of the new village, nature had traced the pattern of Youngstown's future growth long before the arrival of either Indian or white man. Fortuitously, the site John Young stumbled upon as the setting for his community lay in the heart of what would become the "Ruhr Valley of America." From the beginning, ties of physical proximity and shared resources bound Youngstown into the economy of western Pennsylvania. As early as 1802, an enterprising settler erected a crude iron smelter on nearby Yellow Creek, and in 1826 the first coal mine was excavated in the Mahoning Valley. The opening of the Pennsylvania-Ohio Canal in 1839, the construction in 1853 of the first railroad traversing the valley, along with an increase in iron production during the Civil War, each in succession boosted Youngstown's growth and enhanced its prosperity. In the
decade immediately following the war, the community tripled its population to nearly nine thousand. By the turn of the century the figure stood at almost fifty thousand. 24

But all of this lay far in the future. The Youngstown that welcomed Robert Grierson and his family in 1829 still retained the crude facade and rough demeanor of a hundred other infant frontier communities. Barely thirty years old, the village boasted just fourteen hundred inhabitants living under a sky as yet unblemished by the smoke and fire of iron smelters. 25

Ben's father decided to exploit the Mahoning Valley's agricultural resources, and his youngest son's earliest recollections center about the family homestead, about one mile south of Youngstown. 26 The memories were not uniformly pleasant. At the age of eight, the future cavalry commander perhaps came closer to death than at any point in his subsequent career. Ironically, the instrument of near-fatal injury was a horse's hoof.

When neighbors converged to clear each other's land for spring planting, the otherwise tedious chores of log-rolling and bush-burning took place in a festive atmosphere. Parental supervision on such occasions was lax, and when the time came to attack the Grierson fields, Ben romped freely among the adults. Of course, he was invariably under solemn admonition to stay close and to keep out of mischief. But, as the day wore on, parental warnings tended to melt in the
excitement of the holiday.

In one particular instance, when brother John was dispatched on an errand to a nearby farm, Ben discerned a chance for adventure and quietly slipped from his father's side. Perhaps, he reasoned, John could be prevailed upon for a return ride on horseback. The youngster's strategy was well calculated. Confronted by his little brother a half mile from home, the elder Grierson was left with little choice but to accede to Ben's request. However, as John hoisted the lad onto his mount, the animal suddenly bolted. Ben instinctively pitched forward, gripping the horse's mane and holding on for dear life. A frantic quarter of a mile later, the ride abruptly ended as the youngster crashed violently to the ground. Momentarily stunned, Ben half-raised himself in an effort to catch sight of his older brother. At that precise moment, the horse kicked, striking the youth full in the face.

For two weeks he lay unconscious, "hovering between life and death." Remarkably, however, within eight weeks after the accident, recovery was sufficiently pronounced that the family physician ventured to remove the bandage from one of Ben's eyes. Much to the relief of all present, the child enthusiastically announced, "by gum I can see." Still, several months passed before sight returned to the other eye. As an adult, Ben adopted a full beard which covered most of his face. But, even in old age, he retained a
prominent scar running from the forehead, along the right cheek, and terminating at the chin -- a constant reminder of his first encounter with the cavalryman's indispensable friend.27

Tragedy, however, formed but a small part of life on the Grierson's Ohio homestead. In general, the process of growing up for Ben, his brother and his three sisters, differed little from that familiar to thousands of other children reared in nineteenth-century rural America. Life for the Grierson children was composed of varying measures of work, study and play. Gradually, imperceptibly, each discovered individual interests, developed unique talents, and formed distinctive character traits. As Ben later recalled, Louisa, the eldest, was always the family scholar, combining "an excellent education" with "fine natural abilities" and "a remarkably clear and graceful manner of expressing herself." Susan, the second in seniority, was in many ways the antithesis of her older sister. "Taller, stronger and more robust" than Louisa, her brother remembered her as "one of the handsomest girls in Youngstown," disdaining books and studies to indulge a passion for sports and the outdoors. Mary, however, was Ben's favorite. He enjoyed the memory of her "bright, cheerful, sprightly . . . disposition," and it was only with great sadness that he contemplated the deep fits of depression that periodically shattered her normally gay demeanor. Only two years older
than her brother, Mary became the constant companion of his youth and remained his devoted confidant for as long as she lived. Ben never developed so close and open a relationship with his brother. Quite clearly, the two men held little in common. John Grierson combined a powerful physique with an absolute delight in hard work. Even as a boy, John seldom seemed "so miserable as when out of employment." Ben always marvelled at his brother's business acumen and, upon reflection, found it curious that "the larger part of his life was spent in the employment of others." 28

As for Ben himself--well, the truth seemed inescapable. His father, he confessed, undoubtedly hit close to the mark on those frequent occasions when he proclaimed in exasperation that "he would rather have one boy like John to work, than a ten acre lot full of such boys as myself." The youngest member of the Grierson clan never claimed an inclination for work as one of his salient character traits. At an early age he developed a fascination for almost every variety of game. He seemed intuitively to grasp the rules of combat and delighted in exploring subtleties of maneuver. All too often, his "inordinate desire" lured the youngster out of the classroom. Fortunately, however, his mental dexterity extended beyond gamesmanship, and the close of each term generally found a frequently-truant Ben Grierson among the top students at the Youngstown Academy. 29

Mary Grierson instilled in her son her own love and
talent for music. The bonds of home and family are not
casily severed, and the Grierson children often silently
watched their mother "weep when thinking of her departure
from Ireland and separation from the dear relatives and
friends of her native land." But Ben preferred to recall
those happy occasions when his mother's voice seemed to fill
the house, as she entertained the children with her clear and
melodic rendition of some ancient Scotch or Irish ballad.
Almost before he could speak, her youngest offspring was
demonstrating his eagerness to participate by tapping
accompaniment on the nearest solid object. Far from being
annoyed, Mary wholeheartedly encouraged his childhood interest
and, in short order, Ben was avidly practising upon all
manner of musical instruments. The flute, clarinet and
bugle quickly became particular favorites, but his musical
appetite seemed insatiable. Soon, and with little apparent
effort, he also achieved proficiency on drums, piano,
guitar and violin. At the age of thirteen, Ben Grierson
replaced George Todd, brother of Ohio's Civil War governor,
as leader of the Youngstown Band. In this capacity, he
received his first taste of the electrifying emotionalism
generated by a national political contest. During the fall
of 1840, the band, with its youthful leader, toured through-
out eastern Ohio, making its small contribution to that
year's raucous "Log Cabin and Hard Cider" presidential
campaign.
Ben's political principles, however, derived from his father. For years after his arrival in the United States, Robert Grierson remained an ardent Democrat. But, like many other Americans of Scotch-Irish descent, the elder Grierson grew increasingly alarmed as the "encroachments of the slave power made that institution a national as well as a sectional disgrace to the Republic." No advocate of interference with the south's "peculiar institution" where it existed, he naturally gravitated toward the Whig platform and warmly transferred his allegiance to that party's "Free Soil" wing. Ben recalled that his father was "a warm friend of Wendell Phillips and Lloyd Garrison and took an active part in politics during that exciting period; expressing his sentiments freely and fearlessly on all occasions and often facing large mobs regardless of all threats of violence from the maddened advocates of slavery." The example thus set was not lost upon the son. From these antecedents, there developed a delight in political combat, an abhorrence of slavery, an abiding hatred of all who supported the slave power, and a deep devotion to the principles of the Republican party—all of which became so much a part of Ben Grierson's personality as to appear more instinctive than deliberate.31

Like most frontier communities, Youngstown proudly, if not skillfully, attempted to uphold America's sacred minuteman tradition. In its characteristically haphazard militia
organization, Ben received his first taste of military life. As he approached his twenty-first birthday, the young musician complied with existing state law by enlisting as a trumpeter in Captain Samuel Gibson's regiment of cavalry. Shortly thereafter, he was elevated to fill one of two vacancies in the position of regimental bugler. In that capacity, he joined his friend George King, the instructor of the local Presbyterian choir, and together they sounded regimental calls for nearly five years.

The training received, however, seems typical of that experienced by thousands of others who would later march off to fight, and die, in defense of the Union: "... the rank and file generally appeared on parade with corn-stalks, brooms, rails, poles ... or anything that would substitute. The officers selected by ballot were well known drunkards possessing peculiar characteristics. ... During muster days the men worked systematically to get them drunk and the manoeuvres usually wound up by marching to the toe-path of the canal, where sooner or later they managed to charge upon and plunge the officers into the water to sober them." Upon reflection Ben Grierson concluded that the experience acquired through service with the Ohio Militia "was not essentially beneficial in aiding me to command successfully in serious warfare."32

Meanwhile, there was time for romance. As the leader of the Youngstown Band and an organizer of one of the first
minstrel troup in that part of the country, Ben became a fairly familiar figure in the small community. In due course, he attracted the attention of Alice Kirk, the daughter of a prominent merchant and elder of the Christian Church. Alice was an attractive young lady, two years Ben's junior, with a decided interest in both music and a certain musician. Before long, the young clerk at Brander's store found himself plotting circuitous routes home after work--routes that would inevitably lead him past the Kirk residence.

On at least one occasion, his efforts were rewarded. As he approached the house, Ben spied Alice and her Aunt Louisa enjoying the cool of the evening from the upper porch. Pausing at the gate, he called up and pleasantly engaged the ladies in conversation. Soon, all three were absorbed in the gaiety of the moment. Impulsively, Louisa suggested that Ben might join them on their elevated perch. Without hesitating to reflect upon the propriety of his action, the youthful visitor vaulted the gate, clambered the slats and grapevines adorning the side of the house, and in an instant stood in their midst. The trio's laughter, however, attracted the attention of Tom Kirk, who forthwith reported the impromptu social gathering to his mother. Almost immediately a call issued from an interior room beckoning Alice inside and propelling Ben down the side of the building as quickly as he had risen.
In due course, news of the incident reached the ears of Alice's father who, in Ben's estimation, "became unreasonably offended at the occurrence." More than likely, the young man's injudicious action simply provided John Kirk with a propitious opportunity to put an end to what he already deemed an ill-considered infatuation on the part of his teen-aged daughter. The reckless, even brash, young clerk and clarinet player must have struck the sober, staid merchant and church leader as a risky gamble upon which to stake his child's future happiness. In any event, Mr. Kirk lost no time in barring Ben Grierson from his household and in forbidding Alice from having anything more to do with the miscreant. Shortly thereafter, in September 1845, Alice left Youngstown to attend the Huron Institute in Milan, over one hundred miles distant. Subsequently, she removed to Hudson, some fifty miles closer to home. But, for the next three years, Ben saw little, if anything, of his boyhood sweetheart. In the interim, "a remarkable coolness" prevailed between himself and John Kirk.33

From all outward appearances, the Grierson-Kirk romance seemed doomed. Not only had John Kirk physically removed his daughter from Ben's reach, but Alice herself was reluctant to encourage a relationship that violated "a positive precept" of her faith—namely, the commandment to "Honor thy father." However, she maintained a clandestine
correspondence with Ben's sister. Not even Mary, she admitted, could possibly "feel more interest in his happiness than I do." And yet, Alice remained confused and unsure. Perhaps her father was correct in his assessment; Ben didn't appear to offer much of a future, and even she was forced to confess that his indifferent manner was a frequent source of annoyance. Fortunately, Alice concluded, they were young and could well afford to await that happy time when doubts would clear and both would "know what was right."

Until then, she would assume a distant and aloof posture, trusting "that an overruling Providence will direct all for the best, and if it is right that we be married no 'foolish scruples' [as Mary termed them] of mine will prevent it."

On this much, at least, Alice Kirk was rigidly determined. Notwithstanding the importuning of friends, and despite Mary Grierson's continued efforts to effect a reconciliation, the courtship stood in abeyance for nine years. 34

In 1851, Ben widened the physical breach between Alice and himself by moving to Jacksonville, in west-central Illinois. There the aspiring music teacher found what reminded another visitor during that same year of "a village made to order at the East, with neat houses . . . with gardens filled with flowers and shrubbery, with wide and cleanly streets adorned with shade trees, with a public square inclosed with a plain white fence, and graced . . . with the courthouse and public offices, with schools and
academies, with churches, and a college, all clustering about the village center, while well-tilled farms stretch along the borders on every side . . ." The site must have similarly impressed the young traveller from Ohio, for within the year Robert Grierson and the remainder of his family packed up their belongings and once again headed west. 35

Happily, Jacksonville also shared in a general heightening of interest in musical expression and in formal musical instruction, which swept the Prairie State during the 1850s. Concerts by Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale," and by the violinist, Ole Bull, sent hundreds of central and southern Illinoisians streaming to St. Louis. They returned with a new awareness of the personal satisfactions and artistic possibilities inherent in formal musical training. Interest gradually spread through the rural areas of the state, and before long "the music teacher and the dealer in musical instruments began to thrive." 36

Although Ben Grierson may not have actually thrived, he was able to capitalize on the rising popularity of musical entertainment. Common interests and shared skills drew him into Jacksonville's small intellectual and artistic circle. Acquaintances on the faculties of Illinois College and the other institutions of higher learning located in the community, not only encouraged Ben's artistic endeavors,
but also submitted favorable reports of his musical proficiency. With little apparent difficulty, the newcomer quickly established a solid reputation as a teacher. In addition to assuming leadership of the Jacksonville band, he began organizing and instructing groups in several neighboring communities. By the summer of 1852, Ben felt confident enough of his work to take the Jacksonville organization to Springfield. Apparently, he was not disappointed. In reviewing the event, the *Illinois State Register* complimented Grierson's musicians as unique among those in attendance, in that they "played by the card instead of their own conception of what each particular piece of music ought to have been."  

As Ben's musical profession prospered, fate—abetted by sister Mary—conspired to arrange a reunion with Alice Kirk. Mary Grierson regularly informed her Ohio friend of Ben's activities and proferred an open invitation to visit their new home in Illinois. Miss Kirk readily confessed that "in the whole world there is no spot I so much desire to visit as Jacksonville, or rather of all earths [sic] inhabitants . . . that I would prefer seeing now, are in Jacksonville." But the obstacles standing in the way of such a journey were formidable. She had accepted a teaching assignment in the rural Ohio community of Lafayette. The school was small and the pay minimal. Board, "very high roomrent," and numerous incidental expenses proved so constant a drain upon
the young teacher's "limited store," that it became difficult to plan a visit to her own family in Youngstown, much less contemplate a vacation in distant Jacksonville, Illinois. Moreover, time had not dissolved her "foolish scruples." Although it still made her sad "to write or think so much of Ben," Alice remained deeply uncertain of the propriety, or wisdom, of resuming their relationship.

Early in 1854, however, the situation changed. Alice, convinced that she both needed and could afford a brief rest, decided to visit relatives in Springfield. While there she accepted a temporary position on the faculty of the Springfield Seminary for Young Ladies. Ben, in nearby Jacksonville, remained ignorant of the proximity of his former sweetheart. However, his duties as a music instructor regularly took him to the state capitol. There, one day, much to his surprise he accidentally confronted Alice Kirk. The afternoon passed all too quickly, but before the couple parted, Ben extracted a promise that Alice would visit his family in Jacksonville. Now that they were so close to each other, and so far removed from the immediate influence of Alice's father, Grierson was determined to erase all objections to their renewed courtship.

True to her word, Miss Kirk spent the last few days preceding the opening of the spring term of the seminary in the Grierson home. At the end of her stay, Ben personally escorted the young lady back to Springfield. They continued
to meet frequently throughout the spring and summer, with Ben bemoaning any occasion on which his professional obligations interfered with a rendezvous. In May, he received a summons to practise with the Springfield band, preparatory to that city's Floral Exhibition. "I don't [sic] want to do it," he complained to Alice, "for I should much prefer practising [sic] in another way. . . . I will try & go up tomorrow morning so that we can have [a] good time after school." Each passing day diminished Alice's qualms concerning herself and Ben. Upon returning to Youngstown at the close of the school term, she confided that "Ben & I have decided that we would be happier if we were married than we are now we have seen a great deal of each other during the last year & think we ought to be pretty well acquainted by this time, also that we are old enough to have some judgment and look upon life as reality and not all romance." Several months later, and according to pre-arranged plan, Ben travelled to Cincinnati, where he spent several days with John Grierson and his family. By mid-September, he was back in his boyhood home. There, Alice's father, who had sometime since regained a favorable opinion of his daughter's suitor, readily consented to the proposed union. Accordingly, on September 24, 1854, John Kirk personally officiated at a marriage ceremony performed at the Kirk residence in Youngstown, Ohio. In early fall, after visiting with old acquaintances, Ben and Alice returned to Jacksonville,
where they moved into Robert Grierson's house on East State Street.43

Ben continued in his familiar routine of teaching, composing, arranging and performing, but by late summer 1855, it became evident that he must look about for a more reliable and lucrative source of income. Alice was then momentarily expecting their first child, Charles Henry. His arrival would mean an additional mouth to feed and would necessitate alterations in the Grierson family's already cramped living arrangements. Moreover, Ben was tiring of music as a profession and desired some type of employment which would more fully occupy his time and which would not require frequent absences from home.44 Evidently he discussed a possible partnership with his brother during their visit in Cincinnati the previous summer. In the interim, John had accepted a position with a firm in Memphis, Tennessee. But, in August, he was compelled to admit that he had not accumulated enough capital "to bring about the accomplishment of our wishes to get into business together," and could offer "no alternative but to grin & bear it as it is for a time longer."45

Meanwhile, John Kirk indicated that he might lend initial support for a farming venture. Business had compelled Mr. Kirk to remove his residence to Pittsburgh, and he now welcomed the prospect of settling his son-in-law's family somewhere nearby. Alice, for her part, admitted that "it
would suit me very well to live in Pennsylvania if Ben
would be contented and satisfied." But, at the same time,
she recognized that there was scant likelihood of her
husband ever finding happiness in rural Pennsylvania.
"'The West'," she explained to her father, "has more charms
for him than for me . . . all his 'blood kin' are here and
aside from that . . . there is a sort of magic in living
West." Finally, there was the unavoidable fact that "Ben
has no practical knowledge of farming." None among his
immediate family could imagine him long content at tilling
the soil.46

Originally, Ben had intended to comb the northern part
of the state in search of a suitable position or a promising
business venture.47 Then, in early fall, he learned of an
intriguing opportunity in nearby Meredosia. When John
stopped over in Jacksonville, en route to Concord, Ben pre-
vailed upon his brother for advice and assistance.48

John Walihan, co-owner in the general merchandise and
produce concern of Walihan & Holderby, was an old friend, at
one time having been employed on the Grierson farm in Ohio.
Ben knew him to be "a man of good natural abilities." Al-
though seriously deficient in formal education, Walihan was
both scrupulously honest and "well liked & respected" in
the community. Most important, in the eyes of his future
partner, he was conducting "a first rate business" based
upon "an exclusive acquaintance." In past years, sales
regularly amounted to at least twenty thousand dollars per annum, and between August and November, sales for 1855 already totalled some five thousand dollars. However, during the former month, Holderby died, and Walihan was finding the task of managing a business alone physically as well as financially fatiguing.\(^49\)

As far as Grierson was concerned, the venture seemed too potentially rewarding to ignore. With John's approval, he promptly presented Walihan with his note for just over twenty-six hundred dollars and signed a partnership agreement binding for five years. Then, Ben and Alice unleashed their combined powers of persuasion on John Kirk.

After detailing the transaction, along with the rationale behind his actions and his plans for the future, Ben assured his father-in-law that his prospects appeared "very good indeed." "With energy industry & Economy," the firm of Grierson & Walihan could not help but prosper. Admittedly, Neredosia was "not the most pleasant place to live," but it was nonetheless a thriving town "comfortably located" on an elevated terrace overlooking the Illinois River. The surrounding countryside was thickly populated, fertile, and prosperous. This, combined with the village's strategic river-front location, made it "a first rate point for shipping all kinds of country produce."\(^50\)

Still, Ben had gone out on a financial limb to purchase a half interest with John Walihan. His note would fall due
in just five months, and his resources were, to say the very least, "limited." Everything was tied up in his parents' Jacksonville property, which he wished "to remain as a permanent home for the Old Folks while they live." Now that Mr. Kirk seemed "so pleasantly situated in a business point of view," Ben and Alice hoped that he might assist with a one-thousand-dollar loan.\textsuperscript{51}

A visit to Meredosia convinced Alice's father that the community did indeed show commercial promise, and he commended Ben on the deliberation and careful concern with which he had entered into his arrangement with Walihan. But, John Kirk knew all too well the dangers and pitfalls which the glimmer of easy profit often conceal from the uninitiated. "Had you asked my advice," he warned, "I should not have dared given [sic] you any encouragement that you would succeed, knowing as I do the dangers that beset the pathway of every young man entering the mercantile life, either with or without capital." Nevertheless, Mr. Kirk wished his son-in-law every success and agreed to a loan. As a stipulation, he made the interest payable to Alice, designating it her "'pin money,' to be disposed of just as she pleases."\textsuperscript{52}

With additional support from his brother, Ben enthusiastically pitched into the task of making Grierson & Walihan a profitable concern.\textsuperscript{53} Alice confessed to initial misgivings about the venture, but they quickly evaporated
as she watched her husband faithfully devote his time and energy to the business. As the new year opened, she proudly reported that "except [for] some parts of the evenings [when] he was drilling Walihan & two or three others in music, before Christmas," Ben had spent every evening at the store. Combining faith in Providence with faith in her husband, Alice calmly assured herself that "he [Ben] means to do well and, his errors will be of the head instead of the heart."54 Certainly, at summer's end, affairs seemed on such firm footing that John deemed it appropriate to caution his neophyte brother to be no "less diligent in your business because your statement shows so favorable a balance."55

Business concerns, however, gradually faded into the background with the approach of the 1856 elections. Despite his father's vocal Free Soil sympathies, Ben had never taken a strong public stand on national issues. Even during the spring of this election year, he voiced no objections to minding the store while John Walihan attended local Democratic conventions. But, as the campaign fires grew ever more heated, Grierson eventually found it impossible to remain passive.56

Stephen A. Douglas' introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska Bill which, among other provisions, abrogated the Missouri Compromise line, sent shock waves through both Democratic and Whig parties in the senator's home state. Almost immediately, anti-slavery elements in both groups voiced
sentiments looking toward the organization of a new political party dedicated to "arresting the aggressive steps of the slave power." In 1853, one of the first meetings of anti-slavery men to discuss such a move took place in Grierson's hometown of Jacksonville. The movement congealed slowly. The Whig convention held at Bloomington in 1854 considered a resolution proposing the formation of a new anti-slavery society and suggested that it be called the Republican Party. But, not until 1856 did the time truly seem right for such a step. In February of that year, a group of anti-slavery newspaper editors gathered in Decatur and adopted a resolution calling for a state convention to be held at Bloomington on May 29. Ben's Jacksonville neighbor, Richard Yates, represented Morgan County at the May convention and assumed an active role in framing a platform which boldly denounced the further extension of slavery and proclaimed unswerving devotion to the Union. Several weeks later, anti-slavery Democrats and Whigs met in Philadelphia, where they adopted the name assumed by the Illinois delegation and nominated John C. Frémont and William L. Dayton as the Republican Party's standard bearers in the forthcoming national election.

Although "for a time the only man in the town and precinct who openly declared himself a Republican," Grierson heartily endorsed the infant party and lustily campaigned for Frémont and Dayton. John, from Memphis, professed
pleasure at seeing his brother at last "awake to the cause of freedom," but admitted to being taken slightly aback at the degree of enthusiasm with which Ben threw himself into the political fray. "Keep cool," he cautioned, "and do not allow yourself to get excited on politics as it can do no good and may injure your business." 60 Fraternal admonitions, however, went unheeded. The younger Grierson inhaled the smoke of political combat and succumbed to the frenzy of the campaign. Business would have to wait until after the elections.

In relatively short order, Ben learned that his opponents took politics every bit as seriously as he did. Moreover, they were by far in the majority. Feeling ran high against Meredosia's handful of Frémont supporters and threats of bodily harm soon became commonplace. On election eve, John Walihan stealthily approached the Grierson home and quietly knocked on his partner's door. He had learned that his Republican friend would be attacked if he ventured near the polls and suggested that it might be wise to avoid taking any risks. Ben expressed appreciation for the timely warning and promised to maintain his guard, but at the same time made it perfectly clear that he would not be intimidated by threats of violence. Fortunately, election day proved anticlimatic as Ben and two comrades maintained their vigil, calmly and without incident. 61

In the final tally, some thirty-two Frémont votes were
counted among a total of approximately four hundred votes cast in the precinct. Statewide, Buchanan prevailed with a majority of just under nine thousand votes. However, the lopsided outcome hardly discouraged Ben. "Under the circumstances," he recalled, a count of several dozen Republican ballots "was deemed a remarkable success where the Democratic majority was so great, and I was heartily congratulated by leading republicans [sic] for my efforts in the cause." His role in the 1856 election brought Grierson to the attention of influential party leaders in central Illinois. Subsequent political campaigns would broaden and deepen contacts established during the Republican party's first test of strength, and the associations then formed would serve Ben well throughout his career.

Frémont's defeat neither diminished political excitement in Illinois, nor dampened the ardor of Republican partisans—Ben Grierson included. In 1858, the Free Soil party nominated ex-congressman Abraham Lincoln of Springfield as its candidate to oppose incumbent Stephen Douglas in the state's upcoming senatorial election. The twin issues of "Bleeding Kansas" and extension of slavery into the territories highlighted the campaign and catapulted the contest into national prominence. Attention naturally focused on a series of seven sensational debates between the two candidates, which opened at Ottawa on August 21 and closed at Alton on the 15th of October. By election day, Douglas had
traversed every railroad line in the state, save two, addressing his constituents in fifty-seven counties. Meanwhile, Lincoln travelled over 5,227 miles by road and covered almost the entire western portion of the state by steamboat. But while the candidates ranged the length and breadth of Illinois, much of the real work of political warfare was conducted by journalists and local party functionaries slugging it out upon a much more restricted battleground. Within a circle drawn at a radius of some eighty miles about the state capitol, there resided a substantial number of faltering old-line Whigs, many of them recent immigrants from the border states of the South. In the counties of Sangamon, Mason, Logan, Madison and Morgan, partisans of both sides engaged in earnest political combat to secure the votes of these wavering individuals.

Once again, Ben Grierson contributed his utmost to the Republican cause in Meredosia and Morgan County. Throughout the summer and early fall, he expended lavish energy speaking, penning polemics and composing campaign music. In the process, the Meredosia merchant formed an attachment for Illinois' gangling railsplitter that endured to the end of his days. Later, Ben proudly recalled Lincoln's 1858 visit: "He . . . stopped at my house the night after making a speech . . . After the speaking was over and Mr. Lincoln had retired, I went back to the building in which the meeting took place, to assist in quelling a disturbance which might
have arisen." 66

When the campaign smoke cleared, the Democrats easily retained their congressional seat in the Sixth District, which encompassed Morgan County. 67 Republican victories in northern and east-central counties neatly balanced a Democratic sweep of southern and west-central Illinois, and actually gave the Republican legislative ticket a four-thousand-vote plurality. However, the apportionment of seats in the new legislature failed to take into account rapid population growth in northern Illinois since 1850, and left the Democrats with a "clear majority" in the joint session which convened to name the state's representative to the United States Senate. 68 As they retired to mend their wounds, Grierson and his fellow Republicans took encouragement from their superior showing. Defeated in their attempt at capturing a critical Senate seat, they nevertheless had outmanned the Democrats at the polls and had seated both Republican candidates for state office. 69

If prospects grew ever brighter for Ben's fledgling Republican party during the closing years of the decade, the situation appeared considerably less encouraging for Grierson and Walihan's mercantile and produce business. On August 24, 1857, the New York branch of the Ohio Life Insurance and Trust Company closed its doors. A major financial crisis ensued as a mounting number of banks, railroads and commercial firms went under in rapid succession.
Banking recovery, fortunately, was relatively swift. Business and commerce, however, only slowly emerged from a deep and protracted recession. Not until 1859/60 did economic indicators seem to point toward a general recovery. But, by then, political uncertainties generated by the intensifying sectional crisis had begun to influence commercial trends. As late as 1860, Horace Greeley informed his readers from Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin: "The West is poor. The collapse of the railroad bubble . . . has spread desolation over the land." As late as 1860, Horace Greeley informed his readers from Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin: "The West is poor. The collapse of the railroad bubble . . . has spread desolation over the land."71

The sudden crisis and subsequent recession caught Ben Grierson and John Walihan completely off guard. Instead of restricting business and credit, they overextended themselves. At the very moment that banks throughout the East announced the suspension of specie payments, Walihan was purchasing an overstock of merchandise in New York City. As the economic shock waves emanating from the panic spread to the Middle West, the Meredosia merchants' first concern became one of reducing their inventory. Not immediately aware of the seriousness of the recession, Grierson and Walihan reacted by selling their surplus goods "with too little care to 'Tom, Dick and Harry'" and largely on credit. By mid-winter it was obvious that money would remain tight during the foreseeable future. Meanwhile creditors must be satisfied, and in February, 1858, Ben reported being compelled to collect debts owed the firm in corn and pork.
Through a variety of expedients, Grierson and Walihan managed to remain solvent during 1858 and into 1859. Early in 1859 business seemed to revive, but John admonished his brother not to relax his vigilance. "The greatest danger," he cautioned, "will be in selling more goods than the Suckers can pay you for and thereby cramp you to make your payments & perhaps injure your credit." The two businessmen had long since learned the necessity of restricting credit, but their efforts to collect on outstanding debts inexorably generated an expansion of operations and compelled them to rely ever more heavily upon the grain and produce markets. In early summer, they purchased two hundred and fourteen acres of land at a cost of twenty-five hundred and fifty dollars. "We made the purchase," Ben admitted, "to secure a debt, & would not have done so if we could by any possible means get the money." Nevertheless, he remained confident that the firm would profit by the deal. More than a dozen teams were immediately set to work plowing up the ground and planting corn, while Grierson anxiously eyed the grain markets. Cutting was scheduled to commence shortly on wheat planted early in the spring, and they had contracted to receive nearly one thousand additional acres from creditors immediately after harvest. The Meredosia merchants were depending greatly upon good corn and wheat prices at St. Louis or Chicago to give their ailing firm a new lease on life.
In the spring of 1860, financial worries took a back seat as Ben once again threw himself headlong into the political arena. On May 9, the Republican State Convention met at Decatur, Illinois, where the party nominated Richard Yates of Jacksonville as its gubernatorial candidate and unanimously adopted a resolution instructing its delegation to the national convention "to use all honorable means to secure Lincoln's nomination" for President.77 One week later, a noisy Republican national convention assembled in the "Great Wigwam," which had been erected for the occasion on Chicago's Lake Street, and gratified the host delegation by designating Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, and Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, as the party's slate in the November elections.78

Ben Grierson witnessed at least a portion of the great Chicago spectacle79 and found it difficult to contain his excitement. "Hurrah! for Old Abe & Hamlin," he shouted. "With them we are bound to win." And, almost equally important, the campaign promised to be a rough-and-tumble one. If so, Grierson quickly discerned "Rather 'Smart chance' for fun, fun, fun."80

John Grierson confessed to sharing his brother's elation at Lincoln's victory at the Chicago convention and admitted himself to "jumping 18 ft. into the air" upon receipt of the news. But, at the same time, he was familiar with Ben's volatile temperament and well aware of the excesses to
which it might lead. "Benj.," he admonished at the outset, "you must 'watch and pray,' in your business in Meredosia or you will go under. . . . leave no stone unturned, to collect & pay off. . . . I feel it to be my duty to warn you to keep cool during the campaign. You are like me very exciteable [sic]--get into no fusses and spend no money you can avoid."\textsuperscript{81}

As John probably expected, his warning went unheeded. Already "the first gun for the campaign" had been discharged in Meredosia, and Ben's hand was among those pulling the lanyard. The opening Republican rally, on the evening of May 26th, found the younger Grierson making arrangements to obtain a speaker, as well as himself providing musical entertainment on the clarinet.\textsuperscript{82} Several days later, his voice roused an organizational gathering with an original composition assuring the faithful that "Freedom's Army is marshalling / All o'er this wide domain." The following morning, June 2, Ben departed for Jacksonville, where he planned to spend the weekend attending to business and, incidentally, participating in that community's "Republican convention & ratification meeting."\textsuperscript{83} Thus, within two weeks following the announcement of Lincoln's nomination, plans were well under way for the formation of a Republican club at Meredosia, with Ben Grierson again prominent in the vanguard of his party's local arm.

A unique feature of the 1860 campaign was the
"wide awake" organization. First conceived by Chicago Republicans as a phalanx of enthusiasts spearheading parades and rallies, the idea spread rapidly throughout the state until virtually every community had its own group of "wide-awakes." By election day, more than half a million men comprised the "wide-awake" movement in the northern states. 34

At the height of the campaign, the Chicago Democrat described a typical "wide-awake" procession. As darkness falls, its correspondent observed, one "hears the strains of martial music, and beholds a large body of men, bearing blazing torches, and marching in fine military order. Each man bears a thin rail, surmounted with a large swinging lamp and a small American flag, bearing the names Lincoln and Hamlin. The uniform of the privates is a black enamelled circular cape, quite full and of good length, and a glazed military fatigue cap, with a brass or silver eagle in front. Some companies are uniformed with blue, red, drab and silver gray caps and capes, and relieve the monotony of the darker uniforms. The captains and non-commissioned officers are distinguished by an Inverness over-coat, with black cape and undress military caps. In some companies the captain carries a red, the aids a tri-colored, and the lieutenants a blue or green lantern; in others, the captain merely carried a painted baton. The measured tread, steady front and unbroken lines speak of strict attention to drill and
the effective manner in which the various bodies are managed by their officers shows conclusively that men of military experience control their movements."  

In relatively short order, Ben Grierson and his colleagues, drawing upon the Chicago model, adopted a constitution designating their association "The Republican 'Wide-Awakes' of Meredosia" and "fully endorsing the Platform of Principles, enunciated by the Republican Convention." "The triumph of those principles and the election of our much esteemed fellow citizen Abraham Lincoln to the Office of President of the United States," they asserted, "will secure peace & Harmony, & restore this Government back [sic] to the principles laid down by the Framers of the Constitution." To this end, the Meredosia "Wide-Awakes" earnestly pledged "to use all honorable means for the success of the Republican party & the election of its candidates to office."  

Throughout the canvass, Grierson's political and musical talents remained totally devoted to achieving the goals enunciated in the preamble to the Constitution of the Meredosia "Wide-Awakes." Both as an individual, and through the local Republican organization, the old Frémont partisan did his utmost toward generating a degree of enthusiasm sufficient to overcome his party's immediate numerical disadvantage. Shortly after news reached Meredosia of the "Stumptail democracy of Baltimore['s]" selection of
Stephen A. Douglas as its presidential candidate, Ben, writing under the pseudonym "Sandburr," launched a newspaper attack ridiculing the activities of the Democratic faction in the small Illinois River community. And, as spring blossomed into summer, campaign songs--often sung or accompanied by the author himself--enlivened political rallies throughout the central section of the state. But, as in previous elections, sentiment in Meredosia continued overwhelmingly Democratic.

In midsummer, John Grierson threw himself into the Illinois presidential campaign. Leaving Memphis for a few months, he returned to Jacksonville and assumed an active role in that community's "Wide-Awake" organization. As the hometown of Republican gubernatorial candidate Richard Yates, Jacksonville proudly claimed an enthusiastic partisan phalanx, two or three hundred strong. All in all, John considered it far superior to his brother's organization in strength, activity and organization. "Talk about being Wide Awake," he boasted, "Why Jacksonville I fear is head & shoulders in advance of you."

Brotherly chiding continued through late summer. In early August, John announced his intention to attend the upcoming Springfield meeting, and expressed the "hope that the Meredosia Club will turn out to a man." "Make your number at least 50," he suggested--indicating the approximate strength of the Meredosia organization. "Of course," he
added sarcastically, "it will not be expected that you will turn out over one thousand Republicans from such a Loco Foco precinct as M.[eredosia]." But, nonetheless, Ben's club might at least "be better organized than on the trip to Beardstown" earlier in the summer.\textsuperscript{90}

Election day, November 6, brought the fraternal bickering to an end and gave both Ben and John cause for jubilation. Illinois presented Lincoln with a plurality of 1,200 votes; its contribution to a Republican majority of a quarter million votes over Douglas nationwide. Moreover, Dick Yates and the entire state ticket were carried into office on "Old Abe's" long coat-tails, each with a margin of 12,000 votes or more over his nearest rival.\textsuperscript{91}

Fortunately, the national and statewide returns more than compensated for a dismal Republican performance in the Sixth District. In spite of "Wide-Awake" exertions, the voters of Morgan county contributed eagerly to Democratic congressional candidate John A. McClernand's 5,000-vote victory; while in the district as a whole, nine out of ten contested legislative seats also went to Democrats. Even Yates proved unequal to the task of swinging his own county over to the Republican standard. And, as one student observes, "had it not been for resounding victories in northern Illinois, Yates would have been defeated."\textsuperscript{92}

Ben, of course, rejoiced in Lincoln's elevation to the Presidency and in the victory of the Republican state ticket,
but he seemed reluctant to discuss the outcome of his local efforts on the party's behalf. As late as January 1861, his brother was still curious about the result of the contest in Meredosia. In the absence of any first-hand information, John could only presume—no doubt correctly—that "the Locos beat you so badly you are ashamed of yourself."\(^{93}\)

As far as John Grierson was concerned, Lincoln's election represented the first knock of political and economic opportunity. Few were more keenly aware of the fact that with a turnover in national administration would come the inevitable distribution of lucrative federal patronage among the party faithful. In all probability, it was this expectation which lured him back to Jacksonville to participate, briefly but conspicuously, in the 1860 campaign. Late in September, the elder Grierson returned to Memphis where he anxiously watched for early signs of Republican victory. When the October elections in the crucial states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana clearly forecast success in the November showdown, the time seemed ripe for action.

John Grierson's objective was no less than the postmastership at Memphis, and he was determined to exploit his brother's political connections in an effort to secure the position. The obstacles, he admitted, were formidable: "There will be it is said 500 applications from the Bell
Faction for the Post Office here, and that he (I mean Lincoln) will be waited upon at his home (after Nov. 6th) by many of the applicants in person." It was essential, therefore, "to work while the iron is hot." "What is my interest is also yours," he reminded Ben, and it must be conceded that the younger Grierson enjoyed the simple advantage of physical proximity to the new dispensers of influence. It would be his task to "determine when that iron is in proper condition to be hammered [sic] into the desired form."^{94}

Ben evinced a noticeable reluctance at throwing himself, body and soul, into this new campaign. Cultivate the favor of Congressman Etherridge, he suggested; circulate a petition among the local businessmen. But John remained adamant. "My deliberate opinion is that the work must be done at your end of the rope," he replied. And once again he reminded his younger brother: "you must work hard in this matter as you are as deeply interested in it as myself."^{95}

Immediately upon receipt of the results of the November election, John pleaded with Ben to "see Yates . . . & any other influential Republicans you can and get them to leg for us . . . See the Old Rail Splitter himself if you deem it necessary." In fact, he mused, it might prove most effective "if you could get Yates to go with you to Lincoln and state the facts in the case, that I am 40 years old . . ."
have resided 7 years in Memphis, am a holder of Real Estate here . . . am competent . . . have a favorable acquaintance with a large circle of businessmen in the City, am poor and need it." 96 Actually, Yates did appear amenable to John Grierson's appointment, and Ben offered at least to present a letter to the President-elect, but the issue of the Memphis postmastership of necessity hung fire throughout the unsettled secession winter. 97

Then, in early February 1861, the incumbent, M. C. Galloway, secessionist editor of the Memphis Avalanche, tendered his resignation effective March 5. 98 With this critical change in circumstances, John at last resorted to the potentially dangerous expedient of circulating a petition—one in all probability drafted by his brother. 99 The elder Grierson realized that the deck was stacked solidly against him and even feared losing his "situation by the effort." Nevertheless, he concluded, "it is certainly worth the risk." 100

Whatever hope the Memphis Republican may have entertained of circulating his document in secret was short-lived. Almost immediately, he noticed that "there is the greatest excitement getting up in Town in consequence of my circulating a petition addressed to Abm. Lincoln." 101 On February 20, John's endorsement carried "some 25 prominent names," but already it was apparent that his efforts were doomed to failure. "No Secessionist will sign it," he sighed,
"and but few Union men, without some grumbling."\textsuperscript{102} When even his closest Unionist friends recoiled, pleading "John I will do you any favor I can consistant [sic] with my feelings but I cannot petition that \textbf{damned} Black Republican, Old Abe Lincoln,"\textsuperscript{103} Grierson simply had to throw up his hands and concede that "if I get the office it will be outside the influence of a petition."\textsuperscript{104}

Much of Ben's reluctance to involve himself in the matter of the Memphis postmastership stemmed from his own preoccupation with pressing financial matters. On the eve of the Chicago convention, the younger Grierson found himself compelled to request a loan. Creditors had instigated legal proceedings against Grierson & Walihan, forcing the Meredosia merchants to scramble to meet their obligations.\textsuperscript{105} From Memphis, John assured his brother that he would make a sincere effort to raise what cash he could, but warned that "the chances are largely against a probability of success."\textsuperscript{106} Business in east Tennessee remained at "a dead standstill," with money tight and interest rates as high as two per cent per month. The only glimmer of hope John could provide lay in a highly tentative and speculative prospect of selling a lot he owned in Memphis. If, by some stroke of good fortune, that prospect should be realized, he might be able to assist Grierson & Walihan with a loan of five hundred or one thousand dollars.\textsuperscript{107} Meanwhile, all he could offer was advice. "Make your face hard as steel," he suggested,
"and give the Suckers no peace untill [sic] they pay." 108
A request of John Kirk, unfortunately, provoked a similar response. "'Silver & gold I have none,'" Ben's father-in-law quoted, adding, "'my advice to you is ... Come to a dead halt, turn all your assets into cash, pay off your debts, & then keep out of debt, adopt the motto 'pay as you go.'" 109

What Ben Grierson and John Walihan desperately needed in the spring and summer of 1860 was cash, not advice. During the preceding three years, the firm of Grierson & Walihan had scarcely survived from one day to the next. Now, finally, the last expedient had been tested, and the day of reckoning was at hand. No amount of advice, however well intentioned, could possibly satisfy either creditors or a court of law. Without ready cash, the existence of Ben Grierson's mercantile venture could be measured in terms of weeks.

By early December the handwriting was clearly on the wall. Robert Grierson warned his eldest son that Grierson and Walihan could not forestall the end. John, as usual, quickly seized upon the maxim that "self preservation is the first law of nature." Don't forget, he reminded Ben, "that Father & I are jointly [involved] with you." 110 If the firm must close its doors, Ben's primary concern should be that of ensuring "that Father & myself are protected." 111

Ben Grierson and John Walihan spent the closing days
of 1860 involved in a sad effort to put their affairs in order. Appearing before the U.S. Circuit Court for the Southern District of Illinois, the partners surrendered all claim either held upon their respective homesteads, along with any real estate claimed by creditors. Proceeds from the sale of such property would be applied to the payment of outstanding debts, upon condition that all creditors involved in the suit agree to release the concern of Grierson & Walihan from all liabilities and future demands. With this legal action, the partnership formed in 1856 was formally dissolved. Both parties succeeded in meeting their obligations, but in the process "were virtually left without a dollar." 

Shortly thereafter, a despondent Ben Grierson moved his growing family back into his father's house in Jacksonville. Financially, he was even less secure than when he first set out to seek his fortune. Now, a thirty-four-year-old failure, Ben once again turned to music as a means of meager sustenance. "I have often wondered since," he sadly ruminated in his old age, "why I spent five years of my life in Meredosia."
NOTES - CHAPTER I


2 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 11.

3 Ibid., 12-13.


5 During the controversy surrounding the death of Charles II in 1685 and the subsequent efforts of James II to press his claim to the Scottish throne, the Laird of Lag "acquired a diabolical reputation which his subsequent existence of some fifty years did not outlive." Loyal to James, Grierson was a prominent member of the jury that sentenced three women--later known as the Wigtown Martyrs--to death by drowning for their refusal to abjure the Renwick abjuration and pledge their loyalty to the king. The historian John Burton characterizes Sir Robert and his fellow jurors as "men prepared to wreak their vengeance on their hated enemies as far as the law would permit them." The Laird of Lag's role in this affair alone earned him abiding notoriety as "a very Herod, according to the Covenanting traditions, among the persecutors of the faithful." Andrew Lang, A History of Scotland From the Roman Occupation, 4 vols., Reprint (New York: AMS Press, 1970), III, 385-88; John Hill Burton, The History of Scotland from Agricola's Invasion to the Revolution of 1688, 7 vols. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1867-70), VII, 546-49; James G. Leyburn, The Scotch-Irish: A Social History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), 102-107.

6 Leyburn, The Scotch-Irish, xv.
7 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 14-18. Ben Grierson, himself a firm believer in the right and ability of women to develop and exercise their innate talents, describes one of his female ancestors, Constantina Grierson, as "a celebrated classical scholar, and . . . also well versed in philosophy and the exact sciences. She published valuable editions of Tacitus and Terence,--and was the author of numerous poems. Before the completion of her eighteenth year she was perfect mistress of the Hebrew, Greek, Latin and French languages, and far advanced in the study of mathematics." Although Constantina died at a relatively young age, Ben found her short life remarkable, if only for "the fact that she rose to such extraordinary eminence entirely by the force of natural genius and uninterrupted application." Ibid., 17-18.

8 Ibid., 13; see also 18, 27, 30-31.


10 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 27. General Grierson was not the only member of the family to achieve a degree of notoriety in 19th-century America. Benjamin Henry's (of Dublin) daughter, Emily, married Joseph Shepard of London and on September 18, 1848, gave birth to a son, Benjamin Henry Jesse Francis Shepard. Six months later, the family emigrated to the United States and settled successively in Sangamon County, Illinois, Alton, St. Louis and, finally, Niagara Falls, New York. Ibid., 31-32; Grierson, Valley of Shadows, xviii-xix. Jesse Shepard served as a page on the staff of General Frémont during the opening days of the Civil War. In 1869, the twenty-one-year-old youth struck out on his own for Paris. Before long Jesse emerged as the musical sensation of the day. Those who attended his remarkable piano recitals described his unique style as one of "exquisite beauty, striking originality, and a spiritual fulness that induces emotions of distinctly religious character." Edwin Björkman, Harper's Weekly (February, 1914), as quoted in Ibid., xxiv. Performances throughout the major European capitals earned Shepard a solid reputation for musical genius.

During the 1880s, Jesse Shepard turned to literature. His first book, La Révolte Idéaliste was published in Paris in 1889 and won immediate acclaim among French academicians. Ten years later, Shepard decided to change his name to Grierson in order to avoid criticism of his literary works as simply the products of a mere musician. At the age of fifty, Francis Grierson produced his first work in English,
Modern Mysticism and Other Essays (1899). Other volumes of philosophical mysticism followed, the most important of which were his masterpiece The Valley of Shadows: Recollections of the Lincoln Country 1858-63 (1909), Illusions and Realities of the War (1918) and Abraham Lincoln, the Practical Mystic (1918). During the 1880s Ben Grierson, then serving in New Mexico and at Los Angeles, became a periodic visitor at his celebrated cousin's magnificent residence, Villa Montezuma, at San Diego, California. Francis Grierson was then at the peak of fame and fortune. He died in abject poverty on May 29, 1927. DAB, IV, 614-15; Grierson, Valley of Shadows, xvii-xl; Edmund Wilson, Patriotic Gore: Studies in the Literature of the American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962), 72-91.

11 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 32; Manuscript Family Record, Grierson Papers, Microfilm, Texas Tech University, Roll 11 states that "Robert Grierson was left an orphan at an early age."


16 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 39. For a map of Pittsburgh and vicinity, showing the location of Allegheny Town, see Donald E. Cook, Jr., "The Great Fire of Pittsburgh in 1845 or How a Great American City turned Disaster into Victory," The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine, LI (April 1968), 144.


20 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 50.

21 Errett, "Pittsburgh in 1829," 42.

22 Carrafiello and Curry, eds., "The Black City, 254.


24 Writers' Program (Work Projects Administration), Ohio (comp.), The Ohio Guide (New York: Oxford University Press, 1940), 340-42.


26 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 41.

27 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 41-44. Grierson brushes the incident off rather lightly by proclaiming that "the thought of danger never entered my head any more than it has since then at any other critical period of my life," Ibid., 44. It seems likely, however, that the incident did leave some lingering psychological scars. Daniel B. Cullinan, "General B. H. Grierson--Indian Fighter," Password, IV (October 1959), 155 goes so far as to insist that Grierson "hated horses from his youth." And certainly that misadventure seems to have passed through the Colonel's mind on at least one occasion, during the spring of 1875. After mounting his horse, which "had not been ridden for some days & consequently felt his oats," Grierson points out that "I kept my legs kind of glued fast to the side of the horse & saddle, expecting that he would shy or jump sideways." At the same time, however, Grierson's insistence that "he [the horse] & I are becoming right good friends" seem to dispel the notion that he "hated horses," B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 23, 1875, Grierson Papers, Roll 1. D. Alexander Brown, Grierson's Raid (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954), 23, probably only slightly overstates the case when he attributes to Grierson "a profound distrust
of horses," and William H. Leckie, *The Buffalo Soldiers: A Narrative of the Negro Cavalry in the West* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1967), 7 is probably closest to the truth in arguing that the colonel remained at least "skittish of horses." It should be noted, however, that if in fact Grierson was uneasy around horses, at no time did his phobia in any way manifest itself while he was in the field or was engaged in the performance of official duty. See, in particular, Grierson's account of a daring equestrian demonstration while carrying out a rather foolhardy practical joke in the summer of 1861. Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 86-89; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 16, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


29 Ibid., 52-53. This youthful delight in, and proficiency at, games never left Grierson and perhaps to some degree explains his success at playing hide-and-seek with an enemy. Patience, however, was never one of Grierson's long suits, and he was forced to confess that for that reason he could never become more than "an ordinary hand at the game of chess. I do not somehow feel as much interest in Chess as Drafts or Checkers. . . . Like Chess, however, the more I know of the game of Drafts, the more I see I have to learn & it is certainly a wonderful game. The greatest objection I have to Chess is that it is a very slow game & requires too much time & thought to become a proficient or expert . . . Life is too short for any one man to fully understand either of these remarkable games. The more a person knows about Chess or Checkers the more contempt they will have for all games of chance. Many other games however [like] Chess & Drafts are amusing & pleasant, but none so much require the exercise of thought & memory," B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson [August 28, 1876], Grierson Papers, Roll 1.


31 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 52; Fisk, "The Scotch-Irish in Ohio," 120.

of study in the high school and academy at Youngstown and passed an examination which would have entitled him to admission to West Point military academy, but he declined the appointment on account of the opposition of his mother."

Grierson, however, makes no mention of any such examination or appointment, either in his correspondence or in his autobiography. Both Cullinane, "General B. H. Grierson," 155 and Brown, Grierson's Raid, 24 state that Grierson qualified for, and declined, an appointment to the Military Academy. Both also assert that Grierson served only "a few weeks" with the Ohio Militia. No record of an application exists in RG 94, Applications for Appointment to West Point (1842-1847), M 688, National Archives.

33 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 55-58; Alice K. Grierson and Sara Joy Grierson, introduction to Alice K. Grierson, An Army Wife's Cookbook, Mary L. Williams, comp. and ed. (n.p.: Southwest Parks & Monuments, 1973). The matter of Grierson's religious affiliation, as well as that of the Kirk family, is a cloudy one. Formal religion does not appear to have exerted any strong influence in Ben Grierson's life, which may account for at least some of the qualms experienced by both John Kirk, and apparently by his daughter as well. See, for example, Alice Kirk to Mary Grierson, October 21, 1850, September 10, 1852, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. Alice's father was a long-time elder of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and throughout his long life remained a zealous advocate of "Christian Union." John Kirk "to the Bishops & Deacons of the Main Street Christian Church of Lexington Kentucky," May 30, 1885, John Kirk Letterbook, 404, Grierson Papers, Roll 19; J. Kirk to Iola Wight, January 24, 1886, Ibid., 489.

34 Alice Kirk to Mary Grierson, October 21, 1850; Alice Kirk to Mary Grierson, September 10, 1852, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 57-58.


38 Alice Kirk to Mary Grierson, July 1, 1852, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

39 Alice Kirk to Mary Grierson, October 21, 1850, Grierson Papers, Ibid.; Alice Kirk to Mary Grierson [Cincinnati], September 10, 1852, Ibid.


41 B. H. Grierson to Alice Kirk, May 29, 1854, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

42 Alice Kirk, unsigned note to unidentified person, no date, Ibid.

43 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 61; Alice Kirk, unsigned note to unidentified person, no date, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Marriage License, Benjamin H. Grierson and Alice Kirk, Canfield, Mahoning County, Ohio, September 21, 1854, Ibid.; Brown, Grierson's Raid, 24; Foreman, "General Benjamin Henry Grierson," 195; Alice K. Grierson and Sara Joy Grierson, introduction to Alice K. Grierson, An Army Wife's Cookbook. In January 1853, John Kirk wrote his future son-in-law, stating that "I regret I have so long neglected performing a duty that my conscience has often reminded me of;" and asking that Grierson "believe me to be ever and always your well wisher and friend." J. Kirk to B. H. Grierson, January 13, 1853, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. Unfortunately, the exact nature of "all the difficulties and dislikes" that occurred between the two men remains conjectural. Both Kirk and Grierson were reticent about the entire affair, and they, together with Alice, apparently burned all documents relating to the matter. See Ibid. The renewed friendship, however, endured, and Ben describes his father-in-law as "a noble-hearted man [who] regained his former friendship for me, which I have good reason to believe he retained in full force until the day of his death." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows, 61.

44 B. H. Grierson to J. Kirk, October 29, 1855, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. The Grierson's first child was born in Jacksonville on August 11, 1855. See Manuscript Family Record in Ibid., Roll 11.
John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, August 14, 1855, Ibid., Roll 3.

Alice K. Grierson to J. Kirk, October 29, 1855, Ibid.

John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, August 14, 1855, Ibid.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, October 23, 1855, Ibid.


B. H. Grierson to J. Kirk, Jacksonville, Ill., October 29, 1855, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. For a description of Meredesia and vicinity see Paul M. Angle, comp. & ed., Prairie State, 190.

B. H. Grierson to J. Kirk, October 29, 1855, Alice K. Grierson to J. Kirk, October 29 1855, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

J. Kirk to B. H. Grierson, December 31, 1855, Ibid. Alice was disconcerted by her father's grim prognostication. "Had I known your opinion of the Mercantile business as I do now," she replied, "I should have been unwilling for Ben to enter it. . . . I could have 'vetoed' the step, for Ben told me he would do just as I said about it." Alice K. Grierson to J. Kirk, January 11, 1856, Ibid.

Kirk to B. H. Grierson, February 8, 26, 1856, B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 2, 1856; John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, July 26, 1856, Ibid.

Alice K. Grierson to J. Kirk, January 11, 1856, Ibid.

John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, September 9, 1856, Ibid.

Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 52, 68; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 2, 1856, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


59 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 68.

60 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, October 14, 1856, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

61 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 69. Grierson's experience was hardly unique. As one scholar notes: "The campaign of 1856 remained, throughout, one which always bordered on the edge of violence. Former political friends, now turned political enemies, became the object of scorn. Treachery was a common charge and overshadowing all else as a test of political faith was the single issue of 'Nebraska.' 'Nebraska' had by then become a religion." Nortrup, "Richard Yates," 141.


63 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 68.

64 Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 153-80; Lusk, Politics and Politicians, 45-49.

65 Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 175.


68 Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln, I, 396-98; Lusk, Politics and Politicians, 43-45; Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 179.

69 Lusk, Politics and Politicians, 43; Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 179 observes that despite Lincoln's defeat in his bid to capture Douglas' Senate seat, the results in the 1858 Illinois congressional elections clearly indicate that "Illinois had at length become a Republican state." For the Griersons, the campaign closed on a tragic personal note.
On November 4, 1858, their second son, John Kirk Grierson, succumbed to "Lung fever" while visiting at his grandfather's home in Chicago. The death occurred just three days after the child's second birthday. Manuscript Family Record, Grierson Papers, Roll 11.


John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, February 25, 1858; Grierson Papers, Roll 3; see also, John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, March 11, 1858, in Ibid. It served as small satisfaction, but Grierson and Walihan's predicament was by no means unique. As Allan Nevins points out: "The chief western [commercial] centers . . . displayed . . . distress and ruin. Western merchants had made large purchases of goods on notes which they expected to pay when the crops went forward. This year [1857] the western grain crops were good and the quality high. Wheat was just pouring freely to market, when the panic forced a heavy contraction in rediscount operations and prevented any large remittances from New York, Philadelphia, and other seaboard centers on produce account. . . . Market quotations on grain and livestock dropped with a crash. . . . In many Mississippi Valley communities, money disappeared so completely that little business was done save by barter." Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln, I, 192.

John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, January 19, 1859, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 16, 1859, Ibid.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 29, 1859, Ibid.


Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 191-95; Lusk, Politics and Politicians, 100.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 29, 1860, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. Ben probably accompanied his wife on
a visit to her father's home in Chicago during the time that
the Republican Convention was in session. John Kirk was
serving as agent for the American Iron Works in that city.
Alice remained several weeks in Chicago, while her husband
returned to Meredosia on or about May 23. B. H. Grierson
to Alice K. Grierson, May 23, 29, June 1, 1860, J. Kirk to
B. H. Grierson, July 25, 1860, Ibid.

80 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 28, 1860,
Ibid.

81 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, May 28, 1860, Ibid.

82 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 29, 1860, Ibid.

83 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 1, 1860, Ibid.

84 Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 197-98.

85 Chicago Democrat, September 24, 1860, as quoted in
Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 197-98.

86 Preamble and Constitution of the Republican "Wide-
Awakes" of Meredosia, Illinois. Manuscript copy in Grierson's
handwriting in Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

87 See undated drafts in Grierson's handwriting, signed
"Sandburr," Ibid.

88 See B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 1, 6, 1860,
along with undated manuscript campaign songs: "Douglas' Record, or
Political Gymnastics," "The Republicans are Wide-Awake" and "Song of Jubilee," Ibid.

89 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, August 22, 1860, Ibid.

90 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, August 22, 1860, Ibid.

91 Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 200; Lusk, Politics
and Politicians, 101-102; Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln,
II, 312-13; [Springfield] Illinois State Register, January 12,
1861. Ben Grierson carried the news of Yates' election to
Jacksonville. "November 6, [1860]" Sam P. Thompson, E. L.
Ryland and Ben. J. Grierson, of Meredosia, came up on the
night train to proclaim Yates' election with music. The band,
followed by a crowd, went up to Yates & Berdan's office,
West State Street, upon the awning of which Mr. Yates appeared
and thanked his friends. As Yates stood uncovered the first
snow fell, touching his head with the silver which ten
successing years of public life thereafter made plentier."


93 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, January 6, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 70.

94 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, October 15, 1860, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


96 *Ibid*.


99 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, February 17, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

100 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, February 17, 18, 1861, *Ibid*.


102 *Ibid*.


105 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, June 22, 1860, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

106 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, May 31, 1860, Ibid.

107 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, May 31, June 15, 1860, Ibid.

108 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, June 22, 1860, Ibid.

109 J. Kirk to B. H. Grierson, July 25, 1860, Ibid.

110 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, December 10, 1860, Ibid.

111 John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, January 6, 1861, Ibid.

112 Undated agreement, "Grierson Walihan et al." attested in the Circuit Court of the United States, Southern District of Illinois, in Ibid.

113 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 66.

114 The Grierson's third child, Robert Kirk Grierson, was born at Meredosia, Illinois on December 2, 1860. Manuscript Family Record, Grierson Papers, Roll 11.

115 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 70.
CHAPTER II
"I am not a Volunteer"

April 14, 1861 was one of those peculiarly midwestern Sundays, when nature seems self-consciously suspended midway between winter and spring. It had been cloudy, with a chill intermittent drizzle, on Saturday, when news reached west-central Illinois of a southern attack upon the Federal garrison at Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor. But, before nightfall, the sun had breached the overcast, and Sunday morning churchgoers stepped forth into bright, crisp daylight.

An emotional chill settled over worshippers emerging from services about mid-day. Everywhere, men rushed from telegraph offices crying out the electrifying announcement: The flag had been struck! Surrounded by an overwhelming force, and after severe bombardment, Major Anderson had capitulated! For weeks this very possibility had formed the universal topic of parlor conversation, street-corner debate and barroom argument. But now that fanciful conjecture all too suddenly had become immediate, frightening reality, men stood silent in shock and disbelief.

Early telegraphic reports were frustratingly vague and often downright contradictory. Answers to the how and why of Fort Sumter's fall lingered in a speculative limbo.
What was certain was that the flag had been treacherously fired upon and ingloriously lowered. This insult to the sacred standard of national union cried out for redress.

Within hours the prairie became a virtual sea of red, white and blue. If the flag was down in South Carolina, it was defiantly raised in every loyal Illinois community. The symbol of national purpose seemed omnipresent. It floated from every spire and adorned every pulpit. As ministers thundered denunciations of the slave power, citizens rushed into the streets waving flags, draped them over balconies and porches, nailed them to posts and fences. Lawyers, editors and shopkeepers made certain that the flag figured prominently in window displays or that it fluttered conspicuously from above front doors. No locomotive departed a depot save with flags mounted on and about the engine. People fresh from church services were suddenly swept up in excited, milling crowds and carried along to impromptu rostrums, court-house steps and hotel balconies. The cool Sabbath air resounded with impassioned oratory and glowed with the enthusiasm generated by a people instantaneously united in one great purpose.

As night descended, the assembled masses slowly dispersed, hoarse politicians fell silent, and an uneasy hush blanketed the midwestern countryside. Dazed citizens locked doors, doused lamps, and retreated into the troubled privacy of their own thoughts. One question animated the
collective mind, North and South: "What will the President do?" By nightfall on Monday, April 15, that question was answered. President Lincoln was calling out 75,000 militia troops to "supress [unlawful] combinations and to cause the laws to be duly executed."  

Governor Richard Yates of Illinois responded immediately to the President's call. On April 15, he summoned a special session of the legislature to convene on April 23, 1861 for the purpose of providing for "the more perfect organization and equipment of the militia . . . and placing the same upon the best footing to render assistance to the General Government in preserving the Union . . . ; also, the raising of such money and other means as may be required to carry out the foregoing object."  

At the same time, the governor appealed to Gustave Koerner, Orville Browning, Lyman Trumbull and other prominent state Republicans to gather at Springfield and assist in drafting emergency legislation for mobilizing Illinois' human and physical resources.  

On April 16, Yates issued a call for volunteers to meet the War Department's request for six Illinois regiments. Illinoisians, outraged at Southern treachery and confident of a short and glorious war, responded to the governor's appeal in numbers that momentarily staggered state officials. Within ten days more than 10,000 men rushed to defend their
flag. Two hundred companies eagerly vied for places in the six regiments. In an effort to cope with the deluge of volunteers, the patriotic legislature authorized the enrollment of a number of men in excess of the request of the national government. Almost immediately, the first six regiments were mustered in as the First Brigade of Illinois Volunteers. Under provisions of the legislature, the remaining Illinois volunteers were organized into ten additional regiments and ordered into camp in their respective congressional districts, where they would be maintained at state expense for thirty days, if not first called into federal service.⁵

From the outset, Richard Yates determined that Illinois would play a decisive role in the approaching conflict. Certainly, it required no textbook knowledge of strategy to recognize the military importance of the Prairie State. With the Mississippi River as its western border, and with the Ohio River as its southeastern boundary, Illinois plainly resembled a giant Indian arrowhead aimed at the commercial heartland of the Confederacy. As Yates viewed the situation in late April 1861, he envisioned a two-pronged invasion of the Southern states. Officials in Washington, D.C. would direct operations in the East, while control of movements in the Western Theater would be exercised from the Governor's Office in Springfield, Illinois. To accomplish his grand objective, Yates urged Lincoln to
designate "a separate army of the West," consisting of some 20,000 men. This force, presumably composed of a predominant number of Illinois troops, should be well armed and concentrated in the vicinity of St. Louis. Meanwhile, federal troops must be dispatched immediately for Cairo, Illinois, "that point being considered the most important and commanding point of the West." With St. Louis and Cairo thus secure, the Army of the West could turn its attention to waging war on Missouri and Kentucky secessionists. In these early, confused days of the war, Richard Yates clearly saw his chance for glory. As one biographer boldly suggests, "he considered himself an equal partner in any arrangements made with the Lincoln administration." Within ten days after the President's call for volunteers, the Governor of Illinois addressed correspondence to Secretary of War Cameron from "General Hqrs., Office of Commander-in-Chief, Springfield, Ill." In Early May, he ordered his tailors to provide him with the uniform and accoutrements of a major-general commanding the army.

In retrospect, the governor's dreams of heroism and his condescending advice to the federal government seem patently absurd. Even while the Illinois chief executive strutted and preened, the Lincoln administration unobtrusively worked to circumscribe the valuting ambitions of Northern governors. And yet, Richard Yates' acumen, in at least one respect, could not be ignored safely. Even the most amateur
of armchair generals could perceive the strategic importance of Cairo, Illinois.

Situated at the junction of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, Cairo formed the point of the Illinois arrowhead. With this river port securely in Union hands, the federal government would control the main commercial artery to the South. Orders emanating from the War Department instructed Yates to occupy the city immediately. In response, the governor sent the state's unarmed, untrained Chicago regiment hurling southward along the Illinois Central Railroad. 10

Military occupation of Cairo was no mere tactical exercise. In April 1861, Richard Yates and his advisors confronted the very real possibility of secession within their own state. Immediately after Lincoln's election, the Cairo Gazette made it perfectly clear that "the statement that the inhabitants of Egypt are in favor of the perpetuation of the Union by force, is unauthorized. No such feeling exists. On the contrary, so far as our observations have extended the sympathies of our people are mainly with the South." 11 With the surrender of Fort Sumter, rumors of disaffection in southern Illinois became rampant. Upon his arrival at Springfield, Orville Browning learned that "a scheme had been set on foot, and about perfected by traitors in Southern Ill. in cofederacy with other traitors
in Missouri and Tennessee to seize Cairo--cut off all
the State South of the Ohio & Mississippi Railroad--erect it into a state and join the Southern confederacy."¹² The citizens of Pope county greeted Lincoln's call for volunteers with an open mass meeting which endorsed the right of secession. On April 15, a citizens' committee in Marion, Williamson County, Illinois adopted a resolution sympathizing with the Southern states and protesting the use of Illinois troops to coerce the Confederate government. By the last of May, a company had been recruited from Williamson and Jackson counties and had marched off to join the Confederate army. Powerful Democratic congressman, John A. Logan, supposedly endorsed and encouraged the secessionist sympathies of his southern Illinois constituents.¹³

Thoughts of controlling river commerce, of protecting Illinois from possible invasion, and of holding "Egypt" in the Union, therefore, all figured prominently in Richard Yates' immediate concern for the security of Cairo. In late April 1861, 1400 men held the river town. Ammunition and arms flowed south as fast as they could be secured. Mid-May saw the strength of the Cairo garrison grow to nearly 2,700 troops. Fifteen 6-pounder field pieces and one 12-pounder howitzer jutted menacingly from makeshift emplacements. Twelve miles to the north an infantry regiment straddled the city's landward lifeline, the Illinois Central
Railroad. To the northwest, one regiment at Alton and another at Caseyville, kept watchful eye on the precarious situation in Missouri. If necessary, all three regiments could converge on Cairo in a matter of hours.\(^{14}\)

Surprisingly, however, the Lincoln administration was slow to recognize the full importance of the city's strategic location. In particular, Yates received no authority to regulate river traffic. Consequently, throughout the opening days of the war, a virtually uninterrupted supply of foodstuffs and other vital materials continued to flow southward from Ohio River ports. On his own initiative, the Illinois governor instructed the commanding officer at Cairo to seize all munitions passing that point. But he hesitated to assume responsibility for barring all river trade. For the moment, he decided to content himself with calling the Secretary of War's immediate attention to the urgent necessity for such a course of action.\(^{15}\)

Meanwhile, confusion reigned supreme at the state capital. In addition to urgent problems in southern Illinois, the governor faced the enormous difficulties inherent in any attempt at organizing a citizen army for modern warfare. Yates openly complained that he "was greatly embarrassed by the number of volunteers which have assembled."\(^{16}\) And yet, it must be conceded that Richard Yates, politician, greatly enhanced the burdens of Richard Yates, wartime governor.
Popularly derided as the "cornstalks," the Illinois militia represented little more than an unarmed, undisciplined mob. The enthusiasm of Illinoisians' response to President Lincoln's proclamation hardly compensated for serious deficiencies in equipment, training and leadership. At best, the casual optimist could expect only that these thousands of patriotic citizens imbued with a frenzy to save the Union, when actually face-to-face with the enemy, might conceivably run well enough to save their own skins.

But there would be time later to worry about arms and drill. During the early days of the war, Governor Yates carefully pondered the political implications of an expanded military establishment. He had just waged a tough campaign to become the first Republican governor of Illinois. In the process, debts had been incurred and promises had been made. The candidate from Jacksonville had spoken loudly of his friendship with Lincoln and had pledged that if Lincoln were elected, he would exercise his influence in gaining positions for loyal supporters. Yates plainly recognized that patronage formed the solid bedrock of political power. To ensure future gains, county committeemen and precinct workers must receive their full share of the spoils of office. Against this background, Lincoln's request for volunteers suddenly transformed the rag-tail "cornstalk" militia into a pork-barrel of political reward.
Consequently, political considerations played a major role in Yates' decision to ask the legislature to authorize ten regiments in excess of the six regiments requested by the War Department. "To send these men home," he explained to Cameron, "would have a demoralizing effect." Failure to accept the additional volunteers not only might dampen the ardor of Illinois' patriotic citizens, but most certainly would disappoint hundreds of Republican politicians and faithful party workers seeking military commissions. Such action thus would deprive the governor of a most important source of political leverage. And this fountainhead of power Yates was determined to preserve at all cost.

Competition for positions in the new regiments was fierce. On May 2, Ulysses S. Grant informed his father from the Adjutant-General's Office in Springfield that he would not apply for a colonelcy. "All those places," he reported, "are wanted by politicians who are up to log-rolling, and I do not care to be under such persons." Four days later, Grant speculated that he might have obtained command of a regiment. "But," he continued, "I was perfectly sickened at the political wire-pulling for all these commissions, and would not engage in it." In the mad scramble for advancement and reward, a regular army officer found himself at a distinct disadvantage when opposed by a popular volunteer; especially if that volunteer also happened to be an adroit politician.
Out of this chaotic situation, an officer in the regular army, John Pope, inadvertently came to the aid of Ulysses S. Grant and Benjamin H. Grierson. The son of a prominent Illinois pioneer, nephew of a United States senator, a collateral descendant of George Washington, and related by marriage to the family of Mary Todd Lincoln, Captain Pope appeared to many politicians as Illinois' most promising military figure. An 1842 graduate of West Point, he had won the brevets of lieutenant and captain for gallant service in the Mexican War. Following the war, he had remained with the Topographical Engineers, earning promotion to captain in 1856. In April 1861, Captain Pope was on leave from Department Headquarters at St. Louis and serving as mustering officer at Camp Yates on the outskirts of Springfield. 21

It was not without reason, therefore, that Pope and Yates expected the officers of the ninety-day regiments, once mustered, to elevate the elegant captain to the rank of Brigadier-General commanding the First Brigade of Illinois Volunteers. Instead, on May 3, the volunteers selected Colonel Benjamin M. Prentiss, who had been in command of state forces at Cairo since April 22. The new brigadier was a forty-two-year-old native of Belleville, Virginia. At the age of seventeen, he had moved with his family to Marion County, Missouri. In 1841, Prentiss migrated to Quincy, Illinois, where he made his living as
a rope-maker, commission man, lawyer and office-seeker. As first lieutenant in the militia, he assisted in expelling the Mormons from Illinois. Several years later, he saw action as a captain during the Mexican War. Prentiss met defeat in his 1860 bid for a Republican congressional seat. With the outbreak of hostilities in the spring of 1861, however, his political fortune shifted, and he was elected colonel of the Tenth Regiment of Illinois Volunteers. Even in those passionate days, when flamboyant oratory became the common tool of farmer, editor, preacher, and politician alike, the colonel of the Tenth Illinois earned special notoriety by reason of his unusual "penchant for speech-making." In fact, one newspaper correspondent noticed "that cynics declared he always kept a particular stump in front of his tent for a rostrum." A popular and dynamic politician of the Prentiss variety posed a serious threat to any professional soldier, no matter how ambitious. Angry and humiliated, the defeated Pope stormed off to St. Louis.

Prentiss' elevation to the rank of brigadier general and Captain Pope's subsequent hasty departure created two vacancies which Governor Yates might fill at his discretion. It was imperative that a new mustering officer be designated, and, at the same time, a representative might be dispatched to General Prentiss' headquarters. The duties of mustering officer, although tedious, required the attention of
someone relatively familiar with military procedure. Koerner, Dubois, Washburne and the members of the governor's office staff had been constant in their promotion of Ulysses S. Grant. For several weeks, Yates had demonstrated a noticeable aloofness, treating the ex-captain from Galena in a most cavalier fashion. Then, on May 4, he unexpectedly appointed Grant commanding officer of Camp Yates.23

The decision to send an unofficial aide to communicate with General Prentiss, on the other hand, could be resolved solely upon the basis of political expediency. Initially, the services required of Yates' personal emissary would be neither arduous nor particularly complicated. His primary function would be that of providing a handy liaison between the governor and the brigadier general commanding Illinois forces. Only later did Yates recognize that, upon the muster of Illinois troops into federal service, such an officer might also serve as the governor's representative to the state regiments. The man selected to fill this position must be, above all else, utterly trustworthy and unswervingly loyal, both to the governor personally, as well as to the principles of the Republican party. Here, Yates discerned, was a perfect opportunity to reward a close friend and to repay a debt owed a faithful precinct worker. Accordingly, on or about May 6, the governor summoned his Jacksonville neighbor, Ben Grierson, to the
state capital.\textsuperscript{24}

Grierson professed no great dismay upon learning the electrifying news of April 14. Throughout the preceding winter, he had received from his brother in Memphis almost daily reports detailing the seriousness and growth of secessionist sentiment in the South. By the end of February, John and Ben Grierson spoke of civil war as a very real and imminent possibility.\textsuperscript{25}

And yet, Ben was not to be counted among the vanguard of patriotic citizens who rallied in defense of home and flag. In a typical outburst of enthusiasm, Morgan County presented the state with an initial enrollment of 1000 volunteers. But Ben Grierson held back. "I am not a volunteer," he insisted. "It would be hard for me to go and fight my Brothers in the South."\textsuperscript{26}

There were, however, deeper, more personal motives underlying the Jacksonville musician's reluctance to follow the drum and bugle that spring. Unquestionably, the winter of 1860/61 represented the nadir in what would become a long, productive life. The humiliation and hardship of business failure weighed heavily upon a sensitive soul. Five years of Ben's life seemed simply to have evaporated, leaving behind a residue of debt and ill-will. All his energies and resources were taxed in a desperate effort to satisfy persistent creditors. Finding a new start in life at the age of thirty-four, and burdened with a wife and children,
appeared to be a hopeless task. Early in the new year tragedy struck the Grierson household, casting a pall over an already depressing scene. On February 3, Mary Grierson, Ben's comrade and childhood confidant, died. Within weeks thereafter, serious illness threatened his mother's life. Finally, it is not at all surprising to learn that under extreme emotional pressure, Grierson turned to the bottle with increased frequency. In light of his abysmal financial situation, the necessity of providing for his family, and the precarious health of his mother, an initial reluctance to march off to war certainly appears in no way unusual. 27

Nevertheless, Yates' summons provoked an instantaneous response. On May 7, Ben Grierson arrived in Springfield, where he promptly called upon his friend the governor. There is no record of their interview, but Grierson apparently left the executive office after a brief visit, carrying dispatches for Benjamin Prentiss, along with that officer's commission as Brigadier-General of Illinois State Troops. By midnight, he was on a train travelling south.

It was eleven o'clock on the following evening when a weary Ben Grierson disembarked at Cairo. Despite the lateness of the hour, he proceeded immediately to General Prentiss' headquarters at the St. Charles Hotel. Learning that the general had retired, the courier decided to risk incurring displeasure and walked directly to Prentiss' room. There, he found the commanding officer fast asleep, awoke
him, presented his commission, and stood by while the new brigadier examined the governor's instructions. Any fears that Grierson may have entertained concerning the propriety of his actions were instantly dispelled. The Quincy office-seeker and the Jacksonville ward-heeler were, in fact, well acquainted. Their paths had crossed frequently during the hard-fought political campaigns of 1856 and 1860. And now Prentiss openly expressed his delight at the unexpected appearance of an old Republican comrade-in-arms. Why not remain in Cairo, the general asked? Certainly, serving as an official member of the brigade staff would in no way interfere with any unofficial plans the governor may have formulated to employ Grierson as a liaison between Springfield and Cairo. As inducement, Prentiss offered the nominal rank of lieutenant and promised to assist in obtaining a regular commission. Jacksonville's infantry company, as Ben well knew, already had been mustered into service with its full complement of officers and enlisted men. In any event, service as a staff officer appeared infinitely preferable to service in the ranks. Moreover, Prentiss hinted that his own further promotion was imminent. He could ensure that his aide's star would rise with his own. Before retiring, Grierson accepted the general's generous offer. 28

In the revealing light of day, the newly appointed
aide-de-camp might well have found cause to regret his hasty late-night decision. Gateway to the rich Mississippi Valley—in the spring of 1861 perhaps the most strategic point in the West—Cairo, Illinois afforded sparse comfort as a place of human habitation. In fact, the setting had not evolved greatly since 1842 when Charles Dickens painted its stark portrait:

At the junction of the two rivers, on ground so flat and low and marshy, that at certain seasons of the year it is inundated to the house-tops, lies a breeding-place of fever, ague, and death; . . . A dismal swamp, on which half-built houses rot away: cleared here and then, with rank unwholesome vegetation . . . ; the hateful Mississippi circling and eddying before it, and turning off upon its southern course, a shiny monster hideous to behold; a hotbed of disease, an ugly sepulchre, a grave uncheered by any gleam of promise: a place without any single quality, in earth or air or water, to commend it: such is this dismal Cairo.

Here was the baleful "Eden" of Martin Chuzzlewit; Cairo's solitary contribution to western civilization. 29

In May 1861 this "gorgeous hole" was the site of Camp Defiance, temporary home to more than 3,000 raw untrained recruits comprising the First Brigade of Illinois Volunteers. General Fremont called it "the most unhealthy post within my command." Levees protected the boot-shaped projection from the overflow of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. But behind the levees, the jet-black Illinois soil formed a marshy breeding ground for "every species of insect ahd
reptile known to science or imagination." Fever and
dysentery were nearly epidemic. Mosquitoes droned in-
cessantly, and vast hordes of rats brazenly defied military
occupation of their territory. Soldiers not prostrated by
disease, chafed at the oppressive heat and cursed the
ubiquitous mud. A Wisconsin soldier compared the quarters
at Cairo unfavorably with the pig pens on farms back home
and reported that on one occasion a pedestrian had become
mired so hopelessly in the mud, just yards from headquarters,
that he had to cry out for assistance. As a final touch,
a nauseating stench pervaded the atmosphere.30

Grierson pronounced the setting "disagreeable" and
admitted that "the City is muddy enough." But in general,
he appeared quite content in his new environment. General
Prentiss' definition of the duties required of a staff
officer was vague. For the moment, Ben was left to his own
devices, with ample leisure in which to assess his situation.
One of his new prerogatives, however, could be exploited
immediately. General Prentiss had mentioned distinctly
that the new member of his staff should appoint any clerks
that he might need. John Grierson had been compelled to flee
Memphis upon the announcement of Tennessee's decision to
join the Confederacy. Now he was back in Jacksonville and
unemployed. At Ben's request, General Prentiss agreed to
attach the elder Grierson to the Illinois Brigade as assistant
commissary. In addition, Ben promised to name his brother
chief clerk in the shipping department.

Then Ben turned his attention to his own financial concerns. Alice feared that her husband might not receive an adequate salary. Not only must she and the children be looked after during Ben's absence, but a sizable share of whatever he earned, she reminded, "will go to pay debts." Only recently a suit had been filed in federal court against the defunct partnership of Grierson & Walihan. Unfortunately, Ben could offer small reassurance. As a volunteer aide, he was not entitled to compensation for his services. General Prentiss reiterated solemn pledges to assist his staff officer in obtaining a commission. But until officially mustered into federal service, Ben could not even be certain of his rank, much less expect pay. In this uncomfortable extremity, Grierson turned to an old family friend, A. B. Safford. Safford, a prominent Cairo banker, generously overlooked the matter of security and agreed to advance money solely on the basis of a personal note. These meager funds provided the Grierson family in Jacksonville with room and board until the head of the household secured a commission.32

Ben also found time during these uncertain days to turn his thoughts inward and to reevaluate the pattern of his life. General Prentiss, he reassured his worried spouse, represented a constant and shining model of moral rectitude, against which he would endeavor to pattern his future
behavior. After a week spent in the general's company, Grierson voiced confidence that "I will be with not only a great but a good man--he is strictly temperate, never having even tasted a drop of wine, although he is not at present a professor of religion he told me that he firmly believed that should he remain in his present responsible position . . . for Sixty Days, that his own sense of justice & his ever present wish to do what is right under all circumstances would make him a Christian." Ben prayed, "God grant it may be so, & that the effect on me may be . . . beneficial." The new staff officer professed to see all about him "the evils of intemperance." For his part, he solemnly vowed, "I have tasted my past drop of intoxicating liquors & so help me God I will never drink . . . intoxicating liquors again." As a pledge of good faith, he revealed the location of his secret cache of potables.33

In response, Alice vented her long pent-up fears and concerns for her husband's well-being. "I have known & felt for years," she confessed, "that the men with whom you have been most intimately associated, had a bad influence over you, for they were not only intemperate in the use of liquors, tobacco, &c., but with two or three exceptions, they were men, not governed by religious [sic] principle." For this reason, she had welcomed the move from Neredosia, and feared the moral consequences of Ben's enlistment. In the army, far removed from the restraints of family
responsibilities, he might succumb to even worse influences than those exerted by his old cronies. "For the last fifteen months," she continued, "I have felt that I had no power to awaken your higher nature, but have had a faith that God would, in his own good time and way, place you in such circumstances, & under such influences that your moral nature would be aroused, and that you would be a changed man." Discovery of the demijohns of whiskey and brandy in Ben's room in Meredosia, of course, had been a severe shock and disappointment. But Alice expressed her willingness to forgive her husband's past transgressions. "Your pledge," she reminded him, "I consider sacred, not because you have made it to me, I should not have asked it, [but because] it is between you and your maker."34 Her only remaining concern was that Ben had erred in placing John in a position which would require that the two brothers work in close proximity. Drawing again upon the Meredosia experience, Mrs. Grierson voiced her opinion that "a clerkship for John, under you, would be neither harmonious, or agreeable to either of you."35

By the end of May, activity at Camp Defiance had settled into a dull, monotonous routine of drill and fortification. Rumors circulated freely, describing a force of 5,000 Confederates poised at Columbus, Kentucky ready, at a moment's notice, to march upon Cairo. General Prentiss' actions seemed to indicate a belief that such an
attack at least remained well within the realm of possibility. One thousand troops, mostly Germans, were dispatched to occupy Bird's Point, across the river on the Missouri shore, and construction was begun in earnest on the Cairo fortifications. Most enlisted men, however, took the repeated alarms in stride. One Illinois soldier expressed the general sentiment when he exclaimed: "I don't believe anything, only that Cairo is a damned mud hole."³⁷

Grierson, meanwhile, devoted much of his time to the textbooks of his new profession, familiarizing himself with the rudiments of both infantry drill and artillery tactics. That he might be called upon one day to lead horse soldiers into battle, apparently never occurred to the aspiring staff officer. In these first days of the war, his primary interests naturally centered upon those subjects which would assist in the immediate performance of the duties expected of the aide to an infantry commander. It was not long before Ben Grierson received his anxiously awaited opportunity to test his newly acquired knowledge.³⁸

Across the river from Cairo lay the "sacred" soil of Kentucky. That state's legislature, convening on January 17, had discovered sentiment split evenly between pro-northern and pro-southern factions, reflecting a similar division within the populace at large. The struggle between these antagonistic coalitions, continuing through three stormy sessions, clearly demonstrated the impossibility of forcefully withdrawing the state from the Union. Consequently,
Kentuckians invoking the spirit of Henry Clay, turned to compromise, and on May 20 Governor Magoffin proclaimed his state's neutrality. The Confederate government immediately responded with formal recognition of Kentucky's non-belligerent status. United States officials, meanwhile, evinced a willingness at least to respect the legislature's decision. Subsequently, however, the "dark and bloody ground" south of the Ohio River had become in reality the common recruiting ground of both Northern and Southern armies.39

In late May, reports reached Cairo indicating that a band of secessionists, numbering between 75 and 100 men, was operating in extreme western Kentucky. Travellers complained of frequent robberies and informed authorities that Unionists in the area ran a constant risk of search, seizure of property and whipping. As an added touch, many of those waylaid were forced to undergo the humiliating experience of having their heads half-shaven. Annoyed at this open display of disunionist sentiment, General Prentiss at length decided to dispatch an expedition with instructions to break up the guerrilla camp.

Under cover of darkness, on June 7, Ben Grierson joined two companies of infantry as they clambered aboard a rented steamboat. Once underway, the vessel proceeded to a point about eight miles below Camp Defiance. There the troops disembarked, advance and rear guards were formed,
flankers were posted to the right and left, and scouts fanned out to the front and sides. With all proper military precautions thus taken, the small force continued inland "the same as if a real invasion of the country had been contemplated." Surprised citizens encountered along the route of march were placed precipitously under arrest. Much time was consumed in surrounding houses, interrogating dazed inhabitants and posting guards. Finally, near day-break, on June 8 the Illinoisians approached the vicinity of Elliott's Mills, the reputed secessionist rendezvous. Camp-fires flickered in the distance and faint forms could be discerned moving about in the shadows. Two files cautiously moved out to the right and left of the main column, stealthily surrounding the rebel encampment. Nervous fingers cocked cold hammers, and anxious ears strained to distinguish the first sign of detection. Suddenly, without signal, the Union army of invasion poured from the woods in an impetuous charge upon the enemy campsite. For a brief moment both attacker and attacked reeled in stunned surprise. The anticipated band of desperadoes was nowhere in sight. In its stead, a vocal and very much frightened herd of hogs--presumably Confederate--fled in advance of the Union onslaught.

Once the initial confusion cleared, a rather perfunctory search was made of the immediate vicinity, but to no avail. Satisfied that the encampment's human occupants had scattered
toward Columbus, twelve miles down river, the troops returned to their transport and steamed back to Cairo. Grierson expressed disappointment that his first military action should have failed in achieving its objective—the capture of the ringleaders of the band of Kentucky terrorists. But, at the same time, he took considerable pride in the thoroughly professional manner with which the expedition had been conducted. "Although we failed to take the man we went after," he consoled himself, "we broke up their camp, & gave great strength & encouragement to the union men." As for the fierce assault upon the rebel swine, "that memorable encounter ... was omitted from the official report."²⁴⁰

Rumors of secessionist activity in eastern Kentucky persisted, however, and on June 12 Grierson accompanied a second excursion down the Mississippi. General Prentiss expressed concern over reports indicating that the Confederates had erected a battery commanding the river twenty miles south of Cairo, near Columbus. Other information suggested the advisability of also keeping a wary eye on the build-up of rebel forces in eastern Tennessee. As a precaution, Prentiss directed Colonel Richard J. "Uncle Dick" Oglesby to conduct a reconnaissance along the river to a point four miles below Columbus. His command would consist of portions of the 8th and 10th Regiments of Illinois Infantry—in all about 160 men—to be transported
on the City of Alton, a government steamer armed with one 6-pounder gun and one 12-pound howitzer. Oglesby also received strict instructions not to land on the Kentucky shore unless actively attacked.

The expedition embarked in a festive mood, firing a two-gun salute. About five miles down river, Colonel Oglesby assembled the men of his command and disclosed the purpose of their maneuver. At some point along their route, he confidently predicted, they could expect to meet and overcome enemy resistance. The troops, therefore, were ordered to load their weapons and to stand at the ready.

A ripple of excitement passed through the alert ranks as the Union vessel approached Columbus. Poised atop the high bluffs overlooking the Mississippi, the small village consisted of little more than a "straggling collection of brick blocks, frame houses, and whisky saloons." Its shabby facade, however, hardly deceived the nervous Illinoisians. The reputed existence of an enemy battery at that point was an item of general knowledge. Tension mounted, therefore, as Colonel Oglesby directed the transport's captain to hang close to the Missouri shore, blatantly taunting any rebel gunners that might be observing from the opposite bank. A single shot from a Confederate field piece would furnish the federal commander with an anxiously awaited excuse to disembark his force and clean out the secessionist enclave.
The sense of urgency on board the *City of Alton* perceptibly increased as Ben Grierson scanned the Kentucky bluffs through a field glass. In the distance, a rebel flag, bearing eight stars and three stripes, fluttered defiantly from a tall pole erected on the river bank. But, as the presence of the hostile boat provoked no immediate response, Oglesby was compelled to suppress his rage for the moment and to continue several miles down river in search of the rumored Confederate force.

When his reconnaissance of the shoreline below Columbus failed to reveal any sign of enemy activity, the colonel ordered Captain Barnes to swing his vessel about and to proceed back to Cairo; this time hugging the east bank of the Mississippi. Alerted to the passage of Union troops, a sizeable crowd had gathered along the levee in front of Columbus. As the *City of Alton* drew opposite the secessionist banner, Colonel Oglesby called out: "is there a Union man on shore within the sound of my voice . . . who will take down that flag?" When this order produced no response, the colonel resorted to threats. "If you don't take it down," he promised, "I'll have it shot down." Unimpressed, the crowd boldly dared the Yankee soldiers, answering the challenge with shouts of: "We'd like to see you try." An exasperated Oglesby directed Captain Hopkins to test the range of his guns and ascertain if he could shoot down the
offensive piece of bunting. He could, the captain replied, but only at the risk of destroying several civilian dwellings in the town. At this point, General Prentiss' aide leapt forward, requesting to be put ashore and allowed the honor of capturing the rebel standard. Sensitive to the general's explicit instructions not to set foot upon Kentucky soil unless fired upon, the Union commander denied Grierson's request. No one belonging to the command must leave the boat. A hurried conference between Colonel Oglesby, Colonel James D. Morgan and Grierson, however, quickly produced a scheme which would satisfy Union honor without explicitly violating orders. Assembling his command, Oglesby posted the infantry around the steamer's cabin. The deck guard, meanwhile, was drawn up in two ranks, facing the Kentucky shore. All stood with guns held at "ready."
Within a few minutes ship's machinery mysteriously "got out of order" and the vessel drifted ashore. As it approached land, Captain Barnes and two boatmen (all civilians and thus exempt from General Prentiss' order) jumped from the deck, raced up the river bank, hauled down the flag and then retreated post-haste to the steamer. Amid the jeers and curses of a squad of drunken civilians on shore, the boat's machinery suddenly returned to working order, and the City of Alton bore its triumphant passengers slowly up river.

At about 4 p.m., the lookout at Camp Defiance sighted
the approach of a vessel flying the Stars and Stripes, but with an inverted rebel flag floating in the breeze below. Instantaneously, an excited churning crowd of Illinois soldiers gathered along the landing, while the artillery boomed out an impromptu salute. As the City of Alton docked, Captain Barnes and Ben Grierson descended the gangplank carrying the first secessionist banner captured in Kentucky. The two officers, followed by their jubilant comrades, proceeded directly to the St. Charles Hotel, where the commanding general greeted them. The moment was one which no born politician could conscientiously resist. Accepting the captured standard, Prentiss draped it over his arm, climbed to the nearest balcony, and delivered a rousing oration. At the conclusion of the general's impassioned remarks, Colonel Oglesby retrieved the flag and directed Grierson to cut it up. The pieces were to be distributed to every officer and enlisted man who had participated in the Columbus expedition.42

Excitement in the Illinois encampment barely had abated the next morning, when the arrival of General George B. McClellan rekindled the martial ardor of the Cairo garrison. The squat, boyish general already was acclaimed as the man of the hour. His recent victories in western Virginia had placed him in the forefront of those competing for distinction as the "Coming Man." His mere presence captivated the raw Illinois recruits.
On the evening of June 13, General McClellan inspected the infantry at a grand review. For the occasion, General Prentiss extended his command in a line stretching a full mile. He then directed the troops through the drill manual, with Major Baldwin and Ben Grierson passing commands down to the ranks. The "Young Napoleon" expressed his pleasure at the display, and Grierson heartily reciprocated. "It was a grand time," he boasted, "'bully for us.'" The next morning, General Prentiss and his staff accompanied McClellan on an inspection tour of the brigade camps. During their absence, dispatches arrived at Cairo headquarters requesting the major-general's immediate presence at Springfield and St. Louis. Although there would be no time for formal leave-taking, Ben Grierson determined that the gallant soldier should not depart empty handed. Therefore, as a souvenir of his visit with the Illinois Brigade, McClellan carried with him the center star from the captured Kentucky banner, along with a strip of bunting indicating the width of the stripes.43

War was still a grand and glorious crusade, conducted in a picnic atmosphere. The two excursions which Grierson accompanied in early June were obviously of small military significance. But it would be a mistake to dismiss these, and other similar exercises, as mere light-hearted larks. Most of the three-month enlistments in the Illinois Brigade would expire in the latter part of July. Unless these
initial volunteers were induced to re-enlist for three years, Prentiss would see his small army evaporate at the very moment that Confederate troops appeared to be consolidating for a general movement against Union forces guarding the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi. The morale of the Cairo garrison, therefore, became a matter of grave concern. Monotony and boredom posed greater threats to federal security along the Mississippi in June 1861 than did the rumored rebel hordes assembling in Missouri and Tennessee. Prentiss' reconnaissance forays at least interrupted the tedium of camp duty and provided the enlisted men with some sense of their worth as real soldiers. They also served as valuable training exercises performed under field conditions. The excitement generated during the course of these short maneuvers hopefully would be translated into substantial re-enlistment figures. In this respect, the technique seemed to work. As one private exclaimed upon the return of Colonel Oglesby's flag-snatching expedition: "the ride on the river was the best treat I've had for two years." By mid-July, sixty out of one hundred men in his company had enrolled for an additional three-years' service.44

On occasion, the spirit of frivolity infected even the officer corps. One quiet Sunday afternoon in July, General Prentiss, Colonel Oglesby, Quartermaster Hatch, Ben Grierson and several officers from Colonel W.H.L. Wallace's
regiment rode out to scout the Missouri countryside behind Bird's Point. Three miles from camp, the party observed signs of recent rebel activity. Unalarmed, however, Prentiss decided to proceed a few more miles inland before beginning a leisurely return.

The ride back promised to be equally uneventful until a re-crossing of the enemy trail triggered an animated debate among some of the junior officers over the significance of the apparent secessionist activity. Here, General Prentiss discerned, was a choice opportunity for a little fun at the expense of his more intense companions. Summoning his aide, the general gave quiet instructions to ride on ahead while the remainder of the party was distracted. He should proceed about one half mile and then report back, informing the officers of the presence of a company of fifteen to twenty Confederate horsemen lying in ambush.

Grierson, never one to demur at the prospect of a good joke, determined to play his role with consummate theatrical gusto. Advancing the requisite distance, Prentiss' aide reeled his mount and dashed back to the company at a frenzied gallop, hurdling a fallen tree top in his path. As he reined up amidst the astonished group of federal officers, an ashen Ben Grierson warned in a trembling voice of an imminent attack by rebel irregulars. Upon his approach, he continued, four of the enemy had veered off to the left, while seven others had broken to the right.
The remaining horsemen held a position squarely blocking the road.

A hurried conference among the excited Union officers produced a firm and unanimous resolution to advance cautiously to the point where Grierson claimed that he had spotted the guerrillas. As they approached the scene of the alleged ambush, the aide disappeared into the woods flanking the road on the right. Colonel Oglesby (also a party to the prank), meanwhile, led several other officers off to the left. Two or three hundred yards into the timber, Grierson drew one of his revolvers and discharged its contents in rapid succession. Answering shots from General Prentiss quickly retrieved Colonel Oglesby's party. Several more sharp reports, this time from deeper in the underbrush, firmly convinced the alarmed group that the general's heroic aide was valiantly engaged with the entire guerrilla gang. "My God," Captain Hatch exclaimed, "they are murdering Ben Grierson, its an outrage to leave him there without help." But by now Prentiss realized that the joke had played out. A hasty confession, therefore, restrained the eager officers' precipitous dash to the rescue of their presumably beleaguered comrade. And, after a hearty laugh, the entire party returned to camp "in fine spirits." For several days thereafter, "Grierson's Retreat" was reenacted with much relish around the officers' mess. Upon reflection, however, the charade's star participant somewhat sheepishly
admitted that "such tricks would not do to be played off on Soldiers." "But," he rationalized, "our party were all officers." Moreover, up to the very moment the sham was exposed, all not privy to the joke had assumed the fight to be in earnest. Thus, it was a matter of considerable pride that "none showed the white feather." 45

Officers, no less than enlisted men, required morale boosters during the dull, hot early summer days of 1861. And, for Ben Grierson, the rollicking Sabbath prank neatly capped a week in which he already had received his first taste of local war-time notoriety. During a routine check of travellers moving southward through Cairo, he had unexpectedly apprehended a lieutenant and a sergeant, both of whom proved to have served with the secessionist forces at Camp Jackson, outside of St. Louis. Suddenly, he discovered that "Camp life is very exciting--always something going on." 46

The frolicksome atmosphere of spring, however, quickly evaporated in the sultry late-July heat. Daily five-hour drills "under a sun that cooks eggs in 13 minutes," and nightly alarms indicating enemy attacks upon either Cairo or Bird's Point, frayed the nerves of officers and enlisted men alike. It had been common knowledge since May that rebel forces were concentrating in western Tennessee and in extreme northern Arkansas, presumably with the intention of moving upon Cairo. Reports of Confederate troop strength
were greatly exaggerated, however, and information of enemy movements remained sketchy and generally unreliable. Rumors during the last week of July placed anywhere between 2,000 and 15,000 rebels within six to fifteen miles of Camp Defiance. On August 2, Colonel Oglesby confidently reported the presence of an enemy force totalling no less than 17,000 men just fifteen miles from Bird's Point. A cautious Benjamin Prentiss adopted a policy of treating all intelligence received at headquarters as reliable until proven false. As a result, his troops found little rest, while the general's aides wore themselves to a frazzle "galloping round as if tight." 47

In this environment of emotional uncertainty and physical discomfort, the Cairo garrison received the alarming news of General Irvin McDowell's disastrous rout at Bull Run on July 20. Coming at the very moment when the three-month enlistments were expiring, the blow fell like a sledgehammer. Gone were the few remaining hopes of a short and glorious war. "The Struggle," Ben Grierson sadly recognized, "will be long." But, like many other Northerners, he confidently predicted that "the final result is not changed, a more terrible doom awaits the traitors and Rebels." With McClellan's summons to take command of the Army of the Potomac, westerners now anxiously awaited the return of a familiar and heroic figure—the new
commander of the Department of the West, John C. Frémont.  

The already legendary "Pathfinder" arrived at his headquarters in St. Louis on the morning of July 25, 1861. The geographic limits of the Western Department sprawled from the eastern boundary of Illinois to include all the states and territories between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. Frémont assumed command of this vast region at a critical moment, with military movement pending all along a line stretching from extreme southwestern Missouri to western Tennessee. The fate of the entire Mississippi valley seemed to teeter in the balance.

During the spring of 1861, the struggle in Missouri had resolved itself into a contest between secessionist forces under Governor Claiborne Jackson and pro-Union forces under Francis P. Blair, Jr. On April 17, the governor refused to comply with President Lincoln's call for 75,000 state troops. "Your requisition," he insisted, "... is illegal, unconstitutional and revolutionary in its object, inhuman and diabolical, and cannot be complied with. Not one man," he assured the President, "will the state of Missouri furnish to carry on such an unholy crusade." That same day, Jackson called a special session of the legislature for May 2 to pass the necessary laws placing the state in a defensive posture. Prompt action on the part of Blair and Captain Nathaniel Lyon saved the federal arsenal at St. Louis, and dispersed the secessionist encampment at Camp Jackson.
On June 13, Lyon advanced upon the capital at Jefferson City, precipitating the flight of the pro-Confederate government. Four days later, he attacked and routed a militia force under Governor Jackson at Booneville, on the Missouri River, compelling the governor to flee southward.51

This militarily insignificant engagement dealt a stunning blow to the secessionist cause in Missouri. Lyon's campaign had been masterful. The disruption of Camp Jackson had effectively disarmed the state and had placed St. Louis securely in Union hands. With the capture of Jefferson City, the state government had been deprived of its capital, its prestige and much of its claim to legitimate authority. Finally, the defeat of the state militia at Booneville, and its subsequent retreat into southwest Missouri, extended federal control over most of the state, isolated the fertile pro-southern counties of northern and central Missouri, and transformed the strategic Missouri River into a federal highway.52

Throughout the remainder of June, however, recruits flocked to rebel encampments throughout Missouri and northern Arkansas. On July 5, Governor Jackson and Brigadier-General James S. Rains achieved a bloodless victory over Colonel Franz Sigel at Carthage, and drove him back toward Springfield. The following day, Jackson effected a junction with Generals Sterling Price and Ben McCulloch. Price
immediately assumed command of the Missouri forces and moved them to Cowskin Prairie, in the southwestern corner of the state. McCulloch, meanwhile, encamped near Maysville, Arkansas, some twelve miles distant. By mid-July, both Price and Lyon were frantically placing their commands in readiness to resume active operations.\textsuperscript{53}

Thus, when Frémont assumed command of the Department of the West, he immediately confronted a situation in which active hostilities were about to erupt in earnest. In southwestern Missouri, General Lyon held Springfield with a force of 8,000 men, including 2,000 militia. Despite his numerical strength, Lyon's position remained extremely precarious. The nearest railroad terminus lay at Rolla, one hundred and fifteen miles distant. Heavy rains, broken country and sketchy roads complicated federal logistics. When anticipated commissary stores failed to arrive, the Union army was forced to rely upon the countryside for subsistence. Summer downpours, however, prevented local farmers from threshing their wheat, and compelled Lyon to restrict bread rations. Sugar and coffee, meanwhile, virtually disappeared from the soldiers' diet. Large numbers went shoeless. Moreover, a substantial proportion of Lyon's troops were ninety-day men, whose enlistments would expire during the latter part of July. As reports of increasing rebel strength accumulated at Springfield, the size of the Union garrison slowly began to contract with the discharge
of three-month volunteers.54

At the same time, the real possibility of a coordinated rebel assault upon the vital junction of the Ohio and Mississippi diverted Fremont's attention from the grave danger threatening Lyon at Springfield. On July 13, General Leonidas Polk, a West Point graduate and Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church, arrived at Memphis and assumed command of Confederate Department No. 2, which embraced West Tennessee and Mississippi.55 Scarcely one week later, Governor Claiborne Jackson alighted at Polk's headquarters on his way to Richmond, bringing inflated reports of Confederate troop strength in Missouri. General Ben McCulloch, he reported, was encamped on the Arkansas state line with 6,000 Louisiana and Arkansas troops. General Sterling Price and 12,000 Missourians strained at the bit a scant twelve miles away. Meanwhile, rumors indicated that General William J. Hardee, commanding the District of Upper Arkansas, held about 7,000 fully equipped men at Pocahantas.56

Based upon the governor's misinformation, Polk optimistically formulated a plan for offensive operations. The combined forces of McCulloch and Price were to march immediately upon Lyon's position at Springfield. General Gideon J. Pillow would, at the same time, move his force of 6,000 Tennesseans into Missouri via New Madrid. There he would be joined by 3,000 Missourians. Polk hoped eventually to reinforce Pillow with two additional regiments,
thereby raising his total strength to 11,000 men.

From New Madrid, Pillow was expected to proceed northward toward Ironton, terminus of St. Louis' solitary railroad artery to the south. Along the way, he would be joined by Hardee's 7,000-man force moving up from Arkansas. The combined column would then advance upon St. Louis, cutting Lyon's line of communication and wedging him in a firm vise between two aggressive enemy armies. With the important river city securely in southern hands, Price and Hardee would seize all the boats at that point and continue up the Missouri River. Missourians, it was presumed, would swarm to the rebel banner, thus enabling the conquering Confederate generals safely to detach a large enough force to interrupt Lyon's anticipated eastward retreat. If these operations proved successful, Polk planned to launch an invasion from Missouri into Illinois, hoping to take Cairo from the rear.57

The ink had scarcely dried on Polk's grand strategic design when its utter impracticability became glaringly obvious; or at least so at Confederate headquarters in Memphis. Price and McCulloch, it soon was learned, had only one half the strength attributed to them.58 When these two generals requested Hardee's active co-operation, he declined, revealing yet another piece of misinformation. Instead of 7,000 troops at Pocahantas, Hardee reported a scant 2,300.59
In light of this revised intelligence, General Polk quickly reassessed his situation. A full-scale invasion of Missouri certainly would have to be delayed. Still, he urged the Secretary of War to authorize active operations in the western theater before the Federals recovered from their demoralizing defeat at Manassas. Meanwhile, General Pillow would seize and fortify New Madrid as a base for future operations in eastern Missouri. 60

Rumors of further Confederate advances along the Mississippi sparked immediate alarm in Missouri and Illinois. At Cairo, a frightened Benjamin M. Prentiss fired off a series of frantic pleas for assistance to his new department commander. On July 28, he reported the rebels concentrating at New Madrid. An assault upon either Bird's Point or Cape Girardeau appeared imminent. Colonel C. C. Marsh lacked artillery at the former place, and Prentiss claimed to hold only two 6-pounders ready to move at Cairo. "My command," he reminded Frémont, "is merging from three months' to three years' service on half recess. . . . Entire force at Cairo and Bird's Point 6,350." 61

Later that same day, Prentiss added to the department commander's anxiety for the safety of this strategic key to the Mississippi River. Three thousand rebels, he claimed, were operating just forty miles west of Bird's Point. A mere 300 enemy troops remained at New Madrid, but three fresh regiments were expected to reinforce that position
from Union City. Additional reinforcements were marching from Randolph and Corinth. This, Prentiss nervously calculated, would mean that "the number of organized rebels within 50 miles of me will exceed 12,000."62

On August 1, Frémont received yet another hurried telegram. One of Colonel Marsh's scouts had just returned from Pillow's camp, bringing with him a proclamation which warned that no quarter would be granted to Missourians found in arms against the Confederate "Army of Liberation." Furthermore, Prentiss informed his commander that the rebel general had been observed at New Madrid the previous day together with 11,000 disciplined and well-armed infantry, two regiments of sleek cavalry, and more than 100 pieces of artillery. Nine thousand additional men were marching to join him. According to captured documents, Pillow had promised Governor Jackson that he would place 20,000 Confederate soldiers in Missouri at once.63

Although by no means insensitive to General Lyon's lonely plight in distant southwestern Missouri, the harried new western commander elected to devote immediate personal attention to the situation in Illinois and eastern Missouri. Springfield, after all, hardly represented an inexpendable strategic point. Cairo, on the other hand, was of pressing concern both by reason of its physical proximity to department headquarters at St. Louis, and because of its vital role in safeguarding the Ohio and the Mississippi. If
reports of Pillow's strength were accurate, and if he could pass above Cairo and cut off Prentiss from the rear, the result might well prove fatal to the Union cause in the West. Frémont, therefore, concluded merely to secure Lyon's line of communication at the Rolla railhead, and to rush reinforcements to Prentiss at Cairo. 64

Within one week after his arrival at St. Louis, Frémont had chartered eight steamboats and had loaded them with soldiers, arms and supplies. At three o'clock on the afternoon of August 1, the federal flotilla steamed away from the wharves lining the Missouri shore, transporting 3,800 reinforcements to Camp Defiance, Illinois. So important was Cairo to Frémont's future plans, that the general personally directed the relief operation from the deck of the flagship of the flotilla, the City of Alton.

At 5 o'clock the following afternoon, the City of Alton turned into the Ohio, her 8-pounders signalling the arrival of anxiously awaited reinforcements. In an instant, the 32-pounders perched atop the embankments at Bird's Point and Cairo belched their reply. For half an hour, the Missouri and Kentucky shores trembled and reverberated with the rolling echoes of joyous artillery. As the City of Alton tied up along the Cairo waterfront, the levees suddenly became dark with lines of excited, cheering men. Military bands now competed with cannon for command of the air, while enthusiastic cries of "Hurrah for Frémont"
blended into the already deafening cacophony. The roar increased as Generals Prentiss and Frémont, arm-in-arm, descended the gangplank and proceeded up to the St. Charles Hotel.

Frémont discovered that his arrival had been propitiously timed. The Cairo garrison was small and diminishing daily. Not only was the expiration of the three-month enlistments producing gaps in the ranks, but fever, dysentery and a blazing sun were also taking a heavy toll. General Prentiss himself was only then recovering from a case of heat prostration. Upon the suggestion of Mrs. Frémont, who had accompanied the expedition, the department commander ordered the sick removed from the swampy low ground to the shaded and breeze-cooled decks of his steamers.65

The occasion was one which General Prentiss' volunteer aide would not soon forget. "As . . . one of those fanatics who voted for him [Frémont] in 1856," Ben Grierson had been anticipating General Frémont's visit for weeks.66 Now the excited staff officer listened as his first political hero approved General Prentiss' nomination of Colonel W. H. L. Wallace of the 11th Illinois Infantry to command the enlarged brigade at Bird's Point.67 The remainder of the St. Louis reinforcements would form a second brigade. This, in effect, would make Prentiss a division commander, and would entitle Grierson, as his aide-de-camp, to the rank of major.
During the course of the interview, Frémont also detailed his strategic design for the western theater. In simple terms, the department commander explained that he proposed to clear all rebel forces from Missouri and then to commence a grand descent down the Mississippi River to Memphis. Both Prentiss and Grierson were left with the unmistakeable impression that the commandant of the Cairo garrison would be the ultimate choice to lead the general advance southward.

At the conclusion of this highly satisfying discussion, General Prentiss finally turned to introduce his staff to the major-general and his vibrant wife. Jessie Benton Frémont impressed the general's discerning aide as "a robust, good-natured, fine looking woman," whom he judged "to be possessed of a considerable amount of good common sense." But still, it was the gallant "Pathfinder" who charged Ben Grierson's soul with romantic enthusiasm. As he clasped the hand of the erstwhile presidential candidate, the veteran precinct worker "could not help but think of the stirring times during the Presidential Campaign of 1856, in which I felt so much interest. . . ."68

Frémont returned to St. Louis on August 4, convinced that the key to the Mississippi rested secure in Union hands. Reinforcements, and personal pledges of confidence and continued support, he was certain, had restored the strength and bolstered the morale of the Cairo garrison. Moreover,
news of his swift movement to relieve the purportedly beleaguered Illinoisians appeared to have had its desired effect upon Gideon Pillow and his self-proclaimed "Army of Liberation." Quick Federal reflexes in early August, Frémont boasted, had compelled the Confederate commander at New Madrid to abandon "his proposed attack, and gave time to put it [Cairo] effectually beyond the reach of the enemy, and eventually to secure a firm hold on the whole of that important district." 69

General Pillow had a slightly different assessment of the situation on his front. Impressed with expressions of pro-southern sentiment at New Madrid, he continued to clamor for an immediate advance upon Ironton. Hardee, accordingly, moved his headquarters to Pittman's Ferry and sent the vanguard of his column as far north as Greenville. But, unbeknown to Frémont, the Arkansas commander then advised Pillow to suspend active operations until he could concentrate and equip his entire effective force of 4,000 men. Thus frustrated in his efforts to obtain the co-operation or the reinforcements required for an advance into the interior of Missouri, Pillow threatened to mount an offensive against either Cape Girardeau or Bird's Point. Meanwhile, small but annoyingly frequent forays by irregular troops of the Missouri State Guard, under the flamboyant M. Jeff Thompson, kept Federal nerves taut along the western shore of the Mississippi above New Madrid. 70
Before long, even Frémont's overweening confidence began to waver. Within two days of his return from Cairo, reports reached St. Louis describing Price and McCulloch's continued advance upon Springfield. And yet, the rebel threat in the southeastern section of the state continued uppermost in the Federal commander's thoughts. When Colonel C. C. Marsh frantically notified headquarters of an attack upon his position at Cape Girardeau by an estimated 5,000 Confederates, Frémont did not trouble to check the veracity of the colonel's information. What reinforcements were available at St. Louis were dispatched immediately to Cape Girardeau and Bird's Point.\footnote{71} The department commander completed defensive measures in that sector on August 8, when he ordered Brigadier-General Ulysses S. Grant to proceed with his regiment, the 21st Illinois, to Pilot Knob at the terminus of the Iron Mountain Railroad.\footnote{72} Upon relieving Colonel B. Gratz Brown of command of the forces stationed in the Pilot Knob-Ironton area, Grant was instructed to entrench his position "with all possible rapidity." While fortifications were under construction, he would "scour the country" in his front, keeping a watchful eye upon General Hardee's activities at Greenville, some forty miles distant. Equally important, the troops at Ironton must be placed in readiness to move at a moment's notice, either forward or, "in the event of an attack by a greatly superior force," presumably to fall back toward St. Louis.\footnote{73}
Grant's initial report, indicating no sign of any active rebel force within thirty miles of Pilot Knob, apparently reassured Frémont. When General Prentiss and Ben Grierson arrived at St. Louis on August 12, en route to Quincy, they found the department commander's attention focused upon affairs in northern Missouri. Although no names were mentioned, Frémont clearly indicated his dissatisfaction with the desultory efforts of Generals Pope and Stephen A. Hurlbut to curb widespread guerrilla activity in that district. Then, turning to Prentiss, the major-general assured the Illinois brigadier that he retained the full confidence of his immediate superiors, Governor Yates as well as Frémont. As soon as the Union position was consolidated in southeastern Missouri, he reiterated, Prentiss would command the anxiously anticipated forward movement along the Mississippi.74

Once again, the Pathfinder's relative equanimity proved fleeting. Frayed nerves at department headquarters seemed to short-circuit momentarily on August 13. On that day, a distraught courier unexpectedly arrived in St. Louis from the west. Federal troops, he informed the general commanding, had collided with a Confederate army under Price and McCulloch at Wilson's Creek. After severe losses on both sides, Colonel Franz Sigel had withdrawn the battered Union garrison from Springfield to Rolla. The indefatigable Lyon was no more.75
This highly unsettling intelligence scarcely had been digested when a message arrived from General Grant. Three thousand mounted, but poorly armed, Confederates appeared to be moving toward Farmington with the presumed intention of cutting the railroad. At the same time, Hardee was reportedly advancing directly upon Ironton with 5,000 disciplined and fully equipped troops. The commandant at Pilot Knob, however, voiced no undue alarm. "I express you the facts," he calmly explained, "and leave it to the general commanding whether . . . more troops should not be sent."76

This remarkably unemotional report, arriving fast upon the heels of the shattering news of Federal rout in the west, was completely misinterpreted in the chaotic atmosphere prevailing at department headquarters. On the fourteenth, a frantic telegram shot out to the White House: "General Grant . . . attacked yesterday by a force reported at 13,000. Railroad seized by the enemy at Big River Bridge on this side of Ironton."77 Consequently, more troops and arms were urgently needed in Missouri.

When Prentiss and his aide stepped ashore at Quincy, the general was greeted with a dispatch directing him to return immediately to St. Louis, where he would receive further verbal and written instructions. Prentiss, Frémont explained, would assemble four regiments of his command and proceed at once to Pilot Knob. Upon assuming command of
Union forces in that sector, he was ordered to complete fortifications along the Iron Mountain Railroad and to secure the line between Ironton and St. Louis. Once that task had been accomplished, Prentiss was expected to assume an offensive posture, seizing Fredricktown and Centreville, opening communications with St. Genevieve and Cape Girardeau, throwing out scouts toward Hardee's position at Greenville.78

Much of Ben Grierson's initial excitement at the prospect of active field operations was quickly subsumed in the petty concerns of rank. Most immediate, of course, was the impecunious staff officer's as yet fruitless quest after the maple leaf clusters presumably befitting the aide to a division commander. But this matter of personally pressing import was overshadowed by an unexpected, and briefly acrimonious, dispute over seniority between Generals Prentiss and Grant, which first erupted at Ironton.

In assigning Prentiss to Ironton, Frémont apparently assumed that the Cairo commandant was senior in rank to the former commanding officer of the 21st Illinois. Both Prentiss and Grant bore identical commissions as general officers dating back to May 17, 1861.79 Prentiss, however, had assumed the duties of a brigadier-general of Illinois state troops on May 7, at which time Grant was still a lowly civilian clerk in the Illinois Adjutant-General's Office. Headquarters, therefore, seems to have based its presumption of Prentiss' seniority upon the argument that
he had actually exercised the prerogatives of a brigadier-general prior to Grant. Overlooked at St. Louis—but not by Grant—was an army regulation which stipulated that in cases where two officers whose commissions bore the same date were brought together, seniority must depend upon "former rank and service in the army." Although Prentiss had retired to civilian life after the Mexican War as a captain of volunteers, Grant had left the army as a captain of regulars. Therefore, according to statute, Grant ranked Prentiss.

The commanding officer at Ironton was keenly aware of the embarrassing position in which Frémont's action placed him. Prentiss' orders to assume command of the district in no way implied that Grant was relieved, but the law afforded no alternative. "I knew . . . that I was senior," he later wrote, "and at that time even the President did not have the authority to assign a junior to command of a senior of the same grade." But when Prentiss stepped from the train early on the morning of August 17, Grant was automatically deprived of his command. After explaining the disposition of troops in the vicinity of Pilot Knob, along with movements already in progress, Ulysses S. Grant, accompanied by Colonel John Thayer, boarded a lonely midnight train for St. Louis.

Benjamin Prentiss, relying heavily upon the work thus far so efficiently advanced under Grant, energetically
prepared to seize the offensive in southeastern Missouri. Two infantry regiments already occupied Ironton, with another two regiments thrown forward to the right and left of the railroad terminus. Prentiss swiftly augmented this force with three additional regiments of infantry and one of cavalry. Buell's battery of six 6-pounders soon arrived to provide increased artillery support. Meanwhile, on August 22, the new Federal commander directed his aide-de-camp, "Major" Grierson, to undertake a quick inspection tour of the string of outposts guarding the railroad, in an effort to determine which detachments might safely be removed and concentrated in the immediate vicinity of Ironton. As soon as the defenses of the Iron Mountain Railroad were judged secure, and troop concentration satisfactorily achieved, Prentiss proposed a bold advance upon the Confederate encampment at Greenville.83

Grierson had barely completed his survey of Grant's dispositions behind Ironton, when an urgent dispatch from department headquarters neatly scuttled the projected Greenville offensive. Fremont had learned that 4,000 Confederate troops were hastily entrenching at Benton, just twenty miles southwest of Cape Girardeau. Ten miles northeast of Benton another rebel force, numbering close to 1,500, was reported encamped along the Mississippi, near Commerce. To relieve the threat along the river, the department commander envisioned a two-pronged advance
upon Benton. Prentiss would move from the northwest via Dallas and Jackson, while a reinforced Colonel Morgan L. Smith descended upon the rebels from Cape Girardeau. Upon forming a junction with Smith, Prentiss was instructed to communicate with Colonel W. H. L. Wallace at Bird's Point. Wallace would then move immediately upon Charleston with the intention of interrupting the enemy's line of retreat to the south. In the meantime, Frémont promised to replace the garrison at Ironton with two regiments from St. Louis. Moreover, two regiments and a battery would be added to Colonel Smith's command at Cape Girardeau; "all," Prentiss was assured, "to be united under your command." \(^{84}\)

Once again, the Pathfinder's strategic imagination proved as grandly ambitious as the information sparking it was wondrously inaccurate. Generals Pillow and M. Jeff Thompson had indeed reached a now-or-never position on the question of a general advance in southeastern Missouri. But, at the same time, both Confederate commanders fully realized that the success of so bold a movement was entirely dependent upon the active co-operation of General Hardee, then still encamped at Greenville. On the very day that Frémont's instructions for counter-offensive operations reached General Prentiss' headquarters, the usually ebullient Pillow was compelled to admit that there would be no assistance forthcoming from the commander of the District of Upper Arkansas, who still complained of serious
deficiencies in transportation and subsistence. Unassured of Hardee's support on the left flank, even the brash Thompson was beginning to feel embarrassingly naked in his exposed position at Camp Benton. At one o'clock on the morning of August 25, the colorful "Swamp Fox of the Confederacy" fired off a blunt communique to his immediate superior. "I certainly do not intend to keep my men in this dangerous position any longer, when I know there is no occasion for it," he informed Hardee. "We never had any business this side of the swamps," Thompson continued. "If not allowed to take Cape Girardeau, to obtain supplies, and then fall back on your line, I must go to you at once, for I may be cut to pieces here any night."  

Apprised of the chaotic situation along the west bank of the Mississippi, Major General Polk, on August 26, ordered the suspension of offensive operations in southeastern Missouri. A request by General Hardee to fall back upon his base at Pittman's Landing was granted. Meanwhile, Pillow was instructed to concentrate his forces, augmented by Thompson's 4,000-man Missouri State Guard, in the vicinity of New Madrid, Island No. 10 and Union City. Within two days, the plucky, if not always adroit, Confederate general was immersed in the supervision of fortifications at New Madrid. Cairo was already a long-faded dream, and General Pillow now pestered his department commander with verbose plans for the occupation of Columbus,
in neutral Kentucky. Thus, at the very moment when Benjamin Prentiss prepared to implement the defensive maneuvers designed by his alarmed superior in St. Louis, the Confederate threat in southeastern Missouri was fast evaporating.

General Prentiss' departure from Ironton on the morning of August 27 was cloaked in the same official silence which he had resolutely maintained since assuming command of the Pilot Knob area ten days previous. Only later in the day would department headquarters learn of his movement from a somewhat bewildered Colonel P. E. Bland. In complying with Frémont's instructions, Prentiss had stripped the Union garrison along the Iron Mountain Railroad, leaving behind only the 1st Nebraska—Colonel Bland's regiment—and Grant's old command, the 21st Illinois. The march was conducted at a fairly lively pace for raw troops, as the Federal column covered the approximately sixty miles between Ironton and Jackson, via Dallas, in five days. With his commanding officer's permission, Ben Grierson rode in the advance, accompanying a detachment of the 2nd Illinois Cavalry under Lieutenant James K. Catlin. But even in this exposed position, the monotony of an uneventful march soon began to wear upon General Prentiss' high-strung aide. It was with considerable glee, therefore, that Grierson, Catlin, and eight enlisted men one afternoon looked down from the brow of a hill, some three thousand yards in front of the main
column. On the lower slope, the tiny Federal advance observed a contingent of forty or more rebels obviously engaged in a leisurely scout of the countryside and totally oblivious to the proximity of a large Union force. For Grierson and his companions, the opportunity for excitement suddenly seemed irresistible and, motioning to imaginary reserves, the brash Yankee horsemen precipitously descended upon the astonished enemy. In the wake of the fleeing Confederates, the federals reined up in front of a house reportedly belonging to a member of the secessionist Missouri legislature. Inside, Grierson and Catlin discovered that the occupants of the domicile had apparently also beat a hasty retreat before the awesome Union cavalry charge, leaving their unfinished meal still warm on the table. A second detachment of blue-coated horsemen, halting at the ex-legislator's house, thus found their comrades lustily consuming a mid-day repast. The two subalterns' dashing military maneuver, however, had not escaped the attention of the commanding general, and a sharp rebuke for a rash and foolhardy act quickly brought the chastened advance squad back to the main column. Upon reflection, a recalcitrant Ben Grierson readily admitted the impropriety of his actions. "Prentiss had good reason to be annoyed at us," he confessed, "as he had information to the effect that the enemy intended to make a stand at or near Dougherty's plantation, and the approach, under the
circumstances, should have been more cautious, but," he impishly added, "when we observed the panic-stricken rebels we could not resist the fun of making a dash at them." 92

Once in Jackson, General Prentiss' petty annoyance with his aide quickly faded with the renewal of his old controversy with General Grant over the question of seniority. Unbeknown to Prentiss, Frémont had unexpectedly summoned Grant to department headquarters on August 28. The next day, the former commander of the 21st Illinois left St. Louis for Cape Girardeau, bearing instructions almost identical to those sent to Prentiss just three days previous. The new orders, however, plainly reflected two important changes in the Pathfinder's strategic design. Now, Frémont openly declared the ultimate objective of the Federal advance into southeastern Missouri to be no less than the eventual occupation of Columbus, Kentucky, thereby violating that state's shaky neutrality. Moreover, Ulysses S. Grant—not Benjamin M. Prentiss—would exercise overall command of the "combined forward movement" across and down the Mississippi. 93

The precise motives prompting Frémont's preemptive action remain unclear. It has been argued that the western commander had sufficient reason to doubt the Illinois politician's military ability; that he had become greatly annoyed at Prentiss' reluctance to communicate with department headquarters; or, that he simply desired a more seasoned officer in charge of the suddenly expanded operation
in the southeast. Admittedly, any or all of these factors might well have justified the decision to replace Prentiss with Grant. And yet, as at least one historian ventures to suggest, the ultimate explanation may also be the most simple and obvious. In fact, Frémont himself quite openly and honestly attempted to explain the situation to General Prentiss. "When you were ordered to go to Ironton and take the place of General Grant," the department commander wrote, "... it was under the impression that his appointment was at a later date than your own." But, he frankly admitted, "By the official list published it appears ... that he [Grant] is your senior in rank." Therefore, as Frémont clearly implies, he was belatedly attempting to rectify a regrettable error by restoring Grant to his proper command.

Unfortunately, General Frémont's dispatch announcing the change in commanders, and explaining his reasons therefore, apparently never reached General Prentiss. Consequently, it was with considerable surprise, and not a little anger, that Prentiss rode into Jackson, Missouri on September 1, only to discover that Colonel C. C. Marsh, who had been sent forward to effect a junction with the Ironton column, declined to obey orders on the ground that he already had his instructions from General Grant. Upon receipt of this unsettling piece of information, the general immediately dashed off to the Cape, where he encountered
an equally startled U. S. Grant. In the interim, the anxiously awaited news of the approach of the Ironon garrison had reached district headquarters, whereupon Grant had mounted his horse with the intention of intercepting the column and personally delivering instructions to General Prentiss. To his astonishment, however, he had barely proceeded more than one block westward, when he suddenly confronted his much agitated fellow officer. "As I turned the first corner," the Cape Girardeau commander later recalled, "I saw a column of cavalry passing the next street in front of me. I turned and rode around the block the other way, so as to meet the head of the column. I found there General Prentiss himself, with a large escort. He had halted his troops at Jackson for the night, and had come on himself to Cape Girardeau, leaving orders for his command to follow him in the morning. I gave the General his orders—which stopped him at Jackson—but he was very much aggrieved at being placed under another brigadier-general, particularly as he believed himself to be the senior."97

Caught off guard, Prentiss at first agreed to obey an order from Grant, which directed him to move his command to Sikeston "as soon as possible."98 But that evening it was Grant's turn to be taken aback, as Prentiss began to entertain second thoughts about serving under an officer whom he believed to be at least his equal, and perhaps even his
junior, in rank. It was at this point that Benjamin Grierson stepped onto the stage of the unfolding drama, cast in the unenviable role of the only witness to an uncharacteristically violent confrontation involving a bombastic political general and the future commander of the armies of the United States. Although Grierson obviously believed his immediate superior to be fully justified in his claims, he nevertheless professed to recognize that Prentiss was "laboring under great excitement," and therefore deemed it advisable to accompany the general to Grant's headquarters, in order "to prevent any serious collision between himself and General Grant." However, not even Prentiss' nervous aide-de-camp was fully prepared for the vehemence with which the two generals argued their respective positions. Consequently, when Grant motioned away a member of his own staff attracted by the loud voices emanating from the district commander's office, Grierson seized the opportunity to request that he also be granted permission to withdraw. Much to his surprise, Grant refused and insisted that Prentiss' aide remain in the room until the interview was concluded. The situation was decidedly uncomfortable, but Grierson would later recall, with little false modesty, that "although my position was, under the circumstances, an embarrassing one, I believe my coolness and presence of mind was a fortunate thing for all parties immediately concerned, as well as for the cause in which we all felt so
deep an interest."¹⁰⁰

Prentiss launched the verbal assault with a demand that he be granted a three days' leave of absence in which to lay his case personally before General Frémont. When this request was denied, the general proposed to join Grant in presenting their respective claims, in writing, to the department commander for a final decision. This Grant also rejected. As a third alternative, Prentiss suggested that the entire question be submitted to a panel of arbitration, composed of officers of Grant's choosing, who would decide the matter. When this proposal likewise met with a flat rejection, an exasperated Prentiss finally insisted that he be relieved of command until such time as an official decision could be handed down from headquarters in St. Louis. Grant once more refused to budge, making it clear that he would accede to none of Prentiss' angry demands.¹⁰¹

Nevertheless, Grant did seem eager to retain General Prentiss' services on almost any terms short of recognizing his claim to seniority, "promising him," in Grierson's words, "opportunities to do and troops to do with."¹⁰² Prentiss, Grant indicated, might exercise sole field command over the entire movement along the Mississippi. He would, of course, necessarily remain subject to instructions emanating from district headquarters in southeastern Missouri, but Grant assured the general that there would be no interference with his movements. Quite the contrary, as tactical
commander, he could rely upon headquarters for the prompt rendering of every possible assistance to ensure the success of the proposed expedition. But Prentiss proved no more receptive to Grant's proposals than Grant had earlier been to his own. Even in the sympathetic eyes of his aide, the commander of the Ironton column had by this time grown "very violent and abusive," and the interview abruptly terminated with Prentiss forcefully expressing his intention to ignore any orders issued over Grant's signature.103 Once again denied a leave of absence, the enraged brigadier stormed back to his quarters where he tendered his resignation, in care of the departmental adjutant. Before finally retiring for the night, Prentiss dispatched a personal telegram to General Frémont himself, explaining that "I will stay in the Service but not as Junior Brig. Genl."104

That evening's troubled slumber did nothing to assuage General Prentiss' agitated temper. When Grant again confronted the general early on the morning of September 2, the latter "positively refused" to comply with Grant's instructions and placed himself in arrest, leaving the district commander no alternative but to place Colonel John Cook of the 7th Illinois in command of the column at Jackson and to compile charges against Prentiss.105 When Ben Grierson entered his embittered superior's tent, he found Prentiss reclining upon a cot dictating a letter to General Frémont, in which he detailed his grievances and set forth his
version of the unfortunate events which had transpired between himself and General Grant during the preceding twenty-four hours. This letter he entrusted to his aide, with instructions to carry it to St. Louis, where he would present it personally to the department commander. 106

It seems unlikely that Grierson was greatly disappointed when he arrived in St. Louis on September 5, only to learn that General Frémont was just leaving to pay a call upon the visiting Prince Napoleon. Undoubtedly embarrassed by his awkward position, Prentiss' emissary presented his papers to the department commander's private secretary and accepted an appointment to return later in the day. A return visit found Frémont still occupied with his French guest, but Grierson departed with the welcome news that General Prentiss had been instructed to report in person at St. Louis. Ben, therefore, arranged for a morning interview, and retired to await the arrival of his commanding officer. Much to his aide's relief, the disgruntled brigadier reached the city promptly at 6 a.m. on September 6. "This," the young staff officer noted, "relieved me from further action in the matter." With no immediate or pressing duties, Ben Grierson seized the opportunity to unburden himself of the preceding days' rush of events in a letter to Alice, while General Prentiss departed in the company of a formidable entourage, including Orville Browning, for a 1 o'clock meeting with General Frémont. 107
Prentiss' afternoon conversation with the Pathfinder apparently did much to soothe raw nerves and heal wounded pride.\textsuperscript{108} The department commander impressed upon those present that he found nothing to censure in the recent actions of his aggrieved subordinate. Indeed, as Grierson had anticipated, he expressed a genuine eagerness to assign General Prentiss to "a separate command away from Gen'l. Grant," while the entire regrettable matter was quietly referred to the War Department. Flattered, and reassured of his superior's continued confidence, Prentiss gratefully withdrew his hastily submitted resignation and returned to his quarters to await orders.\textsuperscript{109} "Major" Grierson, meanwhile, was amply rewarded for his faithful service throughout the trying affair with a leave of absence to visit his family in Chicago.\textsuperscript{110}

Upon rejoining Prentiss at Quincy, Illinois on September 21, Ben Grierson learned that the general had been given command of a broad section of Missouri lying north of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad. There, the new district commander was expected to "open, and use stringent measures to keep open, said railroad, and preserve the telegraph line from interruption by the secessionists." In carrying out this order, he would employ widely dispersed cavalry detachments as far-ranging strike forces designed "to prevent the secessionists from meeting in bands for camp for a few days or a week as has been their custom in
Northeast Missouri. The inherent limitations of Prentiss' assignment were immediately apparent to the general and his aide alike. "He had a large section of country and a large number of troops," Grierson admitted, but they were so scattered and the rebels so disinclined to concentrate and attempt any great movement, that the command was a very undesirable one as nothing but the most petty and desultory warfare was possible." Consequently, throughout the month of October and into November, both men chafed in impotent frustration as they "were pushed about from 'post to pillar' [sic] unable to accomplish anything of service to ourselves or anyone else."

By mid-October, Prentiss and his aide were comfortably situated at Jefferson City, from which point the general maintained a relaxed supervision of the various commands scattered throughout the northern part of the state. This "very pleasant arrangement," however, proved extremely short-lived. On October 13, Secretary of War Cameron and Adjutant-General Lorenzo Thomas suddenly appeared at General Prentiss' headquarters, en route to Tipton, where Frémont's leisurely advance across Missouri in pursuit of General Sterling Price had temporarily stalled. While Ben Grierson could only speculate upon the nature of the two dignitaries' mission, he immediately sensed "a storm brewing"—a storm which could only bode ill for his old political hero. Although sharing Frémont's "advanced views
on the slavery question," Prentiss' young aide was well aware of the storm of controversy which those views had aroused in the wake of the department commander's famous emancipation proclamation of August 30.\footnote{116} Nor could he be oblivious to the steadily growing public enmity between the flamboyant general and the powerful Blair clan—an enmity which appeared to have reached its height in mid-September with Frémont's arrest of Colonel Frank P. Blair, Jr. Under these circumstances, it was difficult to regard the visit of the Secretary of War and the Adjutant-General of the Army with anything but foreboding. For his part, Ben Grierson prayed that his intuition was faulty, and that General Frémont would be sustained. But even as he expressed this somewhat forlorn hope, the veteran of the lusty political battles of 1856 was forced to admit that "there seems to be a very powerful combination against him [Frémont], and it may be that he will be removed."\footnote{117}

Speculation at district headquarters deepened on the afternoon of October 14, when General Prentiss received an unexpected summons to confer with the department commander.\footnote{118} If, during the course of this interview, Prentiss learned that Frémont was likely to be removed from command of the Western Department—as Grierson later strongly suspected—he apparently did not communicate the information to his staff. When the general returned to Jefferson City on the evening of the fifteenth, he bore a curious order directing
him to communicate in person with the governor of Illinois and his aide, Gustave Koerner, relative to the procurement of new regiments intended for "active operations in the field, under instructions hereafter to be given from these headquarters." Accordingly, Prentiss and Grierson set out immediately for St. Louis where they separated, the general proceeding on to Springfield while his aide turned southward toward Cairo. By now, both men were clearly impressed by the precariousness of Frémont's position. Therefore, while the general conferred with the governor, Ben Grierson undertook a personal mission to sound out the officers of the old 1st Illinois Brigade on the subject of Prentiss' possible return to his former command. No great amount of time was lost in discerning the upwardly mobile regimental officers' reluctance to endorse openly any such proposal, and in relatively short order Prentiss' aide rejoined his superior at Springfield. It was then decided that it would be extremely unwise for Grierson to rely any longer upon Frémont's waning influence to secure his staff position with General Prentiss. He had best, the general suggested, apply directly to his friend the governor for an appointment in one of the Illinois regiments. Yates proved highly receptive to the suggestion and indicated the existence of a vacancy as major in the as yet unorganized 6th Illinois cavalry. Although the open slot occurred in the least desirable third battalion, Grierson expressed
complete satisfaction with the position, whereupon the governor immediately signed the appointment. To offset the relatively low prestige attached to the "rear battalion," Major Grierson's commission was dated August 28, 1861, making him the senior major of the regiment. For the moment, however, Ben Grierson received his colonel's verbal permission to remain on detached duty with General Prentiss. 121

Unbeknown to anyone in the Western Department, on October 24, President Lincoln had indeed signed an order relieving General Frémont. But it was not until November 2, that a messenger finally succeeded in delivering the dismissal pronouncement to the unlucky general at his encampment near Springfield. 122 When confirmed reports of Frémont's removal finally reached Jefferson City on November 7, Ben Grierson sadly reaffirmed his constant faith in the first standard-bearer of the Republican Party. "He is not lowered any in my estimation," Grierson assured his wife, "he will ever have a warm place in the hearts of lovers of freedom—he is head & shoulders above the men who try to break him down, and I think he will yet triumph over his enemies and traducers." 123 But in the meantime, the newly appointed major of the 6th Illinois Cavalry needed urgently to look after his own interests during the uncertain period preceding the arrival of the new commander in the West. 124

A formal request from General Prentiss to the commanding officer of the 6th Illinois produced the desired response,
and on November 13, Major Benjamin H. Grierson was officially "detailed for service upon the staff of General B. M. Prentiss ... subject to the approval of the General commanding the Western Department." 125 Unfortunately, the new department commander arrived at St. Louis with forceful ideas of his own. Henry Wager Halleck—squat, balding and forty-six years old—was hardly calculated to arouse the popular imagination in the manner of his dashing and romantic predecessor. 126 And yet "Old Brains," as he was known in Regular Army circles, impressed many of his fellow officers as ". . . a man of gigantic intellect and well studied in the profession of arms." 127 In assigning Halleck to the Western Department, General McClellan publicly expressed the hope that the general would bend the full force of his reputedly awesome intellect to the "difficult task of reducing chaos to order" in Frémont's ex-satrapy. Thus, one of his first concerns would be to weed out those "general and staff officers holding illegal commissions and appointments not recognized and approved by the President or Secretary of War." 128 Under these circumstances, the new department commander could hardly be expected to look with favor upon the detail of a major of cavalry for duty upon the staff of a brigadier-general of infantry.

Therefore, although greatly disappointed, Ben Grierson was hardly astonished when his interview with General Halleck produced a firm but "good-humored" refusal to endorse
General Prentiss' request. On purely technical grounds, the commanding general pointed out, the regulations simply would not permit a brigadier-general to retain on his staff any aide-de-camp with a rank higher than lieutenant, and even then the appointment must be made from the line. Moreover, he patiently explained, the new regiments were sorely in need of experienced field officers. The experience and knowledge which Grierson had already gained as a staff officer would certainly benefit the service, as well as advance his own career once he joined his new command. Besides, Halleck quipped, the new major certainly "looked active and wiry [sic] enough to make a good cavalry-man." It would be a crime to waste that lanky frame filing orders and requisitions. 129

In retrospect, Grierson recognized that Halleck's decision "proved a blessing in disguise for had I remained a staff-officer it is probable that I would never have had an opportunity for further advancement." 130 But as the penniless and dejected major of volunteers smoked his last cigar and disposed of his only horse in order to raise money enough to join his regiment at Shawneetown, Illinois, he found it difficult to appreciate the logic or justice of the general's action. Time would fully verify General Halleck's assessment of the valuable knowledge and experience which Grierson had accumulated during the first confused months of the war. For the moment, however, the bankrupt
ex-musician faced a future as uncertain as that which he had confronted on that distant day in mid-May when he left behind home and family to answer a summons from Springfield. Circumstance seemed still to dictate the course of his existence, but Grierson departed Missouri with few regrets. "I have always felt diffident about attempting 'to paddle my own canoe,'" he once observed, "but if inevitable I usually paddle it 'like thunder.'" And it was thus with the positive conviction that "It will do no harm to aim high, even should I fall short of the mark," that Ben Grierson prepared to meet a new challenge.
NOTES - CHAPTER II


Nortrup, "Richard Yates," 204.


then before the Illinois legislature providing that each
captain of a company be furnished with Hogarth's painting
of Sir John Falstaff drilling his men. Green's amendment
also called for arming the Illinois militia with cornstalks.
Robert Grierson to B. H. Grierson, January 17, 1861, Grierson
Papers, Roll 3; Annual Report of the Adjutant General
of the State of Illinois, 1863, 10-12.


19Richard Yates to Simon Cameron, April 25, 1861,

20U. S. Grant to Jesse Grant, May 2, 6, 1861, and
August 3, 1861, in Jesse Grant Cramer, ed., Letters of
Ulysses S. Grant to His Father and His Youngest Sister
1857-78 (Reprint ed., New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1972),
31-37, 43-46; Lewis, Captain Sam Grant, p. 418.

21Ezra J. Warner, Generals in Blue: Lives of the Union
Commanders (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press,
1964), 376-77; Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and
Dictionary of the United States Army, from its Organization
September 29, 1789 to March 2, 1903, 2 vols. (Washington:
Government Printing Office, 1903), I, 798; Lewis, Captain
Sam Grant, 411.

22Lewis, Captain Sam Grant, 418; Eddy, The Patriotism
of Illinois, I, 267-68; Warner, Generals in Blue, 385-86;
Browning, Diary, I, 464-65; Albert D. Richardson, The Secret
Service, the Field, the Dungeon, and the Escape (Hartford,
Conn.: American Publishing Co., 1865), 142; Nortrup,
"Richard Yates," 197.

23Lewis, Captain Sam Grant, 416-19; Nortrup, "Richard
Yates," 195-97; U. S. Grant to Jesse Grant, May 6, 1861,

24Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 75; B. H. Grierson
to Alice K. Grierson, May 7, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3;
Nortrup, "Richard Yates," 221.

25John Grierson to B. H. Grierson, February 20, 1861,
Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

26B. H. Grierson to John Grierson, April 28, 1861, Ibid.

27Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 74; Robert Grierson to
B. H. Grierson, February 3, 1861; John Grierson to B. H.
Grierson, February 2, 14 [1861]; Alice K. Grierson to B. H.
Grierson, May 19, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.
Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 74-75; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 7, 11, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 11, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 15, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

Alice K. Grierson to B. H. Grierson, May 19, 1861, Ibid.

Alice K. Grierson to B. H. Grierson, May 16, 1861, Ibid. The nature of the disagreement is not clear, but Ben and Alice Grierson and John Wallihan had a brief falling-out with John Grierson during the winter of 1859-60. Robert Grierson intervened and the misunderstanding was apparently rectified in January 1860. See, John Grierson to B. H. and Alice K. Grierson, January 16, 1860, Ibid.


Alice K. Grierson to B. H. Grierson, May 16, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

R. M. Kelly, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," *Battles and Leaders*, I, 373-78.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 6, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 78-80.

A Republican, Oglesby had resigned his Illinois Senate seat to accept a commission as colonel of the 8th Illinois Infantry. He was promoted to brigadier general on March 22, 1862 and to major general on March 10, 1863, to rank from November 29, 1862. Oglesby resigned from the service on May 26, 1864 in order to make a successful bid for the governorship of Illinois. During the postwar years he served alternately as U.S. Senator and Governor of Illinois, being the first man in Illinois history to hold the latter office on three different occasions. General Oglesby retired from politics after an unsuccessful effort to retain his Senate seat in 1891, and died at his home in Elkhart, Illinois on April 24, 1899 at the age of seventy-four. Warner, *Generals in Blue*, 346-47; Heitman, *Historical Register*, I, 757.

This account is compiled from first-hand accounts contained in the following: B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 14, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 80-82; Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier*, 18-19; Richardson, *The Secret Service*, 150.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 14, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 83; Richardson, *The Secret Service*, 141-43; George B. McClellan, *McClellan's Own Story* (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1887), 45. The incident of the captured Confederate flag provided the ostensible reason for a June 13th meeting at Cairo between General McClellan and Simon Bolivar Buckner, inspector-general of the Kentucky militia. The underlying motive for this conference was an attempt on Buckner's part to clarify the substance of an earlier agreement in which McClellan had apparently guaranteed to respect Kentucky's neutrality if the government of Kentucky would in turn agree to drive out any Confederate force that might attempt to invade the border state. Arndt M. Stickles, *Simon Bolivar Buckner: Borderland Knight* (Chapel Hill: University of
North Carolina Press, 1940), 60-62; McClellan, McClellan's Own Story, 48-49.

44 Wills, Army Life of an Illinois Soldier, 19-21.

45 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 16, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows, 86-89.

46 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 12, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

47 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 85-86, 89; all quotations are from Wills, Army Life of an Illinois Soldier, 21-23.

48 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 24, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


53 Snead, "The First Year of the War in Missouri," 269; Nevins, Fremont, II, 539; Thomas L. Snead, The Fight for Missouri: From the Election of Lincoln to the Death of Lyon (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1886), 223-28, 236-40;
Monaghan, Civil War on the Western Border, 149-57; Albert Castel, General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), 27-30.


66 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 16, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


68 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 89-90; Frémont, "In Command in Missouri," 278, 280; Nevins, Frémont, II, 536.

69 Frémont, "In Command in Missouri," 281; for the actual reasons behind the halt of the Confederate advance in eastern Missouri see above pp. 104-105.


71 C. C. Marsh to J. C. Frémont, August 4, 1861, Official Records, Series I, Vol. III, 425; J. C. Fremont to J. G. Nicolay, August 6, 1861, Ibid., 427; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 91. Marsh's report in fact proved to be a false alarm. C. C. Marsh to J. C. Frémont, August 6, 1861, Official Records, Series I, Vol. III, 429. Grierson later reported that "What alarmed Colonel Marsh was a troop of rebel cavalry attacking and driving in his pickets, from which occurrence he inferred that the entire force of rebels were advancing." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 92.

72 "Pilot Knob. . . , strictly speaking, was only a railroad station, the town being called Ironton . . . ." John M. Thayer, "Grant at Pilot Knob," McClure's Magazine, V (October 1895), 433.


75 J. C. Frémont to Simon Cameron, August 13, 1861, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 459. Gideon Pillow, still pleading for authorization to lead a general advance in southeastern Missouri, claimed a large degree of credit for the resounding Confederate victory in the west. His mere presence at New Madrid, he was convinced, had thrown Frémont into a hopeless quandry. "My position, Pillow informed Polk, "threatens him on the south and on the river, while the advance of McCulloch and Hardee threaten [sic] St. Louis, and he is running his troops up and down the river. He does not know what to do or which way to turn." Under these circumstances, he boasted, Confederate movements in southeastern Missouri had had their desired effect, in that they had caused Frémont to deny Lyon urgently needed reinforcements. In hurrying troops to Cairo instead of to Springfield, Pillow observed, Frémont had "ensured the fall of his cause in the West." G. J. Pillow to L. Polk, August 11, 16, 1861, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. III, 643, 655. Hans Adamson, *Rebellion in Missouri, 1861: Nathaniel Lyon and his Army of the West* (Philadelphia: Chilton Co., 1961), 276-83 and A. L. Conger, *The Rise of U. S. Grant*, 17-18 are in basic accord with Pillow's assessment of Frémont's actions in late July and early August, 1861. For a defense of the Union commander see Nevins, *Frémont*, II, 532-36.


82. Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles L. Webster & Co., 1885), I, 257; Thayer, "Grant at Pilot Knob," 434-36; Conger, *The Rise of U. S. Grant*, 19; Catton, *Grant Moves South*, 28; Grierson, *Lights and Shadows*, 96. Although there is a certain amount of confusion, it would appear that Prentiss and Grierson arrived at Ironton at approximately 2 o'clock on the morning of August 17. In an apparently misdated letter written in St. Louis on August 16, Grierson states: "The Genl [Prentiss] is now with Genl. Frémont ... will leave this evening at 6 or 7 o'clock." B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, August 17 [sic], 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. On August 18 Grierson informs his wife from Ironton: "Arrived yesterday about 2 o'clock ..." Benjamin H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, August 18, 1861, *Ibid.* Colonel John N. Thayer recalls that "The night after the arrival of Prentiss [i.e., the night of August 17], Grant ordered an engine and one car to take him to St. Louis, and invited me to accompany him. We were the only occupants of the car." Thayer, "Grant at Pilot Knob," 435. However, Grant also seems to have had his dates confused when he issued an order to Colonel L. F. Ross of the 17th Illinois dated "Headquarters Ironton Mo August 18 1861." U. S. Grant to L. F. Ross, August 18, 1861, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, John Y. Simon ed., 5 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967-), II, 123. But as the editors of the Grant Papers note, "Since USG was no longer in Ironton on Aug. 18, this order may have been prepared earlier." *Ibid.*

83. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, August 18, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 97-98.


G. J. Pillow to L. Polk, August 28, 1861, Ibid., 685-87.

Catton, Grant Moves South, 41.


Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 92.


J. C. Frémont to B. M. Prentiss, August 28, 1861, Official Records, Series I, Vol. III, 142-43; Catton, Grant Moves South, 40.


Grant, Memoirs, I, 262.


Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 102. In his unpublished memoirs Grierson states: "I first met General Grant early in the summer of 1861 on the cars between Decatur and Springfield, when he was on his way to offer his services to Governor Yates, and he told me during our conversation that he felt doubtful about being able to obtain a commission in the volunteer service." Ibid., 105. Grant, who had accompanied the Jo Daviess Guards to Springfield, had delayed at Decatur for about an hour on April 26, 1861, awaiting a change of cars. Lewis, Captain Sam Grant, 411. If such a chance encounter did in fact occur in the spring of 1861, it apparently did not make enough of an immediate impression to prompt Grierson to recount the incident in his correspondence.
Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 102-103.

B. M. Prentiss to J. C. Frémont, September 2, 1861, Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, II, 170n.

Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 103.

Ibid.


U. S. Grant to J. C. Frémont, September 2, 1861, Official Records, Series I, Vol. III, 145-46; U. S. Grant to J. Cook, September 2, 1861, Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, II, 171-72; U. S. Grant to J. C. Kelton, September 2, 1861, Ibid., 175-76. The filing of charges was purely a formality. In forwarding them, along with supporting documents, to department headquarters, Grant expressed no personal bitterness and declined placing Prentiss in arrest. "I have no personal feeling," he assured the unhappy general, "but have acted strictly from a sense of duty, and, should it be General Frémont's wish, am perfectly willing to see the charges quashed and the whole matter buried in oblivion." U. S. Grant to B. N. Prentiss, September 3, 1861, Official Records, Series I, Vol. III, 147.

Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 103. A copy of Prentiss' September 2 letter to Fremont is printed in Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, II, 170n.

Benjamin H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, September 6, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 103-104; Browning, Diary, I, 499.

Neither Prentiss nor Grant appears to have harbored any lasting animosity as a result of their brief, but heated, dispute over rank. On April 1, 1862, General Prentiss once again came under Grant's command, at Pittsburgh Landing, Tennessee. Five days later, when Confederate forces launched a surprise attack near the Shiloh meeting house, Prentiss resolutely stood his ground at the Hornet's Nest, while the remainder of the Union army executed a hasty withdrawal toward the river. Prentiss' stubborn defense finally collapsed late on the afternoon of April 6, and he was compelled to surrender himself along with his decimated command. Later, he would have the satisfaction of knowing
that his isolated stand had bought sufficient time for Grant to rally his badly demoralized troops and to launch a successful counter-attack against the near-victorious enemy. Ulysses S. Grant, "Battle of Shiloh," Battles and Leaders, I, 473; Don Carlos Buell, "Shiloh Reviewed," Ibid., 505-506. When Prentiss was exchanged after six months in captivity, Grant assigned him to the command of Federal forces in the vicinity of Helena, Arkansas. There he successfully prevented Confederate reinforcement of Vicksburg from the Trans-Mississippi. B. M. Prentiss to H. W. Halleck, October 14, 1862, Official Records, Series II, Vol. IV, 621; Special Orders No. 39, Department of the Tennessee, February 8, 1863, Ibid., Series I, Vol. XXIV, 39-40. On October 28, 1863 the War Department accepted Prentiss' resignation, and he returned to his law practice in Quincy, Illinois. As President, Ulysses S. Grant tendered the Quincy lawyer an appointment as federal pension agent. Ulysses S. Grant Association, Newsletter, III (October 1966), 10; Warner, Generals in Blue, 386. In his memoirs, Grant reflected upon his ancient difficulties with Benjamin Prentiss and expressed his personal feeling that "General Prentiss made a great mistake on the above occasion, one he would not have committed later in the war. When I came to know him better, I regretted it much. In consequence of this occurrence he was off duty in the field when the principal campaign was going on, and his juniors received promotion while he was where none could be obtained. He would have been next to myself in rank in the district of southeast Missouri, by virtue of his services in the Mexican War. He was a brave and very honest soldier. No man in the service was more sincere in his devotion to the cause for which we were battling; none more ready to make sacrifices or risk life in it." Grant, Memoirs, I, 263-64. Ben Grierson voiced similar sentiments in his unpublished memoirs. "The whole affair," he recalled some thirty years after the event, "was unfortunate for General Prentiss and in my judgment it was a very great mistake, under all the circumstances, for him to refuse to receive orders from General Grant. Had he remained at his post he would have had every opportunity afforded him for distinction. . . . My remonstrances with General Prentiss were earnest, and for a time seemed persuasive, but unfortunately failed in the end and it is probable that the result was afterwards regretted by General Prentiss himself." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 104-105. Nevertheless, both Prentiss and Grierson had received an unforgettable lesson in the intricacies and prerogatives of military rank; it was a lesson which Grierson would have frequent occasion to recall during his subsequent career.
B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, September 6, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Browning, Diary, I, 499; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 104.


Ibid., 104-105. While shuffling back and forth between Chillicothe, Missouri and Quincy, Illinois during early October, Prentiss and Grierson were involved in a potentially serious railroad accident. On October 9, Ben Grierson informed Alice from Quincy that "We were delayed yesterday 12 hours coming from Chillicothe here, by a collision [sic] of the trains . . . both were behind time and this side of Stockton about 80 miles from here at a curve in the Road ran into each other with a terrible crash. One Locomotive ran up on top of the other, breaking both to peices [sic]. The cars were smashed up considerably on the Train we were on. Genl. Prentiss' Servant (Colored) was jammed in between the cars. . . . We sent him back to Brookfield still alive, but suppose he is dead by this time. A woman had her collar bone broken . . . No one else seriously injured. A number bruised more or less." B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, October 9, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 108-109.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, October 12, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, October 13, 1861, Ibid.


B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, October 12, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. For the events leading up to the visit of the Secretary of War and the Adjutant General see Nevins, Frémont, II, 561-605.
B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, October 14, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, October 16, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, November 7, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

"At this time, Grierson's financial position was again becoming desperate. On November 25, he informed his wife that his "Extras" for the month only amounted to $2.56 "for Papers." "The cigar question," he added, "has played out. I don't think that I will spend any more money (at present at least) in that way. . . . Money, money, money. I wish there was no need of any in the world. It never made any one happy. I wish everybody could be rich without it." B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, November 25, 1861, Garrison Papers, Roll 3.

Special Orders No. 5, 6th Illinois Cavalry, November 13, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; H. Binmore to T. H. Cavanaugh, November 9, 1861, Ibid.


U. S. Grant to E. B. Washburne, July 22, 1862, Papers of Ulysses S. Grant, V, 226.

G. B. McClellan to H. W. Halleck, November 11, 1861, Official Records, Series I, Vol. V, 39; Ambrose, Halleck, 11. Privately, however, McClellan hardly shared in the general consensus upon Halleck's intellectual capacity. "Of all men whom I have encountered in high position," he later recalled, "Halleck was the most hopelessly stupid. It was more difficult to get an idea through his head than can be
conceived by any one who never made the attempt. I do not think he ever had a correct military idea from beginning to end." McClellan, McClellan's Own Story, 137.

129 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 120-21; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, November 24, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. A student of Richard Yates' political career suspects more than simple insistence upon the letter of army regulations behind General Halleck's refusal to allow Grierson to remain on General Prentiss' staff. As Richard Nortrup explains: "It should have been obvious to the governors that it was impossible to prosecute a war if state executives were able to countermand orders of generals in the field, challenge the authority of the federal government, select those to whom troops would be despatched while denying replacements to all others, and undertake the establishment of private state armies of their own. All these things Yates had done, and in so doing he had made absolutely necessary the strengthening of the powers of the War Department.

"The reaction was not long forthcoming. Yates' attempt to strengthen Grant and McCleandand was vetoed by General Henry W. Halleck. . . . At the same time Halleck refused to permit Benjamin Grierson, a crony of Yates, to remain on the staff of General Prentiss. Thus Halleck seemed to be aware of Yates' design in appointing Illinois representatives to the regiments." Nortrup, "Richard Yates," 225.

130 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 121.

131 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, November 25, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 123. At this time Grierson had served six months without pay, and as yet had no indications of when any money would be forthcoming. As he explains: "... although commissioned a major of a cavalry regiment by the Governor of Illinois, yet I could not get any pay until the regiment was mustered into the service of the United States, and no information was at that time obtainable as to when such muster would take place." Ibid., 122.

132 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 121.

133 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, November 24, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.
CHAPTER III

"It will do no harm to aim high"

The southeastern Illinois community of Shawneetown was hardly calculated to inspire euphoria in a melancholy soul. Situated upon a level plain along the western bank of the Ohio River, just nine miles below its confluence with the Wabash, the modest village had enjoyed a brief flash of prosperity as one of the first white settlements established in the Illinois territory. Its strategic river-front location made it the natural point of disembarkation for families and goods moving inland, while nearby salines seemed to afford a marketable commodity. But Shawneetown's youthful dreams of future glory had proven as transient as the new settlers who stepped ashore there, only to turn their backs upon this "rough-hewn portal to the Middle Border"\(^1\) as they proceeded ever westward. Exorbitant land prices and a post-War of 1812 drop in the value of salt afforded early portents of impending distress. However, it was the capricious Ohio that held the key to the community's fate. Beginning in February or early March, residents regularly watched with helpless resignation as the river commenced its annual rise. Within weeks, the yellowish waters would creep into the lower floors of the relatively few two-story
structures, and would blanket the porous plain behind the town. With fences and crops repeatedly washed away, the farmers along the desolate sandbank had all but surrendered the land to the river. And yet, more than one visitor marveled at the tenacity of the inhabitants of this "wretched sunken place."  

A resigned, but nonetheless unhappy, Major Benjamin H. Grierson arrived at Shawneetown late on the evening of December 13, 1861. His expectations were not unreasonably optimistic, but nothing in the major's experience during the preceding six months had fully prepared him for the appalling condition in which he found his new command. Camp "Katie Yates," temporary home of the self-styled "Bloody Sixth," or "Governor's Legion," was inconveniently located in a wooded area about two miles from town. Rail fences regularly sectioned off the furrowed farmland surrounding the encampment, and within these frail confines dead stalks stood out in stark relief against the winter landscape, or huddled together in forlorn shocks teetering precariously atop the rutted surface of the earth. An uneven thaw had settled upon the river bank, and where the ground was not frozen, it oozed dark brown moisture. Here and there, scattered patches of snow clung to the shaded recesses of the ploughed ground. "Altogether," the newly arrived officer recalled, "the scene presented a dreary and uninviting appearance."
If Grierson was expecting a formal reception from the regimental staff, he was sadly disappointed. All the field officers, he learned, were absent, thus in effect leaving him in command of the regiment on his first night in camp. "Everything," the major noted, "... seems to be in great confusion and very little apparent system of discipline." Most of the officers either lived in town or retired there for amusement each evening. The colonel of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, Thomas H. Cavanaugh, seemed to be in almost complete disrepute. While Cavanaugh schemed with Chaplain James F. Jacques to win the governor's political favor, the colonel's son, the regimental adjutant, rendered himself universally obnoxious through his constant attendance at the local billiard parlors and by his public association "with some young chits of Girls."

It is hardly remarkable that discipline and morale among the officers and enlisted men of the 6th Illinois was deplorable. The only arms which had thus far been furnished to the recruits were sabres; and those without belts. Although adequately supplied with a proper complement of mounts, the regiment had not been drilled on horseback since its organization at Camp Butler on November 15. But, thanks to the haphazard manner in which the colonel had selected a campsite, the command at least benefitted from the exercise received during twice-daily treks into town in order to obtain drinking water. An eighty-acre cornfield in the
vicinity seemed to afford some attraction as a drill ground, but as yet half-hearted negotiations had failed to secure its use. Meanwhile, the drill master who had been illicitly brought along from Camp Butler, devoted his energies to story-telling and beer-guzzling. Even more alarming to the impoverished Grierson was the realization that there was not a single company in camp that could boast its full complement of officers and enlisted men. In his own battalion, for example, Captain Isiah Sperry's company counted sixty-three officers and men; sixteen short of the requisite for muster. Moreover, in this instance Captain Sperry had added to the major's concern by leaving camp on a recruiting detail accompanied by twenty enlisted men. If matters remained in this state at the end of the month, Grierson feared that muster, and pay, would not be forthcoming. In this eventuality, he informed his wife, "you need not be surprized [sic] to see a chap of about my size at Home soon, there to stay, and should I starve I would most likely have the satisfaction of dying in your arms."  

In the interim, Major Grierson determined to abide as best he could by his resolution "to aim high." At least five captains of the regiment, he learned, had been applicants to fill the vacancy at the head of the Third Battalion, and several officers had expressed considerable disappointment at the governor's decision to appoint an outsider to the position. Fortunately, Grierson's congenial manner
and his frank offer to surrender his commission if, "after a fair trial," it was determined that he was unfit to discharge his responsibilities, quickly assuaged any initial bitterness among the company commanders. 8

His flanks thus protected, the new major plunged into his duties with gusto. A separate guard was placed around the Third Battalion, absence from camp was prohibited except with the written permission of the battalion commander, a school for officers was instituted, and morning reports were required to be on the major's desk by 8 a.m. On December 19, the members of the First and Second Battalions watched with a certain curiosity as Major Grierson introduced his troops to company drill. The following day, the soldiers of the Third Battalion further treated their idle comrades with the first battalion drill thus far performed in the regiment. For the moment, Grierson's confidence revived as his raw recruits spontaneously raised three cheers before breaking ranks. "I am determined," he reassured Alice, "that the 3d Battalion of the 'Gov.'s Legion' although 3d in number shall not be second to any in drill and discipline." 9

But neither Grierson's sudden realization "that I can command more self possession when it is required than I supposed myself capable of doing," 10 nor his growing optimism for the future of the Third Battalion, could camouflage the growing dissatisfaction in the ranks of the 6th Illinois
Cavalry. Although Grierson's command had slipped smoothly into a regular routine of drill and camp duty, at the end of December neither of the remaining battalions had as yet experienced so much as the manual of arms. After two months of listless monotony, without arms and without pay, "the whole Regiment," in the new major's worried estimation, "are [sic] or seem to be dissatisfied [sic] and it would not surprise me if it would break up. There has been to [sic] much big talk and nothing done."\textsuperscript{11}

Certainly, Colonel Cavanaugh was doing precious little to bolster his precarious position within the regiment. When General Grant, commanding the District of Cairo, passed through Shawneetown just before Christmas, Cavanaugh boldly insisted upon calling out the regiment for dress parade. Fortunately for all concerned, Grant pleaded pressing business and departed almost as quickly as he had arrived. The commander of the "Governor's Legion," however, was not to be denied the satisfaction of watching his troops pass in review, and therefore decided upon conducting a personal inspection of the regiment. The result, Major Grierson testified, "excelled any farce I ever saw."\textsuperscript{12} Not only did the colonel openly reveal his utter ignorance of the bare rudiments of military drill, but in the process he subjected his command to a public display of its corresponding deficiencies in knowledge and discipline. At the conclusion of the humiliating spectacle, Grierson pronounced himself
and the entire regiment "perfectly disgusted." The only meager consolation to be derived from the entire unfortunate affair appeared to lay in the happy circumstance that "the reputation of the 6th Illinois cavalry did not suffer by the General's [Grant's] timely departure."

Although bitterly embarrassed, the officers and men of the 6th Illinois Cavalry were at last made graphically aware of their obvious shortcomings as soldiers. As the final days of December warmed, Major Grierson thought he detected an increased eagerness in the regiment to emulate the Third Battalion in its daily drills and exercises. Finally, on January 9, 1862, the anxiously awaited muster day arrived, and the 6th Illinois Cavalry was officially sworn into the United States service. That same evening Major Benjamin H. Grierson joined the rest of the field and staff officers as they subscribed to the oath of allegiance. His name, as entered upon the regimental roll, bore October 1, 1861 as the date of enrollment.

As soon as the regiment had received its pay, Thomas Cavanaugh and his inseparable companion, Chaplain Jacques, departed upon another jaunt to Springfield; this time presumably to press personally the colonel's claims to a pending brigadiership. With the regimental commander absent and the remaining field officers variously preoccupied in town, responsibility for the cavalry camp again devolved, by default, upon Major Grierson. The recent pay
day had left the command in a boisterous mood, and Grierson was compelled to initiate immediate action to curb the consumption of whisky and to eliminate gambling in camp. The members of the First and Second Battalions persisted in their aimless daily routine, but the commander of the Third Battalion persevered in his determination that his troops would drill whenever and wherever possible. Impatient with Cavanaugh’s procrastination in securing a suitable training area, Grierson finally decided to take full advantage of the colonel’s absence and, on January 26, announced his intention to “take possession of a Meddow [sic] or field near the Camp for a drill ground, although it is against the orders of the Col.” In view of the glaring need for military exercise in the regiment, the major reasoned that “should I be Courtmarshalled [sic] for disobedience of orders in this matter, . . . it would look well on the Record.”

If Major Grierson indeed carried out his determined resolution to seize a field, he certainly had little time to gauge his commanding officer’s reaction to the preemptive action. Before the week was out, news arrived at Shawneetown informing Ben of a serious setback in his mother’s lingering illness, and on January 31, district headquarters issued orders granting the major a seven-day leave of absence. When Grierson returned to Camp Katie Yates on February 17, he was hardly surprised to discover "open . . . war in the Regt." During the major’s absence,
Lieutenant Colonel John Olney had apparently acquiesced to the demands of the regimental officers and had filed formal charges against Colonel Cavanaugh. Moreover, thirty-seven members of the commissioned staff had signed, and forwarded to the governor, a petition demanding Cavanaugh's immediate resignation. Grierson thus found himself in the midst of an acrimonious tug-of-war between the colonel and his officers. For more than three hours after his return to camp, the commander of the Third Battalion was sequestered with Cavanaugh and the regimental chaplain. But while the colonel attempted to explain and defend his position in the embarrassing controversy, Grierson's fellow officers were equally insistent that the major join them in their petition to Governor Yates. Wary of the pitfalls of political intrigue, Grierson wisely declined to take a public stand in the potentially explosive affair. Although privately sympathetic to the grievances levelled against the colonel, he refused to be maneuvered into a position similar to that now occupied by Lieutenant Colonel Olney, who had been compelled to disavow formally any aspirations for the colonelcy in order to dispel Cavanaugh's counter-charges of self-interest. Satisfied that he stood "A. no 1 with all parties," Grierson for the moment seemed quite content "to let every body fight their own battles," while he advanced his own cause by more subtle methods.

Consequently, Major Grierson was considerably relieved
on February 19, when orders arrived which promised to remove him from the center of the gathering crisis at regimental headquarters. Under instructions from General William T. Sherman, the new commander of the District of Cairo, the 6th Illinois Cavalry was directed to move immediately into Kentucky, where Sherman's command along the Ohio River had been seriously depleted in order to augment General Grant's advance against forts Henry and Donaldson. Grierson's Third Battalion would disembark at Smithland, at the confluence of the Ohio and Cumberland rivers, while the remainder of the regiment continued on a dozen miles farther downstream to Sherman's headquarters at Paducah, at the junction of the Ohio and the Tennessee.

The commander of the Third Battalion occupied a substantial portion of a rain-sodden afternoon literally herding his men aboard a steamer for the short trip down the Ohio. Grierson's task was rendered appreciably more difficult by the fact that a boisterous majority of his command had spent the early part of the day fortifying themselves for the impending journey. The major's first instructions, therefore, were for company commanders personally to empty whisky-filled canteens. Indignant at this presumed infringement of personal liberties the loudly intoxicated troops threatened mutiny, swearing that they would throw the officers overboard and seize the boat. As a last resort, Grierson was compelled to summon a squad of
armed guards, and it was not until near nightfall that he finally managed to drive his rowdy soldiers on board the transport. Unfortunately, however, the major's headaches were still far from over. The command had not proceeded far when it was discovered that the barkeeper on board the vessel had opened a quiet but brisk trade selling illicit liquor to the thirsty troops. A firm hint that persistence in this illegal traffic would result in the unceremonious dumping of the contents of the saloon into the Ohio convinced the spirits vendor to suppress his capitalistic instincts. But still, it required the posting of a guard to prevent the drunken soldiers from tearing down the bar. After a long night's journey, the steamer at last pulled up to the wharf at Smithland early on the morning of February 20, and there disgorged its headsore passengers without further incident.\textsuperscript{24}

His unruly command secure in its new encampment, and far removed from the disruptive influence of alcohol, Major Grierson turned his full attention to the pressing concern of arming the battalion. Three months had passed since the organization of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, during which time Colonel Cavanaugh had apparently made little or no effort to secure weapons for the regiment. Fearing that this deficiency in arms would ultimately result in the disbanding of the entire unit, Grierson decided to seize the initiative and to outfit at least his own
battalion. When a tour of the Fort Donaldson battlefield and of the Quartermaster's Department at Cairo failed to uncover either spare carbines or revolvers, the frustrated major appealed in turn to Colonel Cavanaugh and then directly to the Governor of Illinois.  

In the course of his search, Grierson had learned that in late December the Quartermaster General of Illinois had contracted, through the War Department, with the Cosmopolitan Arms Company of Hamilton, Ohio, for the manufacture of 1140 carbines specifically to arm the 6th Illinois Cavalry. Consequently, on March 8, the major prevailed upon Colonel Cavanaugh to grant him permission to travel to Ohio to consult with the proprietors of the arms company. At Hamilton, he discovered that the Cosmopolitan Arms Company had indeed been awarded a contract to furnish weapons for General Frémont's old Department of the West. Grierson was also informed, however, that the carbines apparently intended for the 6th Illinois Cavalry could not be delivered for at least six weeks, at which time the manufacturer was directed to turn the weapons over to the Governor of Illinois. Under the circumstances, the major's only hope of obtaining arms seemed to lie in gaining authorization to purchase some three hundred carbines of somewhat inferior quality which were already on hand at the Hamilton factory. To this end, Grierson travelled immediately to Springfield, where he consulted with the Illinois governor. Yates
expressed sympathy for the plight of the 6th Illinois, but as he explained to the major, the state executives had been forbidden to furnish arms to troops already mustered into Federal service. All the governor could do was to write to the Secretary of War requesting that Major Grierson be allowed to arm his battalion with the three hundred carbines already stored at the Cosmopolitan Arms Company and soliciting an order from the War Department directing that upon completion of the 1140 arms contracted for by the government, those weapons be shipped directly to the 6th Illinois Cavalry. With this promise, Grierson asked the arms company to speed up production of the uncompleted carbines and returned to Smithland to await the action of the Secretary of War. 26

On March 25, orders arrived at Smithland directing that all troops stationed at that place proceed directly to General Grant's command, then concentrating along the Tennessee River near Pittsburgh Landing. After an annoying delay awaiting transportation, the Third Battalion of the 6th Illinois Cavalry finally boarded the transport Planet and steamed downriver to Paducah. Much to their disappointment, the eager cavalrmen were halted at that point by a messenger from the new district commander, Brigadier General William K. Strong. Lacking proper arms and equipment, the Illinois troopers could only hinder Grant's contemplated forward movement. The Third Battalion,
therefore, was instructed to encamp at Paducah with the remainder of its regiment and await further orders. 27

With the regiment once again together, and still idle, the lingering bitterness toward Colonel Cavanaugh erupted with fresh intensity. As the month of March drew to a close, the pressure upon the colonel of the 6th Illinois Cavalry achieved its purpose, and Cavanaugh was finally compelled to submit his resignation. But still, the confusion within the regiment continued. During the first week in April, the colonel strutted about Paducah confidently boasting that General Halleck would not accept his resignation, leading skeptics to speculate that the resignation had in fact never been forwarded. Moreover, many regimental officers harbored the suspicion that even should the resignation be accepted, Cavanaugh would make every effort to have the 6th Illinois Cavalry disbanded. Only when the colonel's son relinquished his position as regimental adjutant on April 9 did it become evident to all concerned that Cavanaugh's bravado masked nothing of substance.

Major Grierson, for his part, now seemed smugly pleased with his earlier decision to remain outwardly aloof from the regimental squabble. He had played his role well, had performed his duties conscientiously and to the utmost of his ability, and by the end of March was convinced that he would be the new colonel of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. There was, of course, competition. John Olney, the lieutenant
coloned of the regiment, had reneged on his earlier official
disclaimer and now openly declared himself a candidate for
the colonelcy. It was also known that Governor Yates was
being pressured to fill the vacancy from outside the regi-
ment. In particular, ex-governor John Wood, now Quarter-
master General of Illinois, was lobbying strongly for the
appointment of his son. Meanwhile, General John Pope
pressed the claims of Lieutenant Colonel Harvey Hogg of the
2nd Illinois Cavalry. Grierson, however, realized that it
was unlikely that the governor would add to the already
rampant dissension among the officers of the 6th Illinois by
going outside their ranks to select a colonel. Nor was he
particularly concerned over the apparent threat posed by
Cavanaugh's lineal successor within the regiment. Olney's
initial embroilment in regimental politics, and his sub-
sequent hasty assurance to the State Executive that he
harbored no designs upon the colonelcy, had worked its
irreparable harm. Grierson's political instincts assured
him that Olney's eleventh-hour change of heart had totally
eroded any lingering support for his candidacy among the
officers of the 6th Illinois.

The commander of the Third Battalion calmly bided his
time until receipt of official confirmation of the acceptance
of Colonel Cavanaugh's resignation, to date from March 28,
1862. Then, on April 10, Major Benjamin H. Grierson formally
submitted his written application for the colonelcy of the
6th Illinois Cavalry to the Governor of Illinois. Along with the application, he forwarded a petition supporting his candidacy signed by thirty-seven commissioned officers of the regiment.28

The governor's reply, although hardly delivered in an ordinary manner, was not long forthcoming. On April 12, the steamer Black Hawk docked at the Paducah wharves. On board were Governor Yates, Illinois Secretary of State O. M. Hatch, and Adjutant General A. C. Fuller, together with surgeons, medical supplies and nurses en route to the scene of the recent devastating battle at Pittsburgh Landing. When Major Grierson entered the governor's cabin, the conversation naturally turned to the subject of the vacancy at the head of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. It was evident that Yates found himself in an uncomfortable position.

Several of the Quartermaster General's friends accompanied the chief executive and continued to urge the claims of the younger Wood for the appointment. The real dilemma, however, was posed by the rival candidacies of Lieutenant Colonel Hogg and Major Grierson. Both officers were old friends, both had been active in the campaign which had elevated Richard Yates to the governorship, and both were obviously talented and promising officers. If either could truly be said to possess an advantage in the contest, the edge must be conceded to the lieutenant colonel of the 2nd Illinois Cavalry. Not only had Hogg performed prior
service as a captain in the regular army, but he also enjoyed the active support of General Pope. Yates, still rankled by the Lincoln administration's cavalier treatment of John Pope, was hardly inclined to deny any request made upon him by the general. Seeking a reasonable compromise, the governor at first suggested that Grierson withdraw his candidacy for the colonelcy of the 6th Illinois Cavalry in favor of Harvey Hogg, whereupon Yates would appoint the major to fill Hogg's vacant position in the 2nd Illinois. But Major Grierson, who had just surmounted the difficulties facing an outsider appointed over the heads of regimental officers and was not eager to repeat the experience, politely declined the governor's offer and graciously took his leave of the Illinois delegation.

No sooner had the disappointed major stepped ashore than Yates summoned him back on board the Black Hawk, on the pretext of introducing Ben to several ladies in the governor's entourage who also happened to be musicians. Although the request seemed unusual, Grierson complied and accompanied the governor back to the ladies' cabin. There, much to his astonishment, the major was introduced to the assembled party as "Colonel Grierson of the 6th Illinois Cavalry." He was, of course, "a very young colonel," Yates quipped as he handed Grierson his commission, "just five minutes old." 29

The newly appointed colonel's most pressing concern remained that of obtaining arms for his command. All but
despairing of the carbines under contract from the Cosmopolitan Arms Company, Grierson continued to keep a sharp ear cocked for rumors of available arms anywhere within the district. When he learned of such a cache stored at Cairo, and almost immediately thereafter happened upon General Sherman, the colonel of the 6th Illinois Cavalry convinced the general to give an order transferring any weapons that he might uncover in the depot at district headquarters to his destitute regiment. This time luck was with Grierson. At Cairo he discovered one hundred and fifty Sharps carbines which had somehow been overlooked during the previous day's issue of weapons. With these shoulder arms safely at Paducah, and with the arrival of seven hundred and fifty revolvers, the 6th Illinois Cavalry was adequately armed to undertake routine scouts during the closing days of April.

Two weeks after assuming command of the "Bloody Sixth," Colonel Grierson pronounced himself "tolerably well pleased with my success in the management of the Regt." Particularly gratifying was the realization that "the responsibility does not weigh very heavily on my shoulders." But, most important, the lingering depression and self-doubt of the previous months seemed to dissolve as Grierson grappled with the imposing difficulties involved in arming, equipping and training his ragged troopers. "The more I have to do," he confidently reminded Alice, "you know the more I can do—at least you have known it to be so sometimes."
By the first week in June, the 6th Illinois Cavalry was deemed well enough armed and equipped to participate in Union operations in southwestern Tennessee and northern Mississippi.

Unable to dislodge Grant's battered army from the blood-soaked ground at Pittsburgh Landing, General P. G. T. Beauregard on April 7 had withdrawn the Confederate army back to its base at Corinth, Mississippi, at the junction of the Mobile & Ohio and Memphis & Charleston Railroads. It was not, however, until mid-May that the Union army, under the personal command of Major General Henry W. Halleck, had managed literally to dig its way to within one mile of the Confederate works, finally investing Corinth on three sides. Effortlessly, Beauregard extracted his troops from the casually besieged city on May 29 and reestablished his base farther south at Okalona. Pleased at his virtually bloodless success, Halleck had openly admitted that "I do not . . . propose to pursue him far into Mississippi."\(^{31}\)

Subsequent Confederate evacuation of Memphis on June 6, simply confirmed the Federal commander's resolution to place Union forces in Mississippi upon the defensive, while he consolidated control over the broad area in his rear. Although Don Carlos Buell was immediately dispatched upon a mission into East Tennessee in order to secure the left flank of the extended Union line, while the remainder of Halleck's available forces were rushed to support
Samuel Curtis' forward movement in Arkansas, it remained apparent that there would be no general offensive along the Federal center until fall. In the interim, Union troops on the western bank of the Mississippi would be employed repairing railroads, rebuilding bridges, and curtailing bothersome Confederate cavalry forays.\textsuperscript{32}

It was to assist in these tidying-up operations that Grierson's regiment received instructions on June 6, 1862 to consolidate at Columbus, Kentucky preparatory to moving still farther south.\textsuperscript{33} The delay at Columbus was brief. On the evening of June 17, Colonel Grierson accompanied the last five companies of the 6th Illinois Cavalry on board the \textit{Crescent City} bound for Memphis. The first five companies of the regiment, under command of Major William L. Caldwell, meanwhile, were directed to proceed simultaneously to the same destination employing an overland route via Union City and Trenton.\textsuperscript{34}

Already a bustling commercial center, Memphis, situated atop high bluffs overlooking the Mississippi, was almost foreordained by its mere proximity to the agricultural heartland of the Confederacy to become a lucrative center for contraband traffic between southern planters and northern speculators. In mid-June, 1862, however, the city was relatively quiet; its populace dazed, though hardly cowed, by their unexpected and embarrassingly pacific deliverance into the hands of the Yankee invaders. General
Lew Wallace, who had usurped command of the city on June 17, took considerable encouragement from the applause of a group of secessionist ladies who had reviewed a dress parade of the 11th Indiana from the riverfront balconies of the Gayosa Hotel. But Ben Grierson, who disembarked his five companies of the 6th Illinois Cavalry at Memphis on the following afternoon, pronounced the self-styled "Charleston of the West" to be "decidedly a 'secsh' City." En route to Wallace's headquarters, the colonel observed only one Union flag floating over the city, aside from the general's own national standard. Moreover, the ladies of the captive town seemed particularly demonstrative in expressing their distaste for their blue-coated guests, spitting and turning their backs upon Federal officers as they passed on the streets. One curious matron ordered her Negro driver to stop her carriage as they drew abreast of Colonel Grierson on the sidewalk. What, she asked, did the Yankees intend to do with the southern ladies? And, when the colonel replied that the ladies of Memphis could expect to be treated precisely "as they deserved," the woman haughtily proclaimed their right and intention "to be saucy, and say just what they pleased." Such conduct, Grierson retorted, was hardly the prerogative of a true lady, and the female inhabitants of Memphis could rely upon preserving their
cherished privileges only so long as they "pleased to do right and behaved like Ladies." On one point, however, their minds might rest easy. The Union soldiers, Colonel Grierson felt certain, had no intention of depriving southerners of their Negroes. In his personal opinion, the new rulers of Memphis "would as soon think of surrounding ourselves with Skunks" as associate with the community's black populace. But, he warned, "all traitors whether . . . male or female ought to be treated as rebels to the Government." With that expression of the curious racial ambivalence so characteristic of midwestern Republicanism, the Illinois colonel saluted and took leave of his inquisitor, "concluding that she was perfectly welcome to all she made of me." 36

At headquarters, Colonel Grierson found General Wallace plagued by what would prove to be an almost chronic concern among the rapid succession of Federal commanders at Memphis. Throughout the war, the unpredictable and far-ranging activities of irregular Confederate cavalry, creating the near constant illusion of the presence of large enemy armies, would keep varying numbers of Union troops effectively bottled up in the riverfront city. As he conferred with Wallace, Grierson learned that a familiar personage from the Missouri theater, M. Jeff. Thompson, had withdrawn the city's garrison southward from Memphis after a Union naval victory on June 6. With the late arrival of Wallace's Third Division of the Reserve Corps of the Army of the
Tennessee, the Union force in the vicinity of the river
city during mid-June numbered less than 12,000 troops.
Intelligence reports, however, strongly indicated the
proximity of two regiments of Rebel cavalry within twenty
miles of Memphis, purportedly forming the advance contingent
of a rebel army of more than 30,000 men. Prior to the
appearance of the 6th Illinois, Wallace's entire cavalry
strength had consisted of one battalion of the 11th Illinois.
Now that Grierson was present, the general was anxious to
send out a reconnaissance in force to report on the ac-
ivities of the elusive Thompson. 37

Consequently, at 8 o'clock on the evening of June 20,
Colonel Ben Grierson rode out of the Federal cavalry en-
campment near the Memphis fairgrounds at the head of a
column of 315 horsemen composed of the five companies of the
6th Illinois Cavalry and a detachment from the third
battalion of the 11th Illinois. Instructions from General
Wallace directed that he undertake a forced march to
Hernando, Mississippi, some twenty-five miles south of
Memphis on the Mississippi & Tennessee Railroad. The
colonel's objectives were the dispersal of a Confederate
force believed to be concentrated at that place under the
command of M. Jeff. Thompson and the seizure of a train
expected to arrive at the Hernando station on the twenty-
first.

Travelling all night over the flat, heavily wooded
northern Mississippi countryside, with its innumerable winding creeks and streams, the Federal troopers rode unopposed into Hernando before dawn the next morning. Much to Grierson's disappointment, a thorough search of the town uncovered only four stragglers from Colonel William H. Jackson's Confederate cavalry and the information that Thompson, after removing the telegraph wire, had withdrawn his four hundred troops to Coldwater Station, approximately twelve miles farther down the track. Determined that the 6th Illinois succeed in its first real mission, the Federal commander decided to press on toward Coldwater, leaving behind Lieutenant Frank Lindsey and his late-arriving detachment of the 2nd Illinois Cavalry as a rearguard, with instructions to follow the main column at a half-hour interval.

The terrain beyond Hernando became gently rolling until within three miles of Coldwater Station, where it suddenly levelled off onto a flat, thickly timbered plain interrupted by twisting, steep-banked streams which greatly hampered cavalry movement. As the Union horsemen approached to within three-quarters of a mile of their objective, a locomotive whistle shrilly pierced the calm spring air. Immediately, Colonel Grierson dispatched a small contingent to the left to capture and hold the bridge crossing on the Coldwater River, about two miles north of the station. The remainder of the Federal column, meanwhile, precipitously
descended upon the small community, routing its hastily assembled band of defenders. But once again the eager Yankees failed to take either the train or its presumed passenger, M. Jeff. Thompson. Compounding the disappointment, the squad diverted toward the Coldwater returned to the station to report that the bridge across that stream had been burned behind the retreating enemy. Grierson, however, consoled himself as he supervised the destruction of some fifteen thousand pounds of captured bacon, along with a railroad car and substantial quantities of lard and forage; all the property of the Mississippi Quartermaster's Department. After sixteen hours in the saddle, the Federal cavalry encamped that same night at a spot three miles north of Hernando.

Upon his return to Memphis early on the afternoon of the twenty-second, Colonel Grierson confidently assessed the results of his first actual command in the field. Thompson, it was true, had eluded his pursuers, but in the process of searching for the Confederate general, Grierson and his troopers had "behaved with coolness and bravery," destroying the rebel supply depot at Coldwater Station, intercepting intelligence of enemy activities in DeSoto County and, above all, gaining invaluable first-hand knowledge of the difficult terrain of Northern Mississippi. All of this, the colonel proudly noted, had cost the enemy three dead, seven wounded and nine captured, while his command had returned unscathed.
On the afternoon of June 23, Major General Ulysses S. Grant, commanding the District of West Tennessee, arrived at Memphis after a hot and dusty ride on horseback from Corinth, Mississippi. Superseding General Wallace, Grant immediately devoted his full attention to the chaotic conditions prevailing in the southern river town. "Affairs in this city," he informed General Halleck, "seem to be in rather bad order, secessionists governing much in their own way." To correct this lamentable situation, the new Federal commander quickly outlined a system of civil and military government and appointed provost marshals to police the city. As these measures went into effect, Grant confidently predicted that "in a few days I expect to have everything in good order." 39

Still of pressing concern, however, were the small bands of Rebel cavalry that seemed to roam the countryside at will, burning cotton, waylaying trains, tearing up track and cutting telegraph wires. As a precautionary measure, Grant on June 25 instructed Colonel Grierson, with his entire effective force, to accompany a supply train intended for General William T. Sherman's command to its overnight camp ground, or until it was deemed out of danger. 40 Unfortunately, the 6th Illinois--acting with what Grant termed "the usual cavalry stupidity" 41--mistook the proper road in the darkness, thus leaving the wagons unprotected save for a small escort provided by General Sherman. Early the next morning
the district commander's worst fears appeared to be realized when citizens entering the city from the southeast reported that Colonel William H. "Red" Jackson's cavalry had swept down upon the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, just west of Germantown, disrupting the rails and seizing a train carrying the colonel and a work detail of the 56th Ohio Infantry. Since the lightly escorted Union wagon train presumably passed through the same area shortly after the Confederate raid, Grant reasonably assumed that it too had fallen into enemy hands.

Upon his return to Memphis, therefore, an embarrassed Ben Grierson was understandably eager to set his commanding officer's mind at ease. After regaining his bearings, the colonel reported, he had proceeded to Germantown but had uncovered no evidence to substantiate the rumors concerning the capture of Sherman's wagons and supplies. He did, however, observe abundant signs indicating that squads of Jackson's cavalry continued to hover about the line of the railroad, where they were engaged in burning cotton.42 "Additional Cavalry troops," Grant informed Halleck, "would enable me to partially clear the Country of these men."

As a start, the department commander might order the five companies of the 6th Illinois on detached service in the vicinity of Trenton to rejoin the remainder of their regiment at Memphis.43

In the meantime, General Grant decided that the small
mounted force at his disposal could be most effectively deployed along the fifteen miles of railroad track which stretched between Memphis and Germantown. With this important artery to the southeast reopened, and reinforced by a division from Corinth along with an additional cavalry regiment, Grant felt certain of his ability to hold a line from Holly Springs to Hernando, and thereby to intercept Jackson and Thompson's pesky cotton burners. Consequently, on June 27, the district commander directed Colonel Grierson to proceed with the effective force of his regiment, accompanied by a regiment of infantry, to a point some three miles east of Germantown, where Federal troops were already engaged in repairing the track just recently torn up by Jackson's raiders.44

Encamping along the line of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, Grierson immediately sent scouts fanning out in search of a large force of Rebel cavalry reported to be marching upon his position. Fresh in each blueclad trooper's mind as he rode into the west-Tennessee countryside were graphic tales of "Red" Jackson's purported use of vicious bloodhounds to track down members of the 56th Ohio who had attempted to flee from the rebel ambush of June 24. Thus, when Grierson's horsemen failed to detect signs of imminent enemy activity in the vicinity of Germantown, the Union soldiers gleefully exacted a measure of revenge from every canine found in the area, summarily executing over twenty
tracking dogs in four days.\textsuperscript{45}  

Despite the apparent inactivity of the rebels along the Memphis & Charleston, both Grant and Sherman remained wary after Jackson's unexpected foray, and on July 2, Grant ordered Grierson to remain in position along the railroad. Reinforced with a section of artillery, the colonel's command was directed to lend "all the protection possible" to the supply trains passing over the rails en route to General Sherman's troops stationed at Lafayette and Moscow.\textsuperscript{46} In order to facilitate administration, Grierson immediately moved his headquarters into Germantown, where he commandeered the depot for the use of the Quartermaster and Commissary Departments.\textsuperscript{47}  

Now in effect a post commander, the colonel of the 6th Illinois Cavalry professed to find his duties "much more varied without being more agreeable."\textsuperscript{48} His new station, he quickly discovered, was "a very dull little Town," but the unfamiliar burdens of dealing with a civilian population under occupation left little time for boredom or loneliness.\textsuperscript{49} By far the majority of his concerns inevitably involved either slaves or cotton, and before long Grierson wryly mused that to the uninitiated observer it must appear that the Federal commander at Germantown was operating "a rather extensive plantation."\textsuperscript{50}  

As everywhere in the occupied South, at the first sight of a Yankee uniform, blacks in the vicinity of Germantown
seized their chance to escape to freedom. Although Grierson earnestly endeavored to impress upon the local populace the benevolence of their blue-coated visitors, the Negro problem remained a constant irritant. Repeatedly, the colonel took "particular pains" to assure planters that neither he, nor the United States government, held any intention of wresting slaves from their owners. But, on the other hand, he made firm his resolution that under no circumstances would soldiers under his command hunt down or return runaways to their masters. Privately, he admitted that once an escaped slave reached the Union lines, it was his covert policy to "give them passes out and do not inquire which way they are going." 51

Despite any innate prejudices, Grierson could not help but lament the plight of the bewildered and misinformed refugees. On July 8, Grant informed General Halleck of his decision to impress contraband labor for work on the Memphis fortifications. Three days later, Colonel Grierson received an order directing him to forward one hundred Negro workers to the city. The response among the slaves in the Germantown vicinity proved remarkable, and a bit unsettling.

At daylight on the morning of July 12, Union soldiers commenced a round of visits to the plantations of the "most strongly secesh" landlords in the neighborhood, gathering up able-bodied slaves and leaving behind a receipt drafted by the Yankee colonel assuring the planters that their chattel
property would be returned as soon as the slaves' services were no longer required in Memphis; "unless," of course, "in the opinion of the Commanding General, the conduct and bearing of said owner would not render it advisable."\textsuperscript{52}

Within hours Grierson had gathered a total of one hundred and six slaves, and had shipped them off to Memphis. Although proud of his success in complying with Grant's instructions, the colonel found the scene enacted in the Federal camp prior to the departure of the contrabands tinged with pathos. "They were the happiest lot of mortals I ever saw," he informed his wife, "singing and dancing and having a good time generally. . . . The poor souls (so little do some of them know) many imagined that they were free indeed, but they were all very anxious to go and did not need a guard to keep them from running away."\textsuperscript{53} To his further amazement, at least four dozen additional Negroes presented themselves at Union headquarters in Germantown during the subsequent forty-eight hours, and Grierson strongly suspected that a score or more slaves in the immediate area had secretly run off to volunteer their services for work on the Memphis fortifications.\textsuperscript{54}

The cotton problem appeared less vexatious than that of contraband labor, and in it Colonel Grierson discerned a potential source of mutual profit for himself and the government. Planters along the Mississippi still chafed under General Beauregard's spring order to burn all the
cotton in west Tennessee and northern Mississippi in the wake of his retreating army. The manifest reluctance of cotton growers to voluntarily put the torch to their own crops had in fact compelled the Confederate commander along the river to risk still further alienating the plantation owners by sending squads of soldiers into the countryside with instructions to burn all cotton remaining in the hands of its owners. In early July, Grierson attested to the apparent effectiveness of Beauregard's stringent economic measures. At first glance, the counties of southwestern Tennessee and northern Mississippi appeared virtually denuded of cotton, and on every hand irate planters fumed over the loss of their cash crop. In the long run, Grierson observed, this smoldering disaffection might well work to the advantage of the Union cause.

Although discontent among local landholders proved real enough, the Federal commander at Germantown soon discovered that his initial assessment of the physical devastation wrought by the rebel cotton-burners had been premature and exaggerated. As he grew increasingly familiar with the locale, Grierson found that many planters had managed to preserve small caches of cotton from the torch. Now that the Yankee soldiers had reasserted a degree of security over the area, these fortunate plantation owners were anxious to get their endangered crops to market.

In accord with government policy, Colonel Grierson
permitted the cotton of "men who would have been for the Union if they dared" to move freely through his lines en route to the booming speculative market at Memphis. As a former businessman, however, the colonel fully appreciated the commercial potential of his position as military commander of the Germantown area and regulator of the lucrative cotton traffic through that region. If John Grierson could reach Memphis quickly, Ben expected that the two brothers "might make some money, buying cotton. The Cotton in many places near here has been, or considerable of it has [been] hid away and was not burned," he informed Alice. "The men who owns [sic] it are afraid [sic] to haul it to Memphis and would sell it very cheap or so money could be made on it, and I have the military force at my command, [and] could protect the transportation to Memphis, at the same time I do our trains and not do any injustice to the Government." Unhappily for the colonel's depleted pocketbook—although perhaps of exceedingly good fortune for the future of his military career—Ben Grierson's speculative scheme died stillborn. Unbeknown to his younger brother, John had in fact arrived at Memphis during mid-July, but Ben was ordered back to the city before he could put his plan into motion.

On July 11, 1862, Ulysses S. Grant was unexpectedly summoned to Corinth, where he replaced General Halleck in command of operations along the Mississippi. As his
successor at Memphis, Grant designated forty-year-old Brigadier General Alvin P. Hovey, an Indiana lawyer and veteran of the Mexican War. Hovey, either mistrusting or unaware of Colonel Grierson's reports which belied the persistent rumors of enemy activity in the Germantown sector, apparently tumbled into the trap of taking M. Jeff. Thompson's bombastic rhetoric at something more than face value. Thompson, protesting an order issued by Grant which allegedly expelled the families of certain secessionist sympathizers from behind Union lines, usually advised the Federal commander that the Confederate lines in northern Mississippi extended along the Coldwater River, a mere thirty-four miles south of Memphis. Unless the objectionable order was rescinded, the brash rebel general informed Hovey, he must "beware of the curses and oaths of vengeance which the 50,000 brave Tennesseans who are still in our army will register in heaven against the persecutor of helpless old men, women, and children, and the general who cannot guard his own lines." Superimposed upon the incessant reports of large enemy concentrations in northern Mississippi and southwestern Tennessee, this ominous message apparently convinced Hovey that General John C. Breckinridge and M. Jeff. Thompson were indeed preparing to launch a concerted movement upon the Federal garrison along the river. Consequently, on July 16, General Hovey instructed Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson to pull his command back to Memphis.
Grierson was astounded at the unexpected directive. Hoping to illustrate dramatically the utter spuriousness of the nervous rumors prevalent in the river city, the colonel selected a civilian and a buggy to serve as his only escort on a pre-dawn journey from Germantown to Memphis. Arriving at headquarters on the morning of the seventeenth, Grierson impressed upon his superior the absolute security of western Tennessee and at last prevailed upon Hovey to revoke his order. Unfortunately, the colonel was barely afforded sufficient time to rejoin his command before another frantic dispatch arrived from Memphis. Still convinced that an overwhelming assault upon Memphis was imminent, General Hovey against instructed Colonel Grierson to withdraw his troops inside the city's fortifications, either abandoning or destroying the rations and forage remaining on hand at Germantown. Absolutely certain of the accuracy of his own intelligence surveys, Grierson calmly elected to ignore the final paragraph of this order and without undue haste impressed teams, wagons, and drivers to transport his supplies and camp equipage safely back to Memphis. In a final dramatic gesture, Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson conspicuously entered the city in full martial array on July 19. In the advance marched the 58th Ohio, its band blaring out patriotic airs, followed in sequence by the five companies of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, a battery of Michigan artillery, and finally the 52nd Indiana Infantry,
with the wagon train closing up the rear. 63

In a letter written to his wife later that same day, Colonel Grierson confided that the entire affair had left him with a somewhat bemused feeling that "Brig. Gens. get sometimes big scares." 64 He realized, of course, that in riding unescorted to Memphis on July 17, and then lingering at Germantown to gather his supplies and equipment, he had taken virtually no risks at all. Continuous, systematic and thorough scouts of the area entrusted to his command had all but erased any possibility of error in the colonel's assessment of the situation to the south and east of Memphis. If nothing else, Grierson's conduct during his brief command at Germantown revealed a relatively simple facet of his character, but a facet nonetheless surprisingly uncommon among military commanders. As much as Grant, Ben Grierson could justly lay claim to the assertion that whatever his shortcomings as a field officer "stampeding is not my weakness." 65

On July 21, 1862, Major General William Tecumseh Sherman arrived at Memphis with the Fifth Division of the Army of the Tennessee, relieving General Hovey of command of Union forces in that vicinity. 66 Sherman was less immediately concerned with amorphous intimations of impending enemy onslaughts, than with the condition of civil and military affairs within the city. Although Grant had erected the framework for military administration in Memphis, his tenure
proved too brief to effect substantive results. Sherman's first weeks in the river town, therefore, were almost exclusively devoted to defensive measures and to troublesome civil concerns. Of utmost importance to General Sherman throughout July and August was "the maintenance of order, peace, and quiet within the jurisdiction of Memphis." Achieving so desirable a state of security and tranquility required supreme degrees of patience and tact. Surprisingly perhaps, in view of his later reputation, Sherman displayed precisely those subtle qualities best calculated to ensure success as he single-mindedly bent his energies to the completion of the important tasks initiated by Ulysses S. Grant: the erection of fortifications, the definition and regulation of contraband labor, the elimination of rampant profiteering, the suppression of disloyalty, and the restoration of responsible civil administration.

Grierson's cavalry enjoyed a welcome rest during the mid-summer lull in military operations. With General Sherman's attention directed toward civilian concerns, the five companies of the 6th Illinois Cavalry stationed at Memphis were seldom called upon to perform anything but picket duty and routine scouts. Although Colonel Grierson suspected that he would momentarily be ordered to join General Grant's command at Corinth, he nevertheless made full use of the respite to familiarize himself and his troopers with the countryside about Memphis.
By mid-August, events began to suggest that the cavalry's newly acquired knowledge might yet be put to good use. In the face of mounting enemy activity on both sides of the Union line in west Tennessee, Grant finally ordered the five detached companies of the 6th Illinois Cavalry to move south from Trenton and to rejoin the remainder of the regiment. The arrival of these additional horsemen, together with Major Christian Thielman's battalion of Illinois cavalry, boosted Sherman's mounted strength to approximately seven hundred officers and men. To command his expanded mobile arm, Sherman on August 29 designated Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, Chief of Cavalry for the Fifth Division, Army of the Tennessee.69

Observing Halleck's reluctance to continue the Federal advance after the fall of Corinth, General Braxton Bragg had decided to seize the initiative in the western theater. Consequently, during the closing days of July, 1862, Bragg transferred the bulk of his army to Chattanooga, preparatory to launching a full-scale invasion of the heartland of Tennessee. General Sterling Price, meanwhile, was left behind at Tupelo, Mississippi with instructions to watch Grant and to prevent him from going to the aid of General Buell, whose army defended the central portion of the state. The remainder of the Confederate command in Mississippi was entrusted to General Earl Van Dorn. Although directed to maintain the rebel stranglehold on the river at Vicksburg,
Van Dorn was authorized to assist Price if desirable and practicable without endangering the city. In Bragg's estimation, the 30,000 troops under Price and Van Dorn should at least be sufficient to neutralize Grant's forces in the west, while he smashed through the Union center in middle Tennessee. Indeed, with a little luck and cooperation, the two Confederate commanders in Mississippi might even break through Grant's virtually static line and join Bragg's victorious army as it rolled into Kentucky.70

In late summer of 1862, General Grant counted some 54,000 effectives at his disposal in the District of West Tennessee. More than 6,000 of these troops, however, were tied down to garrison duty at isolated points in southern Illinois, eastern Missouri, western Kentucky, and northwestern Tennessee. In southwestern Tennessee, therefore, some 48,000 Union soldiers occupied a front which stretched approximately ninety miles along the Memphis & Charleston Railroad. Sherman, with his own and Hurlbut's divisions, anchored this line on the Mississippi, while Major General William S. Rosencrans' with Hamilton's, Davis' and McKeans' divisions, secured the Federal left at Corinth, Grant's headquarters. The center was entrusted to Major General E. O. C. Ord, who held Jackson and Bolivar with some 18,000 men. Various smaller detachments, meanwhile, were scattered along the entire length of the railroad between Memphis and Corinth. But despite Grant's apparent
numerical superiority over Price and Van Dorn, the Union army along the river lacked flexibility. George H. Thomas' division had been transferred out of the District of West Tennessee in late July, and on August 14 Grant was compelled to dispatch two additional divisions to Buell's command. When Grant suggested that he might initiate limited offensive operations in the vicinity of Corinth, Halleck was quick to warn that any dispersal of Union forces in west Tennessee would be dangerous, as they might be called upon at any moment to further reinforce Buell at Chattanooga.71

Grant's dilemma was almost immediately apparent to Braxton Bragg. Detecting reinforcements flowing to Buell's army from Grant's command, Bragg informed Sterling Price on August 2 that "the road is open for you into Western Tennessee."72 Price, for his part, appeared anxious to move swiftly upon Corinth and in fact had already notified Van Dorn of his readiness to place 15,000 troops in the field at once, under Van Dorn's command. Obviously, no Confederate movement against Grant's line could hope to succeed without Van Dorn's active support, but at the moment the Vicksburg commander seemed too preoccupied with John C. Breckinridge's problem-plagued advance upon Baton Rouge to comply with Price's request for cooperation.73

Lacking reinforcements, Sterling Price continued to improve his army's fighting mettle, while he utilized the
limited resources at his disposal to unsettle the enemy. On August 26, he dispatched Colonel, and Acting Brigadier General, Frank C. Armstrong with a force of 1,600 cavalry on a raid into Tennessee. Picking up an additional 1,100 troopers under Colonel "Red" Jackson at Holly Springs, Armstrong dashed across the Hatchie River and successfully cut the railroad between Bolivar and Jackson before returning safely to Tupelo.74

Armstrong's raid sounded the signal gun for the renewal of military operations in west Tennessee, and thus brought the 6th Illinois Cavalry's period of relaxation to an abrupt end. Fearing for the security of his lines of communication, General Grant ordered Sherman to send Stephen A. Hurlbut's entire division to Brownsville, where it would be in a position to protect the railroad at Bolivar. Meanwhile, information had reached Memphis indicating that a body of Confederate cavalry was moving northward from Coldwater. To counter this apparent threat, Sherman dispatched Colonel James C. Veatch's brigade of Hurlbut's division in a feint toward Holly Springs, while Colonel Grierson's cavalry moved in the direction of Hernando, Mississippi with orders to disperse any rebel concentrations found in the area.75

Leaving Memphis on the evening of September 4, Grierson crossed the Nonconah River with one hundred and sixty troopers of the 6th Illinois Cavalry and entered Hernando without incident early on the following morning. There,
the colonel arrested twelve citizens whom he sent back to Memphis under a small guard commanded by Lieutenant Nathaniel B. Cunningham. The main Union cavalry force, meanwhile, proceeded eastward in the general direction of Holly Springs. After a brief skirmish with a handful of guerrillas, however, the 6th Illinois turned left off the Holly Springs road and advanced in a northeasterly direction toward Olive Branch. Encamping one mile east of that place, Grierson dispatched Major James D. Stacey and a foraging detail toward Germantown.

As Grierson's troopers occupied themselves at breakfast, just after daybreak on September 6, a force of dismounted rebel cavalry unexpectedly opened fire on the Yankee camp. A hotly contested skirmish lasting about thirty minutes left Grierson's troopers hard pressed. At this critical juncture, Major Stacey's detachment returned, descending upon the enemy flank and rear and routing the near victorious rebels. Content with a perfunctory pursuit of the fleeing Confederates, the Federal horsemen quickly returned to the battlefield to collect prisoners, mounts, weapons and equipment. Back at Memphis later that same day, Colonel Grierson estimated that he had cost the enemy twenty-three dead and between thirty and forty wounded, in addition to capturing twenty prisoners, more than thirty horses and some three dozen shotguns. His own loss he reported at twenty wounded; one presumed mortally. Grierson's horse
had sustained three wounds in the encounter at Olive Branch, and the colonel counted three bullet holes in his own coat and trousers. Miraculously, however, Grierson had escaped with no injury more serious than a bruise on the tip of the second finger on his right hand. As a reward for his trouble, General Sherman presented the colonel with an ornately furnished carbine captured from the rebels. 76

Unfortunately, the detachment escorting the citizens arrested at Hernando on the fifth had not met with the same good fortune. Approximately ten miles outside of Memphis, the Yankee horsemen were fired upon from ambush, leaving Lieutenant Cunningham and one prisoner dead and dispersing the remainder of the party. In retaliation, General Sherman immediately ordered all the available cavalry in the city out in search of the partisans responsible for Cunningham's death. Apparently, however, the dead officer's immediate superior, Captain James M. Boicourt, did not wait for proper authorization. As soon as news of the Rebel ambush reached the encampment of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, Boicourt assembled a small mounted force and rode out personally to avenge the death of his young lieutenant. Not far from the scene of the recent encounter, Cunningham's comrades passed the lieutenant's body as it was being transported back to Memphis. Viewing the remains, the angry Illinois troopers counted at least six wounds. Further inflaming the Yankee's already hot passions, the civilians escorting the
body insisted that the dead officer had been shot as he lay wounded, after which the rebels had stripped and mutilated his corpse. Enraged, Boicourt proceeded a short distance to the nearest house in the neighborhood, where he arrested twenty-three-year-old William H. White in the presence of the youth's distraught wife and mother. When the detachment dispatched by General Sherman arrived on the scene shortly thereafter, White lay dead in the yard while behind him his house crumbled to the ground in flames. Under questioning, Boicourt explained that White had resisted arrest and was attempting to escape when he was shot down and killed.77

When full details of the incident reached General John C. Pemberton, the Confederate commander of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana angrily notified Sherman that he was prepared to execute four Union prisoners if White's murderers remained unpunished. As Sherman was well aware, subsequent investigation had revealed that the dead youth not only had not participated in the attack upon the Union guards, but that he had in fact assisted in the burial of the dead civilian prisoner as well as having arranged for the transportation of Lieutenant Cunningham's body back to Memphis. Although embarrassed by the unfortunate affair, the Federal commander nevertheless refused to apologize for the incident. The responsibility for White's death, he asserted, must ultimately rest with the
Confederate government which encouraged or condoned the irregular modes of warfare then being waged in the area under his jurisdiction. "Of course I cannot approve of the killing of any civilian on mere suspicion," Sherman explained. And yet, he continued, "I charge the whole on the system of guerrilla warfare adopted, approved and encouraged by the Confederate authorities. Whatever claims the family and friends of White may have on the magnanimity of our Government I would recognize, but would make no concessions to the authorities of that Government which has turned loose bands of men without uniforms--without any marks of a soldier's calling--to do their will." 78

Information obtained by Grierson during his scout toward Hernando indicated that Price and Van Dorn were contemplating a movement upon Corinth. Sherman, recognizing the precariousness of Grant's position, was determined to all in his power to secure Grant's right flank, while at the same time employing his cavalry to relieve some of the pressure upon the center and left of the Union line by pinning down as many of the enemy's mounted detachments as possible in northwestern Mississippi. 79 On September 8, Sherman instructed Brigadier General Morgan L. Smith to proceed southward with 1200 men of his infantry brigade, together with Grierson's cavalry and a battery of light artillery, to a point some seven miles below Hernando, Mississippi, where he would disperse any enemy force encountered in the
area and destroy the railroad bridge and track spanning the Coldwater River "so effectually that it cannot be repaired." Grierson and 350 troopers rendezvoused with Smith's infantry later that same evening at its encampment on Pigeon Roost road, just beyond the Nonconah Creek. On the following morning, General Smith commenced his descent into Mississippi with a feint toward Holly Springs. The 6th Illinois Cavalry formed the Union advance, operating under entirely discretionary orders beyond the admonition to communicate with the infantry at Hernando. As Smith veered westward toward his true objective, Grierson pushed on toward the east where he had learned of the presence of Rebel cavalry on the Coldwater approximately eighteen miles to the left of Hernando. On every side, the Illinoisiants observed signs of recent intensified partisan activity; fence rails lay flat atop ground freshly indented by Confederate mounts. Glimpsing enemy pickets, Grierson crossed the Coldwater and cautiously advanced in the direction of Cockrum's Cross-Roads. Within two miles of that intersection, in the near impenetrable woods covering the Coldwater bottom, the Yankee troopers suddenly collided with a combined force of Mississippi and Tennessee Cavalry, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Frank A. Montgomery. Montgomery, who had been detached from Colonel "Red" Jackson's encampment north of Holly Springs with orders to counter the Federal raid into Mississippi, had learned of the
enemy's presence in his rear only scant moments before the unexpected clash and barely had time to countermarch before the Union horsemen descended upon his partially formed line, stampeding the surprised rebels.

After forestalling enemy pursuit by tearing up the bridge across the Coldwater, Grierson encamped for the night and rejoined the vanguard of General Smith's column north of Hernando on the morning of the tenth. Within twenty-four hours, the Yankee raiders finally caught a first glimpse of their objective. Two miles north of the river, Grierson's cavalry pressed forward, driving a rebel guard from the bridge and foiling an attempt on the part of the Confederates to burn the structure. Under Smith's orders, the 6th Illinois continued its advance into Coldwater Station, while the infantry busied itself with the destruction of the trestle works traversing the river. Discovering that the enemy was pulling back along the line of the Mississippi & Tennessee Railroad, Grierson halted at Coldwater Station only long enough to set a torch to the depot and three abandoned railroad cars. As flames lapped the sky, the Yankee troopers pressed on southward in pursuit of the retreating Confederates. Within two miles of Senatobia, however, Grierson reached the limits of his instructions and therefore wheeled his command about and returned to the Coldwater Bridge. After a night's rest, the cavalry moved out some five or six miles eastward on the Holly Springs
road in order to shield the infantry's withdrawal toward the north. Later in the day, the 6th Illinois briefly rejoined the main column; and after leaving a detachment of horsemen to accompany General Smith, a very satisfied Ben Grierson led the remainder of his command into camp near Memphis on the evening of September 12.\textsuperscript{81}

As October drew near, General Sherman appeared satisfied that his efforts to secure the Memphis sector of the Union line in west Tennessee had accomplished their purpose. Not only had the destruction of the tracks and bridge across the Coldwater severed rail communications between that point and Memphis, but Colonel Grierson's repeated dashes into northwestern Mississippi had compelled General Van Dorn to tie down the entire force of Armstrong's cavalry in order to cover his supply base at Holly Springs. Finally, Van Dorn's bloody defeat at Corinth, and his subsequent retreat to Holly Springs where General John C. Pemberton assumed command of the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana, relieved the pressure on west Tennessee and restored the initiative in northern Mississippi to General Grant, who already had his eyes fixed upon the river fortress of Vicksburg.\textsuperscript{82}

While a momentary pause again settled over events along the Mississippi, Ben Grierson was allowed to sample briefly the simple pleasures of domestic life. On September 20, the colonel's wife disembarked at Memphis, accompanied by the
couple's two young sons, Charles and Robert. During their first weeks in the city, Alice and the children enjoyed the hospitality of John Grierson and his southern-born wife. However, when General Sherman assigned Colonel Grierson the Memphis & Charleston railroad depot for use as his headquarters, the small family quickly converted two offices in the building into spartan, but comfortable, living quarters. A note of sadness entered the reunited Grierson household shortly after Alice's arrival when a terse letter from Robert Grierson informed his sons that their mother's protracted illness had finally claimed her life on the morning of October 8. For Ben, who had been unable to obtain a leave of absence to visit his mother's sickbed, the news aroused a particular sense of grief. But, as he later quite frankly observed, "the gradual decay of her faculties both physical and mental during the year preceding her death had ... in some measure prepared us all for her final release."

Apparently none of the family members in Memphis travelled to Jacksonville for the funeral, and in relatively short order Ben was again enmeshed in official duties, while John turned his energies to the responsibilities of his new position as quartermaster of the 6th Illinois Cavalry.33

Although Van Dorn's defeat and Grant's threatened forward movement caused Confederate military authorities in Mississippi momentarily to shift their attention eastward from the river, the cavalry was by no means left completely
idle during the more relaxed period following the battle of Corinth. Swarms of rebel guerrillas continued to operate like so many bothersome mosquitoes in the vicinity of the river city. On October 18, an exasperated Sherman announced his intention to expel ten secessionist families from the Union lines for every steamer fired upon by Confederate partisans. Moreover, any individual found in the immediate area where such an act had recently occurred would be subject to summary punishment. 84

Four days later, the Memphis commandant underlined his declaration of total warfare against irregular forces operating in west Tennessee, when he dispatched Colonel Grierson with a "select battalion" of four hundred cavalry in pursuit of Colonel W. W. Faulkner, who was in retreat after a bloody repulse at Island No. 10 in the northwest corner of the state. Sherman minced no words in describing the purpose of Grierson's mission and the means which might be employed to achieve the desired result. "The object," he informed his chief of cavalry, "is to completely destroy [sic] Falkner's [sic] band of guerrillas, already in confusion from their losses at Island No. 10. . . . Subordinates and privates," he cautioned, "must not pillage, but commanders may do anything necessary to impress upon the people that guerrillas must be driven from their midst, else they must necessarily share the consequences." 85 In three days of almost constant skirmishing, the Federal
horsemen completed a wide semicircle to the east and northeast of Memphis, cutting a swath through that nest of partisan forces. Faulkner successfully eluded his pursuers, but not before the Union cavalry had inflicted a further loss upon the already battered Rebels: seven dead, twenty or thirty wounded and seventeen captured. Moreover, in their hasty retreat, the harried enemy troopers were compelled to abandon twenty-two mounts and some three dozen weapons. Colonel Grierson, on the other hand, returned his command to Memphis unscathed.86

During the fortnight following Faulkner's escape, Grierson and his men conducted two similar expeditions against Rebel guerrillas. On the first of these forays, the Yankee troopers again rode toward the northeast where they disrupted a partisan encampment in the vicinity of Somerville, Tennessee. The second raid drew Grierson's horsemen southeastward in the direction of Byhalia, Mississippi. This time the Federal cavalry swept down so rapidly upon a guerrilla encampment on the outskirts of Byhalia that the astounded Rebels abandoned their horses as they fled, but also leaving behind four dead, several wounded and thirty prisoners.87 Personally, Colonel Grierson was confident that "by such constant and active scouting the country from forty to fifty miles around Memphis was kept well scoured and no rebel organization could be formed within that distance and remain in safety for any length of time in
one place." But of almost equal importance was the lesson which Grierson's skillful and diligent use of cavalry was apparently demonstrating to his immediate superior. General Sherman, who "was somewhat inclined to undervalue the service of the cavalry and in a general way looked upon it as more expensive than useful," was beginning to realize the value of the mounted arm when competently led. Along with this growing appreciation came a recognition that in Benjamin H. Grierson he possessed a cavalry commander of rare talent and innate ability.

As Sherman conferred with General Grant at Columbus, Kentucky on November 20, the commander of the Department of the Tennessee detailed his plans for the impending campaign in Mississippi. Grant proposed to move immediately against General Pemberton's forces, which were then entrenched along a line paralleling the Tallahatchie River, south of Holly Springs. Major General James B. McPherson was instructed to move out of Corinth and to effect a junction with the main body of Federal troops concentrated at Holly Springs. Sherman, meanwhile, would proceed southward along the Mississippi Central Railroad in such a manner as to place the Memphis divisions on Grant's right flank by the end of the month. The ultimate object of the proposed movement, Grant confided, was the capture of Vicksburg and the opening of navigation on the Mississippi River. To this end, General Halleck had authorized the Union commander on the east bank
of the river to call upon the co-operation of Federal troops in the Department of Arkansas. 90

Turning over the command at Memphis to Major General Stephen A. Hurlbut, Sherman left the river city on November 26 at the head of three infantry divisions and twelve companies of cavalry. The order of march specified that the infantry divisions, advancing along three parallel roads, converge upon Wyatte, Mississippi, mid-way between Senatobia and Holly Springs. Four companies of cavalry were detailed to accompany the infantry column on the right, while Colonel Grierson and the eight remaining companies under his command were directed to escort the center division. It would be Grierson's task to file off to the left as the Union advance drew abreast of Holly Springs and establish communication with General Grant. 91

By December 1, the forward elements of Sherman's command were safely in Wyatte. Learning that Pemberton had evacuated his position below the Tallahatchie and had fallen back to the Yalabusha, just north of Grenada, the Federal commander halted the infantry until a bridge could be constructed across the river. Meanwhile, Grierson and the 6th Illinois Cavalry forded the rain-swollen Tallahatchie and pressed on through a violent storm to reach Grant's headquarters at Oxford, some fifteen miles distant. 92

Disappointment greeted Colonel Grierson as he rode into cavalry headquarters at Oxford. On November 26, Grant
had assigned Grierson to the command of the third brigade of the cavalry division, XIII Army Corps. As organized, the third brigade comprised the 6th Illinois Cavalry, the 3rd Michigan Cavalry, and Thielman's Battalion of Illinois Cavalry. Difficulty arose as soon as the regimental and brigade commanders met at Oxford. It was then discovered that Colonel John K. Mizner of the 3rd Michigan outranked the colonel of the 6th Illinois. Mizner, therefore, assumed command of the third brigade, ordering Grierson to furnish two hundred dismounted men for patrol duty in Oxford. Shocked and humiliated, Grierson immediately proceeded to cavalry division headquarters, where he requested that the 6th Illinois Cavalry be ordered to undertake a scout of the countryside. Moreover, he suggested that upon completion of its assignment, the regiment be allowed to rejoin General Sherman's command. Fortunately for the erstwhile brigade commander, the division chief, Colonel T. Lyle Dickey, was equally embarrassed by the confusion over rank. As Grant's cavalry commander was well aware, both Colonel A. L. Lee and Colonel Edward Hatch, commanding the first and second brigades respectively, held commissions which post-dated that of the colonel of the 6th Illinois. A decision by Colonel Grierson to press his claims for brigade command would, therefore, necessitate a reorganization of the cavalry division of the XIII Corps. Grierson, however, was not particularly anxious to cause a major disruption in
Grant's cavalry arm on the eve of a campaign. Reflecting upon his situation, the colonel professed that "the whole matter . . . appeared to me at that time as a repetition in another degree of a similar difficulty which had arisen between General Grant and General Prentiss." With the example of that unfortunate incident as a guide, Colonel Grierson declined to assert his prerogative at that particular moment and, with considerable relief on all sides, accepted permission to return to General Sherman's command, quickly gallopping out of Oxford "before any message would reach me countermanding the order for my departure."  

On December 8, Sherman was ordered back to Memphis to organize twenty thousand reinforcements for a full-scale advance down the Mississippi. While one Union army held Pemberton pinned down near Grenada, Grant hoped that Sherman, with close to 40,000 men and Admiral David Dixon Porter's gunboat flotilla, might ascend the Yazoo and capture Vicksburg from the rear. Much, however, depended upon securing the prompt and active co-operation of 12,000 troops serving in the Department of Arkansas. Grant, therefore, dispatched Colonel Grierson and six hundred cavalry overland to open communications with General Frederick Steele, commanding at Helena, Arkansas, and to provide him with details of the contemplated movement.

After nightfall on December 9, Grierson left his camp on Toby Tubby Creek, two miles west of College Hill, and
proceeded westward. Arriving at Coldwater about noon on
the twelfth, the colonel parted with the main body of his
force and continued across the Mississippi with seventy-
five men. Both Grant and Sherman were by this time growing
exceedingly anxious from want of information concerning the
movements and safety of the 6th Illinois. Unknown to the
commanders at Oxford and Memphis, Grierson, after a slight
delay, accomplished his mission on the afternoon of the
thirteenth. Two days later, the Illinois troopers returned
to the banks of the Toby Tubby, only to discover that their
camp had moved farther south during their absence. Conse-
quently, it was early on the morning of December 16 when
Grierson's weary horsemen finally arrived at Oxford, relieving
General Grant of his concern over the success of their
mission. 95

Unfortunately for the future of Grant's projected grand
offensive, however, the Confederate high command had not
been idle as the Union army lumbered steadily southward
into Mississippi. Alerted to the sudden vulnerability of
the Mississippi Valley, Secretary of War James A. Seddon, on
November 24, 1862, had appointed General Joseph E. Johnston
to assume overall command in the West. Van Dorn and Price,
meanwhile, had been designated commanders of the 1st and
2nd Corps, respectively, in Pemberton's Department of
Mississippi and East Louisiana. 96

While Joe Johnston grappled with the inherent vagaries
of his sprawling new assignment, John C. Pemberton was
desperately searching for a means of disrupting the Federal drive toward Vicksburg. The sheer weight of numbers involved in the Union pincers movement along the Mississippi rendered moot any question of Confederate counterattack. Even if, through some miracle, the beleaguered Vicksburg defenders should hold one of the monstrous jaws of the Yankee trap in abeyance, the other must inexorably crash shut. Pemberton agonized on the horns of his dilemma through the closing days of November. Then, during the first week of December, a Texan, Lieutenant Colonel John S. Griffith, suggested an audacious plan which offered the seductive promise of rich rewards with a minimum of risk. The Federal juggernaut was sustained through a single lifeline which stretched like a slender thread along the Mississippi Central Railroad from Oxford, Mississippi to Bolivar, Tennessee. Cut this fragile tether, Griffith persuasively argued, and Grant's army must either withdraw or strangle.97

In an atmosphere of utmost secrecy, Confederate cavalry brigades began to assemble at Grenada, Mississippi on or about December 12. Pemberton had decided to play the long shot and had selected the impetuous Earl Van Dorn to conduct the bold dash to the rear of Grant's army. Accompanying the controversial rebel commander would be some 3,500 campaign-hardened troops consisting of Griffith's Third Texas Cavalry, Colonel Robert M. McCulloch's Missouri and Mississippi brigade, and Colonel William H. Jackson's
Tennesseans. As Van Dorn prepared to move northward, General Nathan Bedford Forrest was being dispatched from Braxton Bragg's department to conduct a diversionary raid against Federal communications in west Tennessee. In the final weeks of 1862, the Confederate high command was relying heavily upon the combined efforts of its mounted arm to relieve mounting pressure in the vital western theater.⁹⁸

On December 15, the column of rebel troopers moved silently out of Grenada and encamped on the opposite bank of the Yalabusha. Shortly after daylight the next morning, the command started eastward along the river in the general direction of Houston. As yet, none of the grayclad riders harbored the vaguest notion of their destination or mission. In fact, Van Dorn's unexpected appearance at the head of the column near sunrise on the sixteenth represented the enlisted men's only introduction to their new commander. Still unknown to all but Van Dorn was the information that the Confederate cavalry's true objective was the destruction of Grant's secondary base of supply at Holly Springs, Mississippi.

Travelling swiftly and unopposed, the Rebel cavalrymen pushed rapidly through Houston, Pontotoc and New Albany before finally reining up just east of their target on the bitterly cold night of December 19.⁹⁹ At dawn the following day, Van Dorn handed down the order to charge, and two columns of screaming rebel troopers poured into the
sleeping town from the east and northeast. Although the Union garrison at Holly Springs had been forewarned of a possible attack, the sudden enemy onslaught caught Colonel Robert C. Murphy and the five hundred troops under his command completely off-guard. Before the sounding of an alarm, the impetuous Confederates had completely overridden the two infantry camps located one-half mile distant from each other; one near the railroad depot and the other in the center of town. Only the alert 2nd Illinois Cavalry, encamped on the fairgrounds north of town offered even token resistance. But, lacking infantry support, the Illinois troopers were also quickly compelled to hoist the white flag. At 8 a.m. on December 20, Van Dorn was securely in possession of Grant's storehouse. By sunset, between $400,000 and $1,500,000 in supplies and equipment had been committed to the flames, and Van Dorn's remounted horsemen were once again on the march; their destination unknown.  

Grant remained unaware of Van Dorn's presence in his rear until the afternoon of December 19. On the previous day, a party of some eight hundred Federal cavalry dispatched to cut the Mobile & Ohio Railroad had encountered the rearguard of the Confederate column as it left Pontotoc. Estimating the enemy's strength at between 6,000 and 8,000 men, the Union commander, Colonel T. Lyle Dickey, had made his presence known and then prudently withdrew in an effort to lure the Rebel horsemen in the direction of Oxford.
Van Dorn, however, refused to be distracted and had gratefully allowed the Yankee troopers to ride off unmolested, while the Confederates continued on their remarkably peaceful journey northward along the Ripley road. Since Dickey had sent couriers racing off to Oxford from Pontotoc, it was with considerable surprise that he entered Grant's headquarters the following afternoon only to discover that the department commander had not yet learned the alarming news of the enemy's proximity to the Federal line of communication. His messengers, it was later learned, had become hopelessly lost in the Yocona bottomlands and did not appear at Oxford until the morning of the twentieth.101

Without waiting for Dickey to finish his verbal report, the commanding general bolted from the room and raced unaccompanied to the telegraph office, a quarter of a mile distant. Although under the mistaken impression that the horsemen whom the colonel had observed at Pontotoc were part of Colonel William H. Jackson's command, Grant alerted commanding officers at Davis' Mills, Grand Junction, LaGrange, Bolivar, and in particular Holly Springs, to the probable intention of the rebel cavalry to cut the railroad somewhere north of Oxford. Meanwhile, Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson was directed to report with his entire regiment to Colonel John Mizner, who in turn was ordered to start immediately in pursuit of the enemy. In addition to the 6th Illinois Cavalry, Grant was placing at Mizner's disposal
the 1,200 mounted troops of the 7th Kansas, 4th Illinois, and 3rd Michigan regiments. 102

Grierson roused his command at one o'clock on the morning of December 20, and one hour later commenced a five-mile march westward to the Springdale ford of the Yocknapatalfa (Yocona) River, where he halted to await the appearance of Colonel Mizner's force marching north from Water Valley. An annoying two and one-half hours after the 6th Illinois' arrival, Mizner at long last approached the ford, and at six-thirty a.m. the entire body of 1,600 horseman waded across the Yocknapatalfa in the direction of Oxford. The morning's march led the Union cavalry through a dense and dismal marsh, which delayed its arrival at Grant's headquarters until one o'clock in the afternoon. Still, Mizner dawdled for three hours at Oxford before resuming his northward march. It was eight o'clock in the evening, therefore, when the cavalry bivouacked near the banks of the Tallahatchie. After a five-hour rest, the troopers again climbed into their saddles to arrive at Waterford, nine miles south of Holly Springs, just after daybreak on December 21. 103

Grant's temper was a fragile instrument following the fiasco at Holly Springs, and the slowness of his cavalry's pursuit of the rebel raiders quickly pushed the Federal commander's patience to the breaking point. At Waterford, Mizner received an order instructing him to turn over his
command to the officer next in rank. By way of explanation, Grant curtly informed the aggrieved officer that "your apparent reluctance at starting from here and the want of alacrity in complying with my orders has so shaken my confidence in you that no matter how well qualified you may be to command such an expedition as the one you have started on, I should feel insecure with you in command." 104

Exhibiting neither "reluctance" nor "want in alacrity," Colonel A. L. Lee of the 7th Kansas Cavalry—"Jennison's Jayhawkers"—immediately stepped into the position vacated by Mizner's removal. Lee's tenure, however, proved exceedingly brief. With an active field command at stake, Ben Grierson demonstrated little of the gentlemanly acquiescence over matters of precedence that he had exhibited earlier at Oxford. A quick comparison of dates of commission plainly revealed that Grierson outranked Lee by almost a full month. Under the circumstances, the colonel of the 7th Kansas was left no alternative but to relinquish command of the expedition to the senior officer. 105

With the lesson of Colonel Mizner's chastening experience fresh in his mind, Grierson immediately placed the cavalry in motion toward Holly Springs. An infantry force under Colonel C. C. Marsh, who had been awaiting Mizner's arrival at Waterford, occupied the center of the long-delayed advance, with Grierson's troopers, marching by parallel roads, guarding each flank. Entering the smoldering depot
at 11 o'clock on the morning of the twenty-first, the Federal soldiers learned that the enemy had abandoned the town during the previous evening, heading in a northerly direction. 

Unfortunately, at this point a mix-up in orders granted Van Dorn's raiders an additional twenty-four hours of critical breathing space. Relying upon his authority as post commander, Colonel Marsh detained the cavalry at Holly Springs until the afternoon of December 22, when an order arrived instructing the colonel to dispatch Mizner and the 3rd Michigan toward Grand Junction in order to scout the roads and to re-establish abandoned garrisons. The commanding general concluded his message with a cryptic request that Marsh "send the balance back here." As the colonel was attempting to comply with Grant's order, Brigadier General C. S. Hamilton reached Holly Springs at the head of an infantry division. Finding Grierson "impatient to pursue the enemy"--and, in fact, "ready to pursue ever since yesterday noon"--Hamilton requested that he be allowed to retain the cavalry. Clearly, the department commander had failed to impress upon either Marsh or Hamilton his desire that the cavalry operate as an independent pursuit force. And, as a result, Grant was finally compelled to direct Hamilton to "let Grierson, Lee and Fifth Ohio Cavalry push after the enemy until they find him. They may travel over West Tennessee in pursuit of the enemy until it will no longer support an army." In the confusion, however,
Grierson had been ordered back to Oxford and was already a mile from Holly Springs when he received word of Grant's authorization to follow the enemy into west Tennessee. Countermarching his command, the colonel overtook the 3rd Michigan Cavalry during the night and reined up at Grand Junction, Tennessee shortly after daybreak on December 23.\footnote{111}

After leaving Holly Springs on the evening of December 20, General Van Dorn had determined to make a feint northward toward Bolivar in an effort to divert attention from Forrest's raid through west-central Tennessee.\footnote{112} The following day, the rebel troopers had assaulted, but failed to dislodge, a tenacious 250-man Federal garrison defending the railroad bridge across the Wolf River at Davis' Mills, eighteen miles north of Holly Springs. However humiliating, the unexpected repulse at Davis' Mills had barely caused Van Dorn to pause long enough to lick his wounds before again turning his column northward. In the absence of anticipated pursuit by Grant's cavalry, the Confederate horsemen had occupied the next two days showing themselves at various points to the north and northeast, in an attempt to conceal their final objective.\footnote{113}

By late morning on December 23, an aggressive Ben Grierson was finally on Van Dorn's trail. A three-hour halt at Grand Junction afforded time to feed the men and horses, communicate with General Grant, and allow the slow-paced 3rd Michigan to catch up with the rest of the command.
During this brief delay, Grierson also received a message from Brigadier General Mason Brayman, commanding the Union garrison at Bolivar, Tennessee. The enemy, he reported, was in his neighborhood. If the colonel could bring his cavalry to Bolivar, Brayman promised to put him "on the track." With the department commander's wholehearted approval, Grierson led his column out of Grand Junction at 10 o'clock a.m., informing his superior that he was "moving as rapidly as possible north to Bolivar." Grant, undoubtedly recalling the confusion and lost opportunity at Holly Springs, this time sent his cavalry commander off equipped with both considerable discretion and a firm admonition. If you are on the track of the enemy follow him," he insisted. Don't be turned off by directions from post commanders unless you think you will get after the enemy by a shorter route or in a more effective way by doing so."

Grierson brought his command into Bolivar at 11 o'clock that same evening and bivouacked his sleepless men and their mounts for the night. The enemy's campfires, he reported, could be distinctly observed flickering in the darkness about six miles to the southeast. In reality, however, the main body of Rebel cavalry was already encamped several miles northwest of town. At daylight on December 24, the Confederate raiders suddenly dashed rapidly south and eastward, cutting off and capturing pickets posted in the
western outskirts of Bolivar before passing out of range of the Federal fortifications. Once he had determined the strength and direction of the enemy force, Colonel Grierson immediately moved his troopers out along the Brownsville road, skirmishing with the rebel horsemen and driving them two miles down the road.\textsuperscript{117}

The Federal cavalry commander later recalled that at this point the rebels "not heretofore knowing of our presence at Bolivar became somewhat confused."\textsuperscript{118} Nevertheless, when the enemy broke off contact, Grierson prudently withdrew with his command into town until two companies dispatched to trail the Confederate column could ascertain Van Dorn's direction of march and probable intentions.\textsuperscript{119} When it became apparent that the enemy was moving south along the Middleburg road, the Federal cavalry once again rode out in pursuit. At Middleburg, the bluecoats again collided with Van Dorn's rearguard. Having failed to dislodge the town's 115-man garrison, the Confederates were again headed southward; but this time with 1,400 Yankee troopers close on their heels.

In obedience to General Grant's instructions of December 23, Colonel Grierson telegraphed word of his progress at every opportunity as he dogged the Rebels' trail back over the same route that his own column had followed several days earlier on its way to Bolivar. In reply, Grant's adjutant, Colonel John A. Rawlins, informed the
Union cavalry commander that a force of infantry and artillery was stationed at Salem, fifteen miles east of Holly Springs, and that Colonel Edward Hatch was moving with his regiment toward the Tallahatchie in an attempt to cut off a part of the enemy column as it approached the river. Grierson, meanwhile, was instructed to "make every possible exertion to harrass and destroy the enemy."  

Near nightfall on December 24, Colonel Grierson reported from Saulsbury that he was encamped within two and one half miles of the rebel raiders, and that he was ready to "follow them to their den." Privately, however, the colonel was both concerned and angry. His own estimates placed the enemy's strength at between 5,000 and 7,000 men. According to these figures, the Confederate horsemen outnumbered their Yankee pursuers by at least four or five to one. Meanwhile, Colonel A. L. Lee, with nearly half of Grierson's effective force, seemed intent upon dragging his feet. When verbal instructions to close up failed to produce a response, the Federal commander dispatched a courier bearing written directions for the colonel commanding the First Brigade. The messenger, Grierson lamented, found Lee still a full 5 miles in the rear, with skirmishers dismounted, on the flanks and front on ground over which I had passed with all due caution two hours previously.  

At 2 o'clock on Christmas morning, Grierson's scouts advised him that the enemy, after feeding, had broken camp.
By 4 a.m., the Yankee horsemen were back in the saddle and in hot pursuit. Four hours later a familiar face rejoined the Federal column as it proceeded southward some eight miles beyond Saulsbury. Apparently forgiven for past transgressions, Colonel John Mizner was once more directing the chase after Van Dorn. Mizner reported the enemy six miles to the south of his position and moving in the direction of Ripley. There could be little doubt that the Rebel horsemen were heading directly for their base at Grenada. However, if Hatch could maneuver his regiment in front of the rapidly moving raiders, Mizner suggested, the enemy troopers might yet be brought to bay.123

With their reinstated commander's grudgingly tendered permission, Grierson's cavalry pressed to the front of the Federal column as it moved through the northern Mississippi countryside. Near Ripley, Major John J. Mudd joined the pursuit with a fresh detachment of the 2nd Illinois Cavalry. But, by this time, the hard-riding 6th Illinois had already advanced beyond the town in search of a suitable campsite for the entire command. At about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, Mizner's exposed vanguard unexpectedly collided with the Confederate rearguard approximately one mile south of Ripley. Apparently undaunted by Illinoisians' superior numbers, the grayclad horsemen barely hesitated before pouring fire into the ranks of their pursuers. Although the 6th Illinois repulsed
the rebel attack with ease, the audacity and fierceness of the enemy assault apparently convinced Colonel Grierson that he was finally face to face with Van Dorn himself. As they pursued the fleeing rebels, the Yankee troopers were startled again and again as the Confederate horsemen re-grouped and opened fire; only to withdraw and repeat the maneuver. Finally, having slowed down the Federal advance some seven miles south of Ripley, the enemy detachment broke off contact and rode southward to rejoin the main Rebel column. As the twilight shadows deepened, Grierson fell back a mile and a half, where he awaited the arrival of Colonel Mizner with the remainder of the command. Expressing his belief that Van Dorn had personally led the enemy force during the recent skirmishing with the 6th Illinois Cavalry, Colonel Grierson requested permission to launch an attack under the cover of darkness. Mizner, however, flatly refused to sanction the colonel's venturesome request, and the Illinois regiment quietly bivouacked for the night.124

On the morning of December 26, the Federal horsemen were again in the saddle, Colonel Lee's brigade in the advance, proceeding in "a cautious and leisurely manner," toward Pontotoc.125 At New Albany, the column halted for two hours, during which time "Jennison's Jayhawkers" added to their speckled reputation by reportedly pillaging local residences.126 Near that place, Colonel Mizner reported that Van Dorn was "making his way back to Pemberton as
fast as he can go." But, he advised Grant, "unless I can learn that a force of ours is south of Van Dorn farther [sic] pursuit will be useless, and to-morrow I shall turn back toward Oxford." Pressing on six miles farther south, Mizner finally gave the order to abandon the chase and marched his command back to the Tallahatchie River. Although he had intended to recross the river via King's Bridge, the colonel allowed himself to be led off on to a wrong road, and it was after dark when the Federal cavalry finally reached the Tallahatchie. In the midst of a violent storm, Colonel Grierson crossed over and encamped with his brigade on the high ground north of the river. Colonel Lee's brigade, meanwhile, was compelled to bed down in the swampy bottomlands along the south bank of the stream. Drenched and fatigued, the disappointed cavalrmen resumed their line of march at 7 o'clock on the morning of December 27 and re-entered Holly Springs on the following afternoon.

Van Dorn's lightening raid upon Holly Springs had been masterful. In two weeks, his Rebel cavalry had travelled over four hundred miles behind enemy lines and, in the process, had handed the Union army along the river certainly its most galling, if not its most significant setback of the year. The destruction of Grant's supply depot on the Mississippi Central Railroad, coupled with the simultaneous disruption of a long stretch of Mobile & Ohio track lying between Jackson, Tennessee and Columbus, Kentucky by
Forrest's hard-riding cavalry, had completely severed the lines of supply and communication which supported the large Federal army poised north of the Tallahatchie and had rendered futile any further overland advance upon Vicksburg. In Grant's own estimation, the adroit and devastating winter raids of 1862 had "demonstrated the impossibility of maintaining so long a line of road over which to draw supplies for an army moving in an enemy's country. I determined, therefore, to abandon my campaign into the interior with Columbus as a base, and returned to La Grange and Grand Junction destroying the road to my front and repairing the road to Memphis, making the Mississippi river the line over which to draw supplies." 129

Throughout the pursuit of Van Dorn's swift-moving raiders, Colonel Grierson had displayed ample evidence of his rapidly maturing prowess as a competent and aggressive cavalry commander. Chafing at the slow, deliberate movements of Colonels Mizner, Marsh and Lee, Grierson, upon assuming command of the Federal cavalry, had moved swiftly and surely; and yet he was always mindful of General Grant's instructions to keep headquarters informed of his own movements, as well as of the movement of the enemy. Learning of Van Dorn's presence near Bolivar, the colonel had proceeded with all deliberate speed to intercept the elusive rebel column. At Bolivar, he had exercised proper and prudent judgment in rendering the defense of the military
post at that place his primary concern and in refusing to be lured blindly into a headlong dash after what might well have proven an audacious feint by the enemy commander. Once he had determined Van Dorn's true direction and probable intentions, however, Grierson had conducted a close and aggressive pursuit all the way from Bolivar south across the Tallahatchie; literally breathing down the necks of the retreating Confederates until ordered to break off conduct by Colonel Mizner, who relieved him as commander of the Federal pursuit. 130 Even after Mizner's return, the 6th Illinois Cavalry retained the advance for twenty-four hours and alone had maintained close contact with the enemy, compelling Van Dorn to post a rearguard at Ripley in order to delay Grierson's hard-pressing troops while the main Confederate force withdrew farther south. In two days of almost constant harrassment of the Rebel raiders, Grierson's cavalry had captured between sixty and seventy of the enemy, including a major and a lieutenant. The corresponding Federal loss was one dead (accidentally shot by the discharge of his own weapon), two wounded, and two missing. In concluding his report of the pursuit after Van Dorn, the Illinois colonel expressed regret only at "not having the hearty co-operation of Colonel Lee, and that consequently I was unable to do more for the further success of the expedition." 131

Although Grierson may not have been aware of it at the time, he had also witnessed a superb demonstration of the
use and possibilities of cavalry operating behind enemy lines. Van Dorn's raid upon Holly Springs amply illustrated the lesson that given surprise, speed and good horsemanship, a small mounted force could operate with considerable effectiveness against larger, better equipped commands. It was a lesson learned early and repeated again and again by Confederate cavalry commanders. Shortly, Benjamin H. Grierson would have occasion to show that the lessons taught by Earl Van Dorn in northern Mississippi during the winter of 1862 had not been lost upon the rebel captain's most aggressive pursuer.\(^{132}\)

Grierson's command remained at General Grant's new headquarters at Holly Springs for five days, during which time the cavalry of the Army of the Tennessee underwent reorganization. While Van Dorn was keeping his horsemen preoccupied, Grant on December 22 had decided to consolidate his cavalry into two brigades. Now that his mounted troops were reassembled and unoccupied, the new arrangement was finally effected. Colonel A. L. Lee stepped up to command the Second Cavalry Brigade, attached to General C. S. Hamilton's XVI Corps, while Benjamin H. Grierson took charge of the First Cavalry Brigade, forming a part of the XVII Corps under General James B. McPherson. In addition to his own 6th Illinois Cavalry, the colonel now assumed over-all command of the 7th Illinois and 2nd Iowa regiments, in all about 3,000 men.\(^{133}\)
On January 3, 1863 the newly organized First Cavalry Brigade descended the Mississippi Central Railroad and took up station at Waterford, Mississippi. Colonel Grierson's instructions directed that he maintain regular scouts of the countryside to the south, west and east of his position. Grant had been surprised once, and he held no desire to see the Confederate cavalry attempt to repeat its recent success, while he tried to extricate an entire Federal army from Mississippi. During the second week of the new year, the Union engineers completed repairs to the tracks between Holly Springs and Memphis. When Grant was assured that Pemberton had abandoned the line of the Tallahatchie and was withdrawing his troops south and westward toward Jackson and Vicksburg, the Federal commander commenced pulling his army back into west Tennessee.\textsuperscript{134}

As the Army of the Tennessee lumbered northward, General McPherson was assigned the duty of supervising the removal of public stores at Holly Springs. Upon completion of that task, the remaining elements of the XVII Corps were directed to fall back upon LaGrange, Grand Junction or Davis' Mills.\textsuperscript{135} On January 10, Grierson's brigade returned to Holly Springs, where the colonel was informed that his troopers would form the rearguard of the Union retreat from northern Mississippi. Thus far, the removal of men and material had proceeded smoothly, but as police authority visibly waned, rumors reached McPherson's ears of threats to burn the former
Rebel stronghold and more recent scene of Federal humiliation. To forestall such an eventuality, the Union corps commander doubled guards and increased mounted patrols during the final hours of his work in Holly Springs. Heightened vigilance apparently saved most of the private dwellings in the small community from destruction. But in spite of McPherson's efforts, the Magnolia Hotel and a number of buildings on the north and east sides of town nevertheless went up in flames as the last blueclad troops marched north toward Tennessee.

At General McPherson's order, Colonel Grierson remained behind with four hundred men as the last train pulled out of the Holly Springs' depot late on the afternoon of January 10. The cavalry commander was instructed to patrol the town through the night, and on the following morning to fall back to Coldwater. Despite newspaper reports to the contrary, Colonel Grierson reported no buildings burning in Holly Springs as he finally removed his soldiers from the community on the morning of January 11. Early the following day, the Union cavalry made a quick dash back into the abandoned depot to drive out a small force of Confederate partisans rumored to have reoccupied the town. A thorough scout of the area, however, failed to uncover any signs of the enemy's presence, and Grierson ordered his command back into west Tennessee, where he placed his troops into winter quarters at LaGrange, fifty-one miles east of
Memphis. From LaGrange, the First Cavalry Brigade of the Army of the Tennessee would patrol the line of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad between Grand Junction and Lafayette, while its commander studiously applied himself to the tedious chores involved in preparing soldiers for the inevitable spring campaign. 136
NOTES - CHAPTER III


3 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 123; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, December 15, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

4 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, December 15, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

5 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, December 18, 1861, Ibid.

7. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, November 24, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.


10. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, December 29, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

11. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, December 22, 1861, Ibid.

12. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, December 28, 1861, Ibid.

13. Ibid.


15. Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 131, 137; Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, 1861-1866, III, 56; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, January 9, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 3. After the war, Grierson exhausted many spare hours in an effort to have his service record amended. The Army Register, 1875, p. 74, lists his date of commission as January 9, 1862. Grierson persistently argued that his actual term of service dated from his appointment as a volunteer aide-de-camp to General Prentiss, May 8, 1861. However, he was openly anxious for the government to endorse August 28, 1861—the date of his commission from the Governor of Illinois—as his correct date of enrollment. When it finally became patently obvious that the War Department would not recognize volunteer duty performed prior to actual muster into United States service, Grierson argued that he should at least rank from October 1, 1861—the date from which he had received pay as major of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. A compromise was eventually reached and, consequently, the Army Register, 1890, p. 84, carries Grierson's rank as major of volunteers to date from October 24, 1861. RG 94, Grierson ACP File, National Archives; Heitman, Historical Register, I, 478; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, January 19, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.
Grierson received $595.60 back pay for services rendered from October 1 to December 31, 1861. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, January 19, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 3.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, January 24, 1862, Ibid. Grierson reported that in this instance "He [Cavanaugh] felt so sure that he would get it, that he provided, and had no better taste than to appear in the uniform of that grade [brigadier general]." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 137. Cavanaugh's hopes for promotion, however, were not realized. The appointment as brigadier general of volunteers had already been conferred upon Colonel John M. Palmer of the 14th Illinois Infantry on December 20, 1861. Neitman, Historical Register, I, 767; Warner, Generals in Blue, 358-59; George Thomas Palmer, A Conscientious Turncoat: the Story of John M. Palmer 1817-1900 (New Haven and London: Yale & Oxford University Presses, 1941), 75.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, January 26, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; B. H. Grierson to Charlie Grierson, January 28, 1862, Ibid.

Special Orders No. 27, District of Cairo, January 31, 1862, Ibid.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, February 18, 1862, Ibid.


B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, February 18, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; John Olney to B.H. Grierson, April 9, 1862, Ibid., Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows, 145-46.


25 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, February 20, 24, March 7, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 148.


27 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, March 29, 1862, Ibid.; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 158-59. Although at the time disappointed at being deprived of an opportunity to participate in actual field operations, Grierson later speculated that the delay at Paducah might well have saved both his life and his career. "The lack of arms and equipment which detained my battalion at Paducah," he wrote, "may have been the circumstance which kept it from disaster and reserved the 6th Illinois Cavalry for future success and distinction. It is very probable that I would have been captured with General Prentiss' division had we been permitted to up the Tennessee . . ." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 160. Prentiss and his entire command were captured in the defense of the "Hornets' Nest," during the battle of Shiloh, April 6, 1862. See, Chapter Two, note 108.


B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 1, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Special Orders No. 22, Headquarters U.S. Forces Paducah, Ky., April 16, 1862, Ibid.; B. H. Grierson to John Grierson, April 19, 1862, Ibid.; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, April 17, May 6, 1862, Ibid.; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 165-66, 168-70. Among the new colonel's administrative duties was the selection of officers to fill vacancies on the regimental staff. One of the first applicants for the position of adjutant, vacated by the resignation of Lieutenant Thomas H. Cavanaugh, Jr., was John Grierson. The colonel of the 6th Illinois Cavalry politely informed his brother that "I would be glad to have you with me and know you could fill the position of Adjt. of the Regt. much better than any one who I will be likely to get." But the younger Grierson went on to explain that he doubted his authority to make such an appointment. Moreover, given the age and declining health of their parents, Ben was not convinced of the advisability of both sons risking their lives far from home. He therefore counseled John to "think the matter over." B. H. Grierson to John Grierson, April 19, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 166. On April 24, Colonel Grierson received a similar request from Richard Yates, asking that the colonel, as a personal "favor," consent to the appointment of the governor's brother, Will Yates, to the adjutancy of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. Will, unfortunately, appears to have shared his brother's well-known fondness for alcohol. The governor, however, assured Grierson that he had recently received "the most flattering account from him, that he is sober and doing well. If you will consent for me [to] appoint him and can't [sic] get along with him," Yates promised, "I will see that he is out of the way whenever you request it. He is a smart fellow and will make you a splendid adjutant if he keeps sober which he promises to do." Richard Yates to B. H. Grierson, April 24, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. The post of regimental adjutant apparently remained vacant until the appointment of William H. Beck—who would later serve under Grierson as lieutenant and captain in the 10th Cavalry—in October, 1862. Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, 1861-1866, III, 57; Heitman, Historical Register, I, 204; RG 94, William H. Beck ACP File, National Archives. Just prior to Beck's resignation in February, 1863, the governor of Illinois again assured Grierson that "my brother William has for some time been entirely temperate," and reminded the colonel that "any thing that you may do for him will be very kindly remembered by our family." Richard Yates to B. H. Grierson, January 19, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. This time Grierson relented, and Will Yates was appointed adjutant of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. One month after entering the service, the governor's brother was court-martialed and discharged effective
August 24, 1863. Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier*, 175; *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, 1861-1866*, III, 57. Grierson appropriated time from his administrative duties in mid-May to campaign in his regiment against the new Democrat-supported constitution proposed for the state of Illinois. When the ballots were finally tallied, he proudly reported that only two votes were cast in favor of the proposition from among the soldiers of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. Also during this period, a Masonic Lodge was formed in the regiment and Grierson became a Master Mason. B. H. Grierson to Robert Grierson, May 21, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 172; Masonic War Certificate, September 11, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.


33 The second battalion of the regiment, under command of Major Isaac Gibson, had been stationed at Columbus since early April. When the first and third battalions left Paducah in early June, Co. B., commanded by Captain James B. Moray, remained behind, while Captain Isaiah M. Sperry and Co. M. proceeded back up river to Bird's Point, Missouri. Undated and Unsigned Memorandum in Grierson Papers, Roll 15; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 172-73, 175. According to Grierson, the 6th Illinois Cavalry's stay at Paducah had been anything but pleasant. In his unpublished memoirs, he reports that "The stories of poisoning our men during the war were usually regarded as merely sensational newspaper reports, but it was true that at Paducah soldiers were poisoned by milk, buttermilk and provisions which were sold to them by rebels. Skiffs and flatboats were moved along the shore near the camp for that purpose and the soldiers were frequently tempted to purchase something to better the army ration, but at the peril of 'death in the pot.' Attempts were also made to poison the wells and springs in the neighborhood from which the soldiers obtained water for drinking purposes." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 174.


38. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 19, 23, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; B. H. Grierson to Lew Wallace, June 23, 1862, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, pp. 9-10 in which Grierson also reports that among the Confederate wounded "was a lieutenant who was endeavoring to escape upon General Jeff.'s [Thompson] favorite horse, which was killed in the engagement"; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 177-82.

his Division at the battle of Shiloh, but also apparently for his entering Memphis without proper orders or authority." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 179.


41. U. S. Grant to H. W. Halleck, June 26, 1862, Ibid., 160.


44. U. S. Grant to H. W. Halleck, June 27, 1862, Ibid., 163-66; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 27, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. Grierson’s command, consisting of five companies of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, the 52nd Indiana Infantry and the 58th Ohio Infantry, numbered between 1100 and 1200 effective. B. H. Grierson to John Grierson, July 1, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 1, 1862, Ibid.; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 184.

45. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 1, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 184-85.


47. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 6, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 185.


49. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 6, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

50. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 14, 1862, Ibid.

Copy of receipt for slaves in Grierson Papers, Roll 4; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 11, 14, 1862, Ibid.; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 188-89; U. S. Grant to H. W. Halleck, July [7], 1862, Papers of U. S. Grant, V, 199.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 14, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. Parenthetically Grierson adds that "It put me in mind of the old song, 'a nigger will be nigger whether slave or free.'" Ibid.

Ibid.


B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 6, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows, 185-86.

Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 185-86; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 6, 14, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Capers, Biography of a River Town, 153.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 14, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 190; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 19, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. John Grierson apparently was still endeavoring to find employment after abandoning his job and home in Memphis at the outbreak of the war. On July 5, 1862, he made an unsuccessful trip to Springfield to seek assistance from Richard Yates, only to find the governor in a fairly typical condition—"drunk and unfit to attend to business." Alice K. Grierson to B. H. Grierson, July 8, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. John may then have decided to return to Memphis in the hope either of participating in the speculative frenzy or of obtaining some sort of military position through his brother's influence. In any event, John C. Grierson's importuning finally resulted in his muster as quartermaster of the 6th Illinois Cavalry on November 17, 1862, to rank from October 29. Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, 1861-1866, III, 57.

U. S. Grant to A. P. Hovey, July 11, 1862, Papers of U. S. Grant, V, 206; General Orders No. 62, District of West Tennessee, July 17, 1862, Ibid., 210; Catton, Grant Moves South, 287-88.
61 U. S. Grant to A. P. Hovey, July 11, 1862, Papers of U. S. Grant, V, 206; Warner, Generals in Blue, 235-36.

62 N. J. Thompson to U. S. Grant, July 14, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 2, pp. 98-99. Although addressed to Grant, this communication arrived at Memphis four days after his departure for Corinth.

63 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 19, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 190-91.

64 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 19, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.


66 Orders No. 56, Fifth Division, Army of the Tennessee, July 21, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 2, pp. 110-11; Sherman, Memoirs, I, 287. Grierson lamented the fact that "we have been of late almost lost among the changes of commanders." Sherman was the fifth Union officer to exercise command at Memphis during the approximately four weeks since the 6th Illinois Cavalry's arrival in the city. B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 24, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.


68 Ibid.; Orders No. 58 and 60, Fifth Division, Army of the Tennessee, July 22, 1862, Ibid., 112-13; W. T. Sherman to E. S. Plummer, et. al., July 23, 1862, Ibid., 114; W. T. Sherman to S. Sawyer, July 24, 1862, Ibid., 116-17; Orders No. 61 and 62, Fifth Division, Army of the Tennessee, July 24, 1862, Ibid., 117-19; W. T. Sherman to J. A. Rawlins, July 25, 1862, Ibid., 121-23; Sherman, Memoirs, I, 293-306; McIlwaine, Memphis Down in Dixie, 121-25; Capers, Biography of a River Town, 152-53; 155-60. For a sampling of southern reaction to Sherman's impressment of Negro labor for work on the Memphis fortifications see, Memphis Daily Appeal, [Grenada, Miss.], August 5, 19, 1862.


77 W. T. Sherman to J. A. Rawlins, November 19, 1862, Official Records, Series II, Vol. IV, 729-30; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 202; Memphis Daily Appeal (Grenada, Miss.), September 12, 1862. In his report of the incident, written two months after the event, Sherman states that Major James D. Stacy commanded the detachment sent out to punish Cunningham's murderers. Grierson, however, remarks in his memoirs that Major Reuben Loomis led the Federal horsemen dispatched to hunt down the rebel partisans. Since Grierson's official report of the expedition to Hernando, written on September 8, 1862, clearly places Major Stacy with Grierson's command, it seems likely that the colonel's later recollection is correct, and that Loomis, not Stacy, was ordered to uncover those responsible for Cunningham's death. B. H. Grierson to W. T. Sherman, September 8, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, pp. 55-57.

78 W. T. Sherman to J. A. Rawlins, November 18, 1862, Official Records, Series II, Vol. IV, 729-30; J. C. Pemberton to General Officer Commanding U. S. Forces, Memphis, Tenn., November 12, 1862, Ibid., 702-703. During the eight weeks which passed between the killing of White and General Pemberton's official reaction, Captain Boicourt apparently faced disciplinary action and consequently resigned from the service on October 21, 1862. Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, 1861-1866, III, 61. Sherman's response to Pemberton's ultimatum was measured, but firm: "White was not a Confederate soldier, not even a guerrilla, and some contend he was a good Union man. I assert that his killing was unfortunate, but was the legitimate and logical sequence of the mode of warfare chosen by the Confederate Government by means of guerrillas and partisan rangers. Captain Boicourt has answered for his conduct to the Government of the United States and it may be will to the civil authorities of Mississippi when peace is restored to her but not to the Confederate Government or its officers. . . . Your guerrilla and partisan rangers have done deeds that I know you do not sanction. Do not make this war more vindictive and bloody than it has been and will be in spite of the most moderate counsels. If you think a moment you will admit that retaliation is not the remedy for such acts as the killing of White, but the same end will be attained by
regulating your guerrillas. This I know you are doing, and for it you have the thanks of your Southern-rights people who were plundered and abused by them. General Grant commands this department and you had better await his answer before proceeding to extremities." W. T. Sherman to J. C. Pemberton, November 18, 1862, Official Records, Series II, Vol. IV, 723-25.

79 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 204; Sherman, Memoirs, I, 290.


81 M. L. Smith to L. M. Dayton, September --, 1862, Ibid., Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, pp. 57-58; B. H. Grierson to M. L. Smith, September 13, 1862, Ibid., 58-60; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, September 13, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 206-12; Frank A. Montgomery, Reminiscences of a Mississippian in Peace and War (Cincinnati: Robert Clark Co., 1901), 96-98; J. G. Deupree, "The Noxubee Squadron of the First Mississippi Cavalry, C.S.A., 1861-1865," Publications of the Mississippi Historical Society, Rowland Dunbar, ed. (Jackson, Miss.: Mississippi Historical Society, 1918), II, 47-50; Young, Seventh Tennessee Cavalry (Confederate), 47-48; Memphis Daily Appeal (Grenada, Miss.), September 12, 15, 16, 18, 1862. The infantry brigade sustained no casualties during the expedition. Grierson reported the cavalry's loss at two dead; one of whom was mortally wounded when his own gun accidentally discharged. The colonel himself suffered for several days from a painful bruise on the head caused by a carbine ball passing close over his left ear during the skirmish at Cockrum's Crossroads. Although probably greatly exaggerated, the Confederate loss was estimated at 41 dead and between 70 and 80 wounded. M. L. Smith to L. M. Dayton, September --, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, p. 58; B. H. Grierson to M. L. Smith, September 13, 1862, Ibid., 59; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, September 13, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Memphis Bulletin, September 13, 1862, as quoted in Memphis Daily Appeal (Grenada, Miss.), September 18, 1862.


88Ibid., 221.


92Sherman, Memoirs, I, 308-309; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 228; Jacksonville [Ill.] Journal, April 9, 1863.

93General Orders No. 1, Cavalry Division 13th Army Corps, November 26, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 2, pp. 363-64; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, December 1, 1862, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; B. H. Grierson to Robert Grierson, December 1, 1862, Ibid.


Rose, Ross' Texas Brigade, 84; S. B. Barron, The Lone Star Defenders: A Chronicle of the Third Texas Cavalry, Ross' Brigade (reprinted, Waco, Texas: W. M. Morrison, 1964), 132; Hartje, Van Dorn, 255; Hartje, "Van Dorn Conducts a Raid," 122-23; Jones, Confederate Strategy, 116-17; Deupree, "Capture of Holly Springs," 51; B. Bragg to S. Cooper,


*100* Brown, "Van Dorn's Operations in Northern Mississippi," 157-59; Kerr, ed., *Fighting with Ross! Texas Cavalry Brigade*, 51-52; Rose, *Ross! Texas Brigade*, 85-88; Deupree, "Capture of Holly Springs," 54-59; Baron, *Lone Star Defenders*, 134-37; Young, *Seventh Tennessee Cavalry (Confederate)*, 58-59; R. C. Murphy to J. A. Rawlins, December 20, 1862, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, pp. 508-509; J. J. Mudd to J. A. Rawlins, December 22, 1862, *Ibid.*, 512-14; Hartje, "Van Dorn Conducts a Raid," 126-29; Hartje, *Van Dorn*, 260-65. General Grant's assessment of his loss in property at Holly Springs at $400,000 is no doubt extremely conservative, while Van Dorn's $1,500,000 is probably exaggerated. Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 432; E. Van Dorn to J. C. Pemberton, December 20, 1862, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, p. 503. There was, however, no similar uncertainty in assigning the blame for this disastrous blow to Grant's campaign. Colonel J. J. Mudd of the 2nd Illinois Cavalry strongly suggested that the ease and completeness of Van Dorn's victory were directly attributable to the "drunkenness or inefficiency of commanding officers" at Holly Springs. J. J. Mudd to J. A. Rawlins, December 27, 1862, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, p. 513. In his defense, Colonel Murphy simpered that he was the helpless victim of the "misfortunes of war" and whined that "my fate is most mortifying. I have wished a hundred times to-day that I had been killed." R. C. Murphy to J. A. Rawlins, December 20, 1862, *Ibid.*, 509. The department commander may well have been tempted to grant the colonel's wish. Two months prior to the debacle at Holly Springs, Murphy had barely escaped court-martial for his hasty abandonment of Iuka at the mere approach of General Price's army. His patience now finally at an end, Grant issued an order on January 8, 1863 summarily dismissing Colonel Murphy from the service by reason of "his cowardly and disgraceful conduct." General Orders No. 4, Department of the Tennessee, January 8, 1863, *Ibid.*, 516; Grant, *Memoirs*, I, 434.


108 U. S. Grant to C. S. Hamilton, December 22, 1862, Ibid.


Kenneth P. Williams cites Grierson's decision to place his main force in a position where it could assist in the defense of Bolivar in case the sudden enemy movement should have proved a feint, rather than blindly charging after a completely unknown force, as an example of the colonel's sound military judgment. Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, IV, 200. At the time, however, General Brayman
was critical of what he considered an overly aggressive performance on Grierson's part at Bolivar. "Colonel Grierson," Brayman reported, "prematurely brought his cavalry into full view of the enemy, by advancing to the ridge which they were approaching, and which would have brought them within the range of our guns." M. Brayman to A. J. Buchanan, December 31, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, p. 484. On the other hand, Colonel A. L. Lee and his Kansas "Jayhawkers", apparently still resentful of Grierson's assumption of command, grumbled at the ex-musician's apparent reluctance to bring the enemy to battle, accusing him of allowing Van Dorn to escape. Starr, Jennison's Jayhawkers, 228.


124 B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, December 29, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 1, pp. 519-20; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 242-43; Jacksonville [Ill.] Journal, April 9, 1863; Kerr, ed., Fighting with Ross' Texas Brigade, 53-54. Grierson's report of Van Dorn's presence during the skirmishes south of Ripley on Christmas day is probably erroneous. In the opinion of Van Dorn's biographer: "The weary Confederates spent Christmas day in the saddle with Grierson's troops breathing down their necks. Outracing the pursuing Federals seemed out of the question, so the wily Van Dorn decided upon another scheme. Arriving at Ripley late on Christmas day, he abruptly divided his small
force. Leaving one unit of his rear guard and a few scouts at Ripley, he continued his retreat with his main force. Instead of following the Pontotoc road to the southwest . . . he turned his force down a small road heading toward the southwest.

"Meanwhile, Colonel Grierson encountered what must have been Van Dorn's rearguard near Ripley. Hoping to delay the Federal cavalry, the Confederates fired at Grierson's troops and then quickly retreated. They repeated this operation until they lost a lieutenant and ten men. Then they hurried southward out of Grierson's reach. Grierson reported, probably in error, that Van Dorn himself commanded the unit he met at Ripley. Evidence seems to place the Confederate captain with the main body retreating towards Grenada." Hartje, Van Dorn, 267; see also, Brown, "Van Dorn's Operations in Northern Mississippi," 160.


130 For recollections of the closeness and aggressiveness of Grierson's pursuit written by veterans of Van Dorn's
cavalry see, Brown, "Van Dorn's Operations in Northern Mississippi," 160; Deupree, "Capture of Holly Springs," 59; Rose, Ross' Texas Brigade, 92.


132 Hartje, "Van Dorn Conducts a Raid," 132; Brooksher and Snider, "A Visit to Holly Springs," 44.

133 General Orders No. 14, Department of the Tennessee, December 22, 1862, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 2, p. 461; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 267; Jacksonville [Ill.] Journal, April 9, 1863; Abstract from Return of the Department of the Tennessee, January 20, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XVII, pt. 2, pp. 576-77. In his memoirs, Grierson states that "General Grant directed Captain [sic] Rawlins . . . to give me my choice of the cavalry regiments and to arrange to place all under my command if I so desired. I thought the three regiments selected were a large enough force for me at that time and thanking General Grant for his kind offer I declined to take command of the whole cavalry as proffered." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 244-45.

134 Grant, Memoirs, I, 438; Jacksonville [Ill.] Journal, April 9, 1863; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 245.


CHAPTER FOUR
"The Confederacy is an empty shell."

In the gray depths of the rain-sodden winter of 1862-63, General Joe Johnston plotted audacious strategy for Confederate cavalry in the west. Earl Van Dorn's astonishing effectiveness in disrupting Federal communications in northern Mississippi suggested the intriguing possibility of organizing a large mobile force, unrestrained by departmental boundaries, to operate against supply lines far in the rear of advancing Union armies. Even as he notified Braxton Bragg of Van Dorn's success at Holly Springs, Johnston announced his eager desire "to unite Forrest and Roddey with Van Dorn for further operations." ¹

Grant's withdrawal to Memphis and Sherman's subsequent suspension of operations in front of Vicksburg, removed any immediate threat to General Pemberton's command in Mississippi. To the east, however, Bragg's failure to achieve a decisive victory at Murfreesboro during the first week of January, 1863, left Major General William S. Rosecrans in a strong position threatening the tenuous Confederate hold upon middle Tennessee. Consequently, Johnston instructed Van Dorn to assume command of two-thirds of the cavalry in the Department of Mississippi and East Louisiana and to move
immediately to General Bragg's support. As he explained to a sputtering John C. Pemberton, Van Dorn's 6,000 troopers were urgently required "to interrupt any movement into Mississippi or Middle Tennessee."

But, beyond the simple statement forwarded to mollify the nervous defender of Vicksburg, the new Confederate commander in the west harbored an even broader vision of highly fluid cavalry movement. "One of Van Dorn's great objects," he informed Bragg, "will be to cover your left by preventing Federal troops from going from West to Middle Tennessee." To President Davis, on the other hand, he further confided that the daring horse captain was being dispatched "to Bragg's aid to operate upon the enemy's communications." Unless his strategic sense played him false, Johnston confidently expected that a large interdepartmental mounted command, such as he envisioned, could easily fulfill all of the roles which he had outlined for it and still retain sufficient flexibility to enable it to move swiftly back into Mississippi in order to meet any renewed threat to Vicksburg. 2

Unfortunately for the fate of Johnston's imaginative design, bitter humiliation at the hands of Van Dorn had also sown dreams of mounted glory in the heads of Union commanders in the west. When, during the cold, dreary days of February, reports began to reach the Federal lines indicating that the accomplished rebel raider had commenced an eastward march
from Tupelo, Mississippi toward Columbus in south-central Tennessee, the stage seemed set for a Yankee re-enactment of his lightening raid upon enemy communications. For General Grant, now ensconced on the west bank of the river opposite Vicksburg, it seemed as though a door had suddenly swung open in northern Mississippi. On February 13, he telegraphed Stephen A. Hurlbut, in command of the XVI Corps headquartered at Memphis, apprizing him of the unique opportunity afforded by the altered situation in his front. "It seems to me," the department commander suggested, "that Grierson, with about 500 picked men, might succeed in making his way south, and cut the railroad east of Jackson, Miss. The undertaking would be a hazardous one, but it would pay well if carried out. I do not direct that this shall be done, but leave it for a volunteer enterprise." Hurlbut was quick to take the hint. On February 14, the Federal commander at Memphis approved a plan submitted by General C. S. Hamilton, then commanding the center division of the XVI Corps at La Grange. Hamilton, noting that "Van Dorn has removed all his available cavalry force into middle Tennessee, thus clearing our front from everything except Guerilla [sic] Bands," was anxious "to make a dash on the Vicksburg & Jackson railroad." As outlined to Hurlbut, the general's proposal called for the movement of a cavalry brigade "from La Grange around the headwaters of the Tallahatchie and the Yalabusha, making as much of a
demonstration as possible about Pontotoc; then the main body to retire, and a single regiment, under a dashing leader—say Hatch—move to the south as rapidly as possible, taking fresh horses from the country, and push night and day direct for Jackson. There are no troops at Jackson, but Johnston is there. The bridge over the Pearl River could be destroyed, as well as all the railroad shops and rolling stock, and a dash made at the Big Black River Bridge, which, if destroyed, will completely isolate Vicksburg from the interior." To Colonel Grierson, the commander of the 1st Cavalry Brigade of the XVI Corps, General Hamilton gave the humble task of directing the feint toward Pontotoc.

A protracted spell of inclement weather, and reports of bolstered troop concentrations in the vicinity of Jackson and near the Big Black, combined to force an almost immediate suspension of Hamilton's projected raid into Mississippi. General Grant expressed disappointment over the temporary setback, but within two weeks the department commander dispatched Colonel T. Lyle Dickey to Memphis with verbal instructions to place the cavalry in the District of West Tennessee "in as good condition as possible . . . for heavy service." As Grant explained to Hurlbut, his intention was "to have the cavalry from your command cooperate with the cavalry it is in contemplation to start from some point on the Yazoo." While a cavalry column under the command of General C. C. Washburn marched eastward to cut the Mississippi
Central Railroad where it crossed the Big Black River, another large mounted force was to move south from La Grange. After demolishing the bridge across the Tallahatchie, the La Grange column would turn toward the southeast and proceed to the headwaters of the Big Black, where the command would divide. The larger portion of the Federal cavalry was expected to create a diversion by threatening the Mobile & Ohio Railroad, while a small detachment of picked men raced south to accomplish the main object of the expedition—the disruption of the Southern Railroad between Vicksburg and Jackson. In order that there might be no doubt as to his own preference in selecting an officer to lead the cavalry sent from Tennessee, Grant emphasized that "I look upon Grierson as being much better qualified to command this expedition than either Lee or Mizner." 

Grant clearly viewed cavalry operations in Mississippi as an integral part of a coordinated assault upon Vicksburg. "The date when the expedition will start," he reminded Hurlbut, "will depend on movements here." Unfortunately, however, the department commander's bold strategy once again slowly crumbled as Admiral Porter's gunboats foundered helplessly in the tangled bayous north of Vicksburg, and the fourth attempt to take the river citadel from the rear "ended in failure." For the alert troopers in the District of West Tennessee, therefore, the month of March became a frustrating period of preparation and fruitless waiting.
Until Grant could place his army upon dry ground on the east bank of the river, a raid upon rebel lines of communication behind Vicksburg would serve no useful purpose.

Final plans for a massive, coordinated Federal cavalry movement in the West evolved somewhat fortuitously during the first week of April, 1863. While Grant and Hurlbut awaited a propitious moment to launch a strike against Vicksburg's rail lifeline, General William S. Rosecrans and his chief-of-staff, Brigadier General James A. Garfield, in middle Tennessee were independently formulating their own scheme for a Van Dorn-like raid upon Braxton Bragg's lines of communication deep in Alabama. Hurlbut first learned of Rosecrans' projected operations on April 3, when Grenville M. Dodge, commanding the left wing of the XVI Corps at Corinth, notified his superior that the Union commander in middle Tennessee had requested that Dodge "move on Tuscumbia at the same time that he does on Florence, and have our forces meet." Although it seemed highly suspicious that Rosecrans should have communicated directly with General Dodge, without first having notified the commander of the XVI Corps of his intentions, Hurlbut did not make an issue of the apparent breach of protocol and immediately instructed Dodge to "move as requested by General Rosecrans, with force enough to do it thoroughly." Still, three days passed before the Federal commander in west Tennessee finally obtained the details of the movement afoot on his left.
On April 6, Hurlbut transmitted an outline of proposed operations in northern Alabama and Georgia to General Grant. As Rosecrans had at last explained, he intended to send a column of 1,700 men up the Tennessee River to the vicinity of Eastport, where it would unite with Dodge's force moving southeastward from Corinth. The two commands would then march together toward Tuscumbia and Florence, creating the impression of a single Federal expedition ascending the Tennessee. Near Tuscumbia, however, Rosecrans' troops would veer off to the southeast and continue on alone into western Georgia to accomplish the main object of the Union raid—the destruction of the Western & Atlantic Railroad which supplied General Bragg's army at Chattanooga. Dodge, meanwhile, was instructed, after capturing Tuscumbia, to throw his cavalry forward to Decatur, destroying the saltpeter works at that place and disrupting the tracks along the Decatur & Tuscumbia Railroad. 19

At Memphis, the Federal commander in west Tennessee immediately grasped the opportunity which the contemplated movements in Alabama and Georgia would afford his own troops in Mississippi. Consequently, he heartily endorsed Rosecrans' plan to General Grant. "If this movement goes on," Hurlbut pointed out, "it will materially aid my contemplated cavalry dash on the railroad below, for it will draw off their cavalry into Alabama and leave my field clear." The implications for Grant's projected landing at Grand Gulf
seemed almost too obvious to mention. "This cavalry dash," the XVI Corps commander concluded, "I desire to time so as to co-operate with what I suppose to be your plan to land below Vicksburg. . . . By cutting the road, I shall, as I think, materially aid in the movement, as well as by shoving the heads of infantry columns as low as the Tallahatchie."²⁰

Informed that Colonel Abel Streight and the force from Nashville could be expected at Eastport on April 16, Hurlbut quickly plotted enemy troop dispositions on his front and hurriedly formulated plans to place his own forces in the field in sufficient time to benefit from the diversion on his left.²¹

A glance at the campaign map revealed the exposed position in which Van Dorn's departure had left the Confederates in Mississippi. A scant 3,000 rebel horsemen now patrolled the two military districts which embraced the entire northern region of the state. Most of the 2,000 troopers at Brigadier General Daniel Ruggles' disposal in the First Military District, which stretched from the Mississippi-Alabama border west to New Albany, were clustered in the vicinity of district headquarters at Columbus, with Lieutenant Colonel C. R. Barteau's battalion of 2nd Tennessee Cavalry occupying an advanced position at Verona, opposite Corinth. To the west lay Brigadier General James R. Chalmers' Fifth Military District, encompassing the territory between New Albany and the Mississippi River. With barely 1,000
cavalry and a single battery, the rebel brigadier maintained a tenuous hold upon the important region below Memphis. Nevertheless, with the bulk of this mobile force concentrated at district headquarters at Panola, and with scouts keeping a close watch upon Federal troop movements from picket lines on the Coldwater and the Tallahatchie, Chalmers remained a force to be reckoned with in outlining any operations in northern Mississippi.\textsuperscript{22} Hurlbut could reasonably rely upon General Dodge's movement into western Alabama to draw Ruggles' attention eastward. In the meantime, steps must be taken to tie down Chalmers' troops along the Coldwater.

To monopolize the enemy's attention in the northwest corner of Mississippi, Hurlbut planned a two-pronged invasion of the Fifth Military District. An infantry column, 1,500 strong and accompanied by a battery of artillery, would move southwestward from La Grange under the command of General Hamilton's successor, Brigadier General William Sooy Smith. Below Panola, Smith would turn his troops northward and advance along the line of the Mississippi & Tennessee Railroad. A second Federal column, meanwhile, was to push south from Memphis under Colonel George E. Bryant. While Bryant's 1,300 troops pinned down Chalmers in front, Smith's force would fall upon the rebel flank and rear.\textsuperscript{23} As a member of the 7th Illinois Cavalry described the Union movement from west Tennessee, "with the thin confederate line in northern Mississippi thus completely pulled apart and piled up at
its ends," the stage was set for a "slender column" of cavalry to plunge southward into the hollow center of the state—"thrust, like a nimble sword through an unguarded point, into the very vitals of the confederate position."\textsuperscript{24} If successful, the coordinated Federal raids of April, 1863, would leave two major Confederate armies dangling helplessly from their severed lines of supply and communication.\textsuperscript{25} In selecting a commander for the hazardous dash to the rear of Vicksburg, Hurlbut apparently took to heart Grant's forceful suggestion made in early March and turned to Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, commanding the 1st Cavalry Brigade at La Grange, Tennessee. The troopers of Grierson's brigade had spent a relatively uneventful winter in the once peaceful and picturesque southern community situated atop a high ridge overlooking the southwest Tennessee countryside.\textsuperscript{26} A reconnaissance in force conducted with 900 men of the 6th and 7th Illinois Cavalry under Colonel Grierson's personal command had afforded some excitement during the second week of March, when the blue-coated troopers clashed with Robert V. Richardson's partisan band near Covington, Tennessee, routing the rebel guerrillas and capturing the Confederate chieftain's camp equipage, commissary and quartermaster's stores, wagon train, ammunition and records. But, on the whole, fruitless battalion-strength chases after the elusive swarms of irregular troops infesting the southern Tennessee and northern Mississippi countryside had provided only
temporary relief from the pervasive tedium of camp life. 27

Not even the commander of the 1st Brigade had been completely immune to the psychological stresses engendered by the long, dreary, monotonous winter. Following the frustrating and fatiguing pursuit of the wily Van Dorn, Colonel Grierson had welcomed the opportunity for a well-deserved rest and the leisurely refitting of men and mounts. Shortly after his arrival at La Grange, the colonel had enthusiastically informed his wife that he found "it much pleasanter [sic] to have command of a Brigade than a Regt. It removes a person from the everlasting noise & confusion of Horses, mules & men." But in the same breath, he had also confessed that "every position has its drawbacks." Although Governor Yates, along with Generals Grant, Sherman and Hurlbut, had forwarded letters urging Grierson's promotion, the third session of the 37th Congress opened and closed without confirmation of the Illinois colonel's elevation to the rank of brigadier general. 28 Still, a supremely self-confident Grierson had borne his disappointment philosophically, observing that "it is not always the best men who are appointed," and reassuring himself that "should the promotion not come now, I think it will before very long, as I have a good military record." 29

Certainly, the Federal cavalry commander had more immediate and pressing concerns during that gloomy season than the mere matter of formal recognition of a command which
he already exercised in fact. Although requisitions had been submitted for arms, equipment and mounts needed to refit the cavalry at La Grange, repeated delays had frustrated Grierson's efforts to prepare his troops for the field. Inadequate clothing, coupled with the foul weather, had filled the hospitals with sick soldiers, and before long cases of smallpox were noted upon the sick list. Frustration, monotony, illness, and nature itself seemed to conspire until Grierson had to admit that "under the circumstances I came about as near having the blues as I wished to and a trifle nearer and earnestly hoped that it would dry or freeze up, or that the sun would shine long enough to dry dull care away." It hardly seems surprising that thoughts of furlough had often filled the colonel's mind. 30

Intimations of an imminent cavalry movement, coming close upon the heels of the unpopular C. S. Hamilton's removal from command of the Federal division headquartered at La Grange 31 and the arrival of his more congenial replacement, Brigadier General William Sooy Smith, 32 had relieved some of the winter tedium and lifted spirits in anticipation of things soon to come. And yet, the early weeks of spring had dragged on with no indication of when or where—if indeed at all—the cavalry would move. Believing that at least several more weeks must elapse before his brigade would take the field, on April 6, Colonel Grierson had left La Grange on his long-awaited leave of absence. 33
A sharp knock at the door of the Grierson's Jacksonville home on April 14, interrupted the colonel in the midst of a mid-morning romp with his two young sons. The unexpected caller presented Ben Grierson with a tersely worded telegram from General Hurlbut, directing that the cavalry commander return at once to Memphis. Three o'clock that same afternoon found the Yankee colonel in Cairo, anxiously awaiting transportation down river. Unfortunately, however, the regular steamer from St. Louis was unaccountably delayed and, as a result, it was nine o'clock on the morning of the sixteenth when Grierson finally strode into XVI Corps headquarters.\(^34\)

In presenting Colonel Grierson with verbal instructions, General Hurlbut tried as best he could to acquaint the cavalryman with enemy troop dispositions in Mississippi, as well as with General Grant's probable movements along the river. Although the Memphis commandant could not be certain of either the exact timetable or the precise plan for Federal operations near Vicksburg, he was aware of Grant's intention to move his army past the river fortress and to land it on the east bank of the Mississippi somewhere below the city. Since Hurlbut had conscientiously kept the department commander informed of his own plans, and those of General Rosecrans, he could reasonably assume that whatever Grant's movements, they would be coordinated with the cavalry raids being launched into Mississippi, Alabama and Georgia.\(^35\)
No doubt repeating written orders already delivered to Sooy Smith at La Grange, Hurlbut outlined the pending Federal diversion toward the Coldwater. If successful, this movement, coupled with Dodge's eastward drive, should clear the enemy from a corridor of north-central Mississippi open at least as far south as Pontotoc. Starting before daylight on Friday morning, April 17, Grierson's cavalry brigade would dash swiftly into the unprotected center of the state. Upon reaching the fork in the road near Pontotoc, the weaker of the regiments forming Grierson's flanks would swing to the right, cut the rails and telegraph in the vicinity of Oxford, cross the Tallahatchie, and overtake the main column. The other flanking regiment, meanwhile, was expected to strike the Mobile & Ohio Railroad to the east. This task, Hurlbut emphasized, must be thoroughly done. The regiment selected for its completion must tear up as long a stretch of track and telegraph line as possible. After destroying all the supply depots and water tanks found along the line of the railroad, the commander of the eastern column was directed to collect all the horses his men could safely handle and to return by the most practicable route to La Grange.

While these several diversions were being conducted to the right and left of the main body of Federal cavalry, Grierson was instructed to push southward with "the strongest and best mounted command," moving swiftly toward the
principal objective of the Union raid into Mississippi—the Southern Railroad between Jackson and Meridian, General Pemberton’s supply line in the rear of Vicksburg. Striking the railroad near the Chunky Bridge, the Yankee troopers would disrupt the tracks and telegraph wires in both directions, creating the widest possible gap. Colonel Grierson could then decide for himself whether to move upon Jackson or Columbus. But, Hurlbut added, if the Pearl River was found to be fordable near Canton, every effort must be made to destroy the depots, shops and rolling stock believed to be under light guard at that place. The command would march with four days’ rations and would be "cautioned when they set out to make them last." Troopers and horses were expected to live off the country, and Grierson was authorized to seize fresh forage whenever necessary. Beyond these general instructions, Hurlbut concluded, "details must be left discretionary." 36

Upon leaving corps headquarters, the cavalry commander hastened to a waiting train which would carry him to La Grange. Time was now at a premium. Since Grierson had been absent on leave in Illinois when final orders for an expedition into Mississippi were issued on April 15, Hurlbut had directed that in the event that the colonel should fail to return before dawn on the seventeenth, command of the cavalry movement would devolve upon the next officer in seniority, Colonel Edward Hatch of the 2nd Iowa Cavalry. Grierson,
therefore, was barely afforded time to dispatch a note to his hastily abandoned wife before boarding the cars for the short run between Memphis and La Grange. "My command is ordered to leave... to-morrow, on the expedition I spoke to you about," he informed Alice, while also warning her that "you must not be alarmed should you not hear from me inside of a month... Other movements (of less extent) will take place from various points along the lines and," he cryptically concluded, "my movements are to aid a greater movement which is to take place at a distant point or points. You will understand what I refer to." 37

Stepping from the train about sundown on the evening of the sixteenth, Colonel Grierson spent a hectic night and early morning conferring with General Smith and completing final preparations for a pre-dawn departure. 38 Uppermost on the minds of both Union officers was the problem of an escape route from Mississippi once Grierson's cavalry had accomplished its mission. Both Grierson and Smith had been vocal advocates of pushing through to Federal-held Baton Rouge after demolishing the railroad behind Vicksburg, arguing that any attempt to return northward would place the raiders squarely in the hands of their pursuers. Hurlbut, however, had disapproved of the plan to cut through to the former Louisiana capital as being far too rash and dangerous. Rather, in his preliminary instructions to General Smith, the XVI Corps commander had expressed his strong personal
recommendation that Grierson's troopers drive directly for
Meridian, or even Selma, and then swing back through Alabama
to their base in Tennessee. 39

Although Hurlbut's intentions were well known to both
Smith and Grierson, his final instructions to the cavalry
commander, forwarded through General Smith, made no mention
of a specific return route. Apparently, during their late-
night consultation on April 16, Smith and Grierson discussed
the discrepancy in the two sets of written directions and
concluded that Grierson need only feel bound by the more
generous terms contained in the last communication issued
from district headquarters. After all, both sets of official
orders had been addressed to Smith; not Grierson. Conse-
quently, responsibility for their implementation rested with
the senior officer at La Grange. "If he [Grierson] succeeded,"
General Smith later explained, "no questions would be asked:
and if he failed I would take the consequences." At the
same time, however, both officers seem to have recognized
that the entire question of how best to extricate the Federal
cavalry from Mississippi was in many ways a moot one. "At
all events," as the general pointed out, "when he [Grierson]
passed to the rear of the enemy's lines south of the
Tallahatchie his communications with us would be cut off,
and he would have discretionary power and it would be his
duty and privilege to use his own judgment as to the course
it would be best to take. Most likely after the rebel
cavalry had closed in behind him, he would not dare to try
to get back and would have to go straight on to Baton Rouge." Almost forty-five years after the two Union soldiers bid
each other godspeed in the gray pre-dawn hours of a west
Tennessee morning, General Smith recalled that Ben Grierson
took his leave with a final dramatic pledge uttered "in his
falsetto voice." "B[y]-G[od] I'll do it," the colonel ex-
claimed. And, Smith added, "B[y]-G[od] he did do it." 40

By April 17, 1863, there could be little doubt that
General Grant's anxiously awaited final offensive against
Vicksburg was at last underway. While Smith and Grierson
occupied the wee hours of the morning in preparation for
the separate infantry and cavalry movements emanating from
La Grange, Tennessee, two hundred and fifty miles to the
southwest, Admiral David Dixon Porter's gunboats rode
placidly at anchor after having successfully passed beneath
the Confederate guns mounted upon the bluffs overlooking the
Mississippi River. General Dodge had already commenced his
eastward march from Corinth on the sixteenth, and Colonel
Bryant was under orders to move south from Memphis on the
eighteenth. Before sunset on this second Friday in April,
Grant would receive the welcome news from Memphis informing
him of Colonel Grierson's departure from La Grange and of
Sooy Smith's southwestward march to meet Bryant on the
Coldwater. "These various movements along our line,"
General Hurlbut earnestly prayed, "will . . . so distract
[the enemy's] . . . attention that Grierson's party will get a fair start and be well down to their destination before they can be resisted by adequate force. God speed him, for he has started gallantly on a long and perilous ride. I shall anxiously await intelligence of the result. 41

Friday morning dawned with the promise of a near perfect spring day. The fragrance of green pine and budding flowers wafted through the air on a gentle south wind, while a chorus of wakening birds lent an almost frivolous atmosphere to the war-weary countryside. The Federal Cavalry camp at La Grange, Tennessee had been alive with activity since the early hours of the new day. Orders issued on the sixteenth had set 3 a.m. as the time of the cavalry's departure, but Grierson's late arrival had delayed the march until just after daylight. Finally, as the early morning sun rose full above the tree-crowned hills, two thin ribbons of blue-coated horsemen stretched snake-like from the sleepy village and slithered gracefully into the shaded cover of the wooded countryside. 42

In all, some 1,700 veteran cavalrypeople followed their unlikely musician-commander into the verdant Mississippi bottomlands. The order of march assigned the advance to Colonel Grierson's own 6th Illinois, now under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Reuben Loomis. Colonel Edward Prince's 7th Illinois Cavalry filed closely behind its sister regiment, followed in turn by the Hawkeyes of the 2nd Iowa,
led by Colonel Edward Hatch. Tucked securely within the columns of mounted men, six 2-pound Woodruff guns, comprising Captain J. B. Smith's Company K of the 1st Illinois battery, rolled with ungainly motion over the rutted roadbed.

Grierson had stripped his command down to the bare essentials. Smith's battery represented the only wheeled transportation afforded the expedition—each light field piece drawn by a two-horse team and accompanied by a caisson loaded with small round shot and canister. Haversacks draped across saddle pommels held the troopers' meagre fare. Five days' "light rations"—consisting of hardtack, coffee, sugar and salt—had been issued with a firm admonition that every soldier was expected to stretch his store in order to make it last at least ten days. In addition to his haversack, each soldier carried a carbine, saber and one hundred rounds of ammunition. If anything produced concern in the mind of the expedition's commander, it was the condition of the horses. General Hurlbut's persistent efforts to secure fresh mounts from the cavalry depot at St. Louis had met with little success. Consequently, Colonel Grierson had been compelled to appropriate mules from the brigade wagon train in order to equip the 2nd Iowa. As in the case of food and forage, the Federal cavalry would rely heavily upon the bounty of the Mississippi countryside for remounts.

An unusually light-hearted mood prevailed among the
long columns of Yankee horsemen as they moved across the
sun-drenched southern landscape. After the dullness of a
long, leaden winter, the balmy spring air seemed to weave
a magic spell about the eager troopers. Sergeant Richard
Surby recalled with a smile that "the morning on which the
command moved out was a beautiful one," alive with the in-
vigorating sounds and smells of unfolding nature. "The
men," he observed, "seemed to feel highly elated, and, as
they marched in column of twos, some were singing, others
speculating as to our destination."44

Occasionally a curious trooper might glance up from
mindless conversation with his saddlemates to glimpse a tall,
lanky figure moving near the head of the column in the com-
pany of Lieutenant Samuel L. Woodward, the young brigade
adjutant.45 Close inspection revealed a man of above
average height; less than an inch shy of six feet. Swarthy
complexion and a sharp, prominent nose accentuated the
angularity of features illuminated by deep-set, dark hazel
eyes. An unruly mat of thick ebony hair crowned a high
forehead. And, to complete the portrait, the scraggly
beginnings of a full spreading beard, partially camouflaged
an unsightly scar which ran from forehead to chin. Although
hardly handsome, Ben Grierson's tall, familiarly gaunt,
Scotch-Irish physique commanded the attention of the hardy
western farm hands under his care at the same time that
his "iron constitution" and "modest and unassuming" demeanor
combined to earn their respect.\textsuperscript{46}

Unknown to all save adjutant Woodward, Colonel Grierson himself was hardly more enlightened concerning the details of this expedition into Mississippi than were his uninformed troopers. Every effort, of course, must be directed toward the disruption of the Southern Railroad. Beyond this objective, however, the movements of the Federal cavalry had been left largely to Grierson's own discretion. Once they had penetrated the unfamiliar region below the Tallahatchie, the raiders' safety and effectiveness would depend in great measure upon the contents of their colonel's pockets—an ordinary compass, Colton's pocket map of Mississippi, and a written description of the countryside between Okolona, Mississippi and Montgomery, Alabama apparently supplied earlier in the year by an anonymous Unionist. As Hurlbut's verbal instructions and the vague written orders forwarded through General Smith plainly implied, success or failure in the dangerous enterprise would ultimately rest upon the skill and imagination of Benjamin H. Grierson.\textsuperscript{47}

Nightfall, April 17, found the Yankee troopers thirty miles into Mississippi and some four miles northwest of Ripley, the seat of Tippah County. Rejoined by the errant 6th Illinois, which had been thrown out toward the west most of the day as the result of a wrong road taken just outside of La Grange, the entire brigade proceeded into camp on the Ellis plantation. The frequent winter scouts into
northern Mississippi had apparently served their purpose, and it was near dusk before the raiders caught their first glimpse of Rebel observers. A quick dash across an open field resulted in the capture of three unlucky Mississippians, as two or three of their swifter companions outraced the unexpected Yankee pursuers. Colonel Prince, meanwhile, unwittingly helped set the tone of the expedition as he presented a two-dollar greenback to an unfortunate lad who had lost his hat to an admiring Illinois cavalryman.48

Bright sunshine again greeted the Federal horsemen as they turned out of their blankets at daybreak on the eighteenth. By seven o'clock, the entire command was mounted and moving toward the southeast. Within the hour, the Yankee cavalry clattered down the streets of Ripley. Reining up in the midst of a surprised civilian populace, Grierson paused to deploy for a crossing of the Tallahatchie, some eighteen miles farther south. Anticipating opposition to a single column of cavalry, the colonel divided his force and concluded to strike the river at three different points. An advance along parallel roads, he reasoned, would afford the surest opportunity for obtaining necessary food, forage and remounts, while at the same time presenting the widest possible front to the enemy.

As clocks tolled 9 a.m., the uninvited cavalry moved out of Ripley, Colonel Hatch's Iowans riding east and southeast with instructions to cross the Tallahatchie five miles
upstream from New Albany. The 6th and 7th Illinois, meanwhile, continued due south to a point four miles below Ripley, where the Union advance was startled by an ineffectual volley from a bare handful of Rebel muskets. As the equally astonished enemy rapidly withdrew, Colonel Prince detached Captain John M. Graham's first battalion of the 7th Illinois Cavalry to move by the most direct route for New Albany. The main column simultaneously edged slightly to the left and resumed its descent via the small rural community of Orizaba.49

Graham's battalion approached the Tallahatchie at New Albany at about four o'clock in the afternoon. The bridge at that place, the captain discovered, had already been partially destroyed, and in the near distance a small Rebel squad was observed engaged in a frantic attempt to fire the structure in advance of the Yankee cavalry. As Graham reined up within rifle shot of the river, the Rebel pickets opened fire, forcing the blue-clad horsemen to dismount. Pressing forward as skirmishers, the Illinois troopers returned the enemy fire, and easily drove the Confederates from their position. After repairing the bridge, Captain Graham crossed the stream and halted on the southern shore to await the arrival of the Orizaba column.

Within the hour, the 6th Illinois and the remainder of the 7th safely forded the Tallahatchie, two miles east of New Albany. Moving out along the Pontotoc road, the
Illinois regiments proceeded five miles south of the river and encamped for the night on the Sloan plantation. Colonel Hatch's command, meanwhile, after brushing aside a small partisan band near Molino, struck the Tallahatchie about six miles above New Albany and bivouacked four miles beyond its margins.  

Rain fell in torrents throughout the dark night of the eighteenth and continued until noon on the following day. While he awaited an easing of the downpour, Grierson dispatched a detachment eastward to communicate with Colonel Hatch and to make a demonstration in the direction of Chesterville, where a regiment of Confederate horsemen was reportedly being organized. At the same time, Captain George W. Trafton and two companies of the 7th Illinois Cavalry were ordered back across the Tallahatchie with instructions to drive a Rebel force out of New Albany. A third detachment, meanwhile, was thrown out to the northwest in order to break up a partisan command rumored to be forming under Major A. H. Chalmers in the vicinity of King's Bridge. With these forays, Grierson hoped to create the impression that the objective of the Federal advance was the disruption of the various bands of irregular cavalry then being recruited in northeastern Mississippi.

Approaching the Tallahatchie from the southeast, one group of Federal troopers discovered that Major Chalmers had learned of the Yankee's proximity and had abandoned his
camp during the night, moving westward. Off to the right, however, Captain Trafton's command collided with an enemy force estimated at 200 men on the outskirts of New Albany and drove the Rebels back through the town in disorder. The small expedition riding eastward, meanwhile, established contact with the 2nd Iowa and then moved out toward Chesterville before circling back to the camp of the 6th and 7th Illinois.

Unknown to the raiders, the feint in the direction of Chesterville alerted Confederate Lieutenant Colonel C. R. Barteau, drawing him north from Verona. By nightfall on the nineteenth, Barteau's command, consisting of the 2nd Tennessee Battalion, Colonel J. F. Smith's militia regiment, and Major W. M. Inge's battalion, would be encamped twelve miles north of Tupelo and within three miles of Chesterville. 51 General Pemberton, in the meantime, telegraphed the commanders of the two military districts which embraced northern Mississippi informing them that all the Confederate cavalry north of the Southern Railroad was being placed at their disposal in order to block the Yankee incursion. If Joe Johnston could launch a heavy diversionary raid toward Abbeville, it might help to relieve some of the pressure upon Chalmers and Ruggles; otherwise, the beleagured defender of Vicksburg intimated, the two district commanders would simply have to make do with the meager resources already on hand. 52

With the return of the several detached companies, the
Federal cavalry broke camp at ten o'clock on a rain-drenched Sunday morning and plodded southward over roads fast becoming quagmires. Colonel Hatch's regiment rejoined the main column about noon and, as the clouds lightened after mid-day, the besodden troopers halted for a late lunch. For at least a handful of enterprising cavalymen, the momentary relaxation of vigilance seemed almost a formal invitation to forage and loot. Within moments a nearby house crackled in flames. Powerless to extinguish the blaze, brigade officers conducted a perfunctory search after the arsonists, but, as a campaign-wise sergeant remarked with tongue in cheek, since the fire had "occurred mysteriously, no one knew anything about it."  

As deepening grayness masked the setting sun, the 6th Illinois Cavalry dashed precipitously through the outskirts of Pontotoc, Mississippi, scattering a small Rebel force which had been hastily assembled to resist the Yankee assault. Combing deserted village streets, the men of Captain Graham's hard-working battalion uncovered some four or five hundred bushels of salt and a wagon load of ammunition, along with camp equipage, mail and records; all abandoned by Captain John T. Weatherall's company of state militia in its hot-footed retreat. Grierson halted only long enough to destroy government property and to sift through captured documents for information regarding enemy troop movements. Less than an hour after their arrival in Pontotoc, the
Federal troopers were again moving south in the direction of the Houston road, their mounts trampling briskly over salt-strewn streets. Five miles out, the colonel ordered another dismount, and the three regiments of the 1st Cavalry Brigade bivouacked within sight of one another on the Dagget and Weatherall plantations. Despite the deteriorating condition of the roads, the hard-riding horsemen had not slackened their thirty-mile-per-day pace.\(^54\)

While the Yankee troopers unfolded their bedrolls, fifteen miles to the northeast Lieutenant Colonel Barteau was just learning of the enemy's presence in Pontotoc. Fortunately for Grierson's raiders, during the night the Rebel commander elected to slide some fifteen miles southeastward in order to cover the railroad between Okolona and Aberdeen. Consequently, it was only after observing that the Union cavalry was not in pursuit that Barteau finally moved back to Pontotoc on the morning of April 20 and there discovered that the Federal column had already passed to the south.\(^55\)

At the same time that the Rebel lieutenant colonel was squandering precious hours in a fruitless effort to anticipate the enemy's next move, Colonel Grierson was stripping his command of dead weight. In a thorough midnight inspection of men and mounts, the colonel personally selected 175 troopers, representing "the least effective portion of the command," and assembled them together with prisoners, excess or unserviceable horses, and one artillery piece for the
hazardous return to base. At three o'clock on the morning of April 20, the muffled sound of "Boots and Saddles" softly disturbed the damp spring air, and Major Hiram Love moved his forlorn "Quinine Brigade" quietly out of the Federal bivouac. Selected from among the field officers of the 2nd Iowa, Love was instructed to march his men in column of fours through Pontotoc. In the darkness, Grierson hoped to deceive the residents of that community into thinking that the entire Union column had turned back to west Tennessee. The Iowa major was directed to send out a single scout south of Oxford, to cut the wires along the Mississippi Central Railroad, while the remainder of the detachment pushed on toward La Grange.56

Two hours after Major Love's departure, the bulk of Grierson's command resumed its advance along the Houston road. Gray dampness returned with the muted dawn and minds wandered as the 2nd Iowa guided the Yankee cavalrmen across the monotonously rolling countryside. It was with considerable surprise, therefore, that daydreaming riders awakened about 4 p.m. to find themselves cutting a new trail through an extensive field of fresh, green wheat. Alarmed glances and speculative murmurs passed rapidly from trooper to trooper. Prevailing opinion in the ranks suggested that the enemy was close at hand, and that the colonel was attempting a flanking movement. Understandably, an almost audible sigh of relief arose with the appearance of roof tops and church
steeples on the near horizon. Obviously, the raiders had reached Houston, and Colonel Grierson, hoping to stimulate exaggerated accounts of his strength, was presenting the citizens of the unwary community with a distant side view of his extended column. Completing their circuit of Houston, the horsemen veered off on a slightly southeastward course and encamped shortly after dark upon the Kilgore plantation, 11⅓ miles out on the Starkville road.57

At six o'clock on the morning of April 21, the Federal cavalry resumed its march and two hours later struck the road leading southeast toward Columbus. Thus far, Grierson's "daring" expedition had seemed astonishingly uneventful. The Yankee colonel was well aware that even his swift-paced command could not expect to roam for five days deep in enemy territory without drawing some attention. And yet, he could hardly have guessed that Lieutenant Colonel Barteau had closed a thirteen-mile gap during the night, and that at 8 a.m. the Rebel commander was scant hours behind the Union horsemen. It proved a considerable stroke of luck, therefore, when Grierson halted at the Columbus junction just long enough to detach Colonel Edward Hatch's 500 Iowans and a single gun from Captain Smith's battery. The loquacious thirty-one-year-old ex-lumberman was instructed to drive south and east, striking the Mobile & Ohio Railroad near West Point and destroying the tracks and telegraph lines as far south as Macon. This task accomplished, Hatch would
trace a semicircle through western Alabama before swinging back into Mississippi, disrupting the rails below Okolona and proceeding directly for the cavalry base at La Grange.\textsuperscript{58}

After Colonel Grierson's departure with the 6th and 7th Illinois, Hatch detached Company E of the 2nd Iowa and Captain Smith's tiny two-pounder to retrace the trail of the main column for a distance of three or four miles. While the bulk of the regiment rested, E Company rode down the Starkville road, then wheeled about and returned northward in column of fours, obliterating all tracks in the opposite direction. To complete the ruse, Hatch ordered the cannon turned at four different spots in the road, leaving behind four distinct sets of wheel impressions to correspond with the number of guns still accompanying the main body of troops. Hopefully, the Confederates would pick up the freshest tracks in the thick mud and conclude that Grierson's entire force had turned east toward Columbus and the Mobile & Ohio.\textsuperscript{59}

Hatch's diversion worked flawlessly. Barteau, arriving at the junction of the Columbus road shortly before noon, reported that "my advance guard fired upon a party of 20 of the enemy, supposed to be the rear guard. This party fled and took the Starkville road. The enemy had divided, 200 going to Starkville and 700 continuing their march on the West Point road." Mistaking Colonel Hatch's detachment for the main enemy force, Barteau turned eastward in pursuit.\textsuperscript{60}

Erasing Grierson's trail, however, had cost Hatch
valuable time. At 2 o'clock on the afternoon of April 21, Barteau fell upon the Iowans' flanks and rear two miles northwest of Palo Alto, forcing Hatch to dismount, change front and unlimber the two-pounder. Falling back along a hedge-covered lane into a small stand of timber near Palo Alto church, the Yankee troopers returned the enemy's fire while Barteau maneuvered to get in the rear of the Hawkeyes. Anticipating the Rebel movement, Hatch's men suddenly discharged a withering volley from their repeating carbines into Colonel J. F. Smith's militia regiment. Caught just as they were deploying for a charge, the dismounted Mississippian broke and melted away in confusion. Seizing the initiative, Hatch immediately ordered a counter-charge which succeeded in driving his attackers three miles down the Houston road. Barteau, meanwhile, cautiously withdrew to cover the road leading south to West Point and Macon.  

Although Grierson later thought that Colonel Hatch might have followed up his advantage after the skirmish at Palo Alto and still have struck the Mobile & Ohio Railroad at Macon, the feisty Iowan no doubt correctly assessed the precariousness of his situation. Confederate forces in northern Mississippi were now fully alerted to the Yankee presence, while Barteau, relatively unscathed and undoubtedly awaiting reinforcements, stood squarely between the Iowa Cavalry and its objective. "Believing," therefore, that "it was important to divert the enemy's cavalry from
Colonel Grierson," Colonel Hatch began a slow withdrawal northward in the dead of night pulling the pursuing Rebels along with him. Fighting a constant rearguard action, the 2nd Iowa slowly retreated through Okolona and Birmingham. Finally, outside of Molino, on the twenty-fourth, Barteau broke off contact, his weary Confederates having traced a two-hundred-and-forty-mile rectangle in six days of forced marches. On April 26, the Iowa Cavalry returned safely to La Grange, Tennessee, where Colonel Hatch provided the first reliable information concerning Grierson's movements. "The fight at Palo Alto, and diverting the enemy from Colonel Grierson," Hatch reassured Generals Hurlbut and Smith, "has undoubtedly given him thirty-six hours' start." 62

Under cover of Hatch's eastward feint, Colonel Grierson continued south along the Starkville road. With the departure of the 2nd Iowa, Grierson's command was reduced to 950 men, comprising the 6th and 7th Illinois Cavalry, accompanied by the four remaining guns of Captain Smith's battery. Shortly after noon on this, the fifth day of the raid, an unlikely group of butternut-clad horsemen, each cradling a shot gun or long rifle, appeared at the head of the column, exciting considerable curiosity among the Illinois troopers. Earlier in the day, Lieutenant Colonel William D. Blackburn of the 7th Illinois had won approval of a plan to disguise a squad of six or eight scouts in civilian garb and to keep them out anywhere from a quarter of
a mile to two miles in front of the main body of cavalry, where they could gather information regarding roads, streams, bridges, enemy positions and Rebel troop movements. Dubbed by their comrades the "Butternut Guerrillas," this handful of volunteers, under the resourceful command of Quartermaster Sergeant Richard W. Surby of the 7th Illinois Cavalry, would provide invaluable service as the alert and discerning eyes and ears of the Yankee raiders.63

At four o'clock on the afternoon of April 21, Grierson's cavalry appeared virtually unannounced on the outskirts of Starkville, Mississippi. As the astonished citizenry stood idly by in helpless disbelief, bluecoated horsemen darted in and out of stores and public buildings, collecting arms, ammunition and other government property--all, with the exception of the captured mail, marked for destruction. In the general confusion, some soldiers relieved several of the local ladies of their jewelry and then moved on to sample the goods secreted in the community's tobacco warehouses. Such depredations, however, were apparently minor, and even the Starkville Banner charitably professed itself satisfied that "all this was done without the permission of the officers attending the command." Having gathered up all the serviceable horses and mules in the vicinity, along with a handful of Negro drivers, the Yankee cavalry was quickly back in the saddle and once again moving south.64

As darkness descended, the raiders found themselves
sloshing laboriously through dismal marshlands. Water lapped monotonously at stirrups, and the humid air frequently resounded with the curses of weary troopers, as they prodded their mounts to swim rain-swollen creeks. Vulnerable artillery ammunition had been unloaded from moisture threatened limber boxes, and many soldiers carried shell or powder as an added burden. It was well after nightfall, therefore, when Grierson's exhausted command at last stumbled upon dry plantation land, some four or five miles below Starkville. With violent rain pellets pounding upon rubberized ponchos, the drenched Yankee horsemen scattered beneath the shelter of outbuildings and hay stacks, and there welcomed the oblivion of sleep. 65

Before breaking camp on the morning of April 22, Grierson dispatched Major Graham's battalion of the 7th Illinois Cavalry with instructions to demolish a tannery and shoe factory located in Bankston, some four miles west of the Federal bivouac. 66 The Union major encountered no opposition in the tiny manufacturing center, and in a few brief hours, the blueclad troopers destroyed a quantity of boots, shoes, leather and machinery estimated at between $20,000 and $50,000. With Graham's return, bearing a Rebel quartermaster captured enroute to Port Hudson, the Yankee colonel set his column in motion through the near impenetrable Noxubee River bottomlands, in the direction of Louisville. 67

Still uppermost on Grierson's mind was the Mobile & Ohio
Railroad, which paralleled the cavalry's line of march some twenty or twenty-five miles to the east. With the rails and telegraph intact, the Confederates might unexpectedly throw troops upon the flanks and in front of the Federal column. If the bluecoated horsemen failed to break the tracks and wires, they must at least threaten the arteries of communication in eastern Mississippi so as to pin down enemy forces along the railroad. Uncertain of Colonel Hatch's success in carrying out his instructions, Grierson decided to dispatch Captain Henry C. Forbes, with 35 men of Company B of the 7th Illinois Cavalry, to attack the line at Macon.

At Grierson's direction, Captain Forbes' tiny command diverged from the main column north of Louisville and proceeded eastward, encamping that evening just two and one-half miles short of its objective. From information gathered under the cloak of darkness, the Illinois troopers learned that a trainload of Confederate infantry and artillery was expected at Macon before daybreak. Reluctantly, the Federal captain abandoned his plans to attack the town.

Sunrise on the twenty-third brought further disappointment. Skirting Macon in an effort to strike the rails south of the depot, Forbes found the railroad bridge leading to Meridian under heavy guard. Frustrated, but grimly determined to save his command, Captain Forbes turned his small band southeastward in search of Colonel Grierson's trail.
Despite the failure of Company B to reach its target, the feint toward Macon had hardly been in vain. As Henry Forbes would later learn, although he, like Hatch, had been unable to disrupt the Mobile & Ohio, the weak diversion had succeeded in lifting attention from the main body of Federal cavalry and in rivetting Rebel eyes upon the railroad in eastern Mississippi. During the night of April 22, 2,000 troops had been rushed north by rail from Meridian in order to protect Macon from assault by an estimated 5,000 Union troopers. 68

While Captain Forbes cautiously approached the Mobile & Ohio Railroad, Colonel Grierson passed swiftly through Louisville shortly after dark on the twenty-second. Word of the Yankee incursion into eastern Mississippi apparently had not yet reached the Louisville region. In fact, much to their surprise, the dust-covered horsemen encountered an enthusiastic reception as a detachment of Earl Van Dorn's heroic Rebel cavalry. Nevertheless, as a precaution against residents leaving the community with information describing the strength and direction of the mounted column, Grierson sent Major Mathew H. Starr's battalion of the 6th Illinois Cavalry into the town in advance of the main body with orders to picket the streets until relieved by Major Graham's battalion. Graham, in turn, was instructed to remain behind until the remainder of the command had gained an hour's headstart.

Meanwhile, fearing that Captain Forbes' small company
might nonetheless prove too large to reach its objective undetected, Grierson elected to dispatch two more men in the direction of the railroad. In the deepening darkness, Captain John Lynch and Corporal W. H. H. Bullard, both volunteers from Company E of the 7th Illinois Cavalry, donned civilian attire and quietly slipped away from the Federal column. The mission of the pair of strangely garbed Yankees was to cut the telegraph wires along the Mobile & Ohio, thereby preventing information of Grierson's location and movements from travelling between Jackson and various points along the eastern railroad.69

Beyond Louisville, the Federal cavalry descended into the abysmal marshlands which extended for three miles on either side of the swollen Tallahaga Creek. Horses, struggling in profound darkness through water seldom less than three feet in depth, stumbled and drowned, leaving unfortunate riders floundering helplessly until discovered and rescued by their groping comrades. After hours of alternately wading and swimming, the 6th Illinois finally touched high ground and went into camp on the Estes plantation, ten miles south of Louisville. The troopers of the 7th Illinois moved into camp near 3 a.m., an hour behind the lead regiment.70

At daybreak on the twenty-third, Grierson's raiders moved out along the road leading south to Philadelphia. The colonel, recognizing that the recent rains had undoubtedly
rendered the Pearl River unfordable, sent Sergeant Surby's squad rushing forward to secure the all-important bridge which spanned that stream some six miles north of the Neshoba County seat. In a conversation with an unsuspecting elderly gentleman encountered along the road, Surby learned that his commander's fears were fully justified. The rushing sound of turbulent water could be discerned in the distance, and it was now discovered that a picket composed of five armed citizens defended the narrow crossing. The center planks had already been removed from the bridge and combustibles placed atop the structure, to be ignited at the approach of the Yankee raiders. With no time to waste, the sergeant hurriedly copied down the name and residence of his informant before revealing his own identity. Unless the old man convinced his neighbors to surrender the bridge, the sergeant forcefully explained, the Federal troopers were fully prepared to attack, and in all probability kill, the tiny patrol stationed at the river crossing; among whom, as he had learned was the frightened rustic's son. Furthermore, Surby grimly promised, destruction of the Pearl River bridge would most certainly result in a similar fate befalling the aged squire's own property.

Fortunately for the fate of Grierson's expedition, the thoroughly unnerved senior citizen proved persuasive. As Surby's men approached the bridge, the ad hoc guard quickly dispersed, leaving the butternut-clad Yankees to repair an
only slightly damaged wooden structure. Reflecting upon his success in securing the Pearl River crossing, Sergeant Surby recalled the incident as but "one of the many in which the Power above seemed shielding us from harm as the destruction of the bridge would have been fatal to the expedition." 71

With the main column close behind, Surby's scouts pushed on toward Philadelphia. Signs of local hostility increased perceptibly as the Federal troopers advanced upon the county seat until, within about three hundred yards of the town, Grierson's vanguard ran up against a line of mounted and dismounted men deployed across the road, apparently prepared to dispute the Yankee's passage. A quick call for reinforcements brought forward ten men from the advance guard, and with this modest force Sergeant Surby charged the enemy, capturing six men and scattering the remainder. Among the prisoners, Grierson discovered the county judge who, although frightened, admitted responsibility for organizing resistance to the Federal raiders. In response to the judge's faltering confession, the colonel good-naturedly informed his captives that while he was committed to the capture and destruction of Rebel troops and property, it was neither his intention, nor his inclination, to molest the persons or property of private citizens. Granting the much relieved civilians an informal parole, Grierson passed quickly and quietly through Philadelphia at about 3 p.m. 72
On this, the afternoon of the seventh day of the Federal raid into Mississippi, the Yankee horsemen were almost within striking distance of their objective—the Southern Railroad of Mississippi. Suddenly, the importance of rapid and heavily veiled movements rose to an even higher premium than at any previous moment in a cavalry sweep already so swift that it had easily outdistanced all information concerning its whereabouts. Consequently, Colonel Grierson left Philadelphia in a southeasterly direction, moving four miles down the Enterprise road before ordering a halt. Hopefully, news of this movement would once again draw the attention of Confederate authorities to the Mobile & Ohio Railroad and perhaps divert troops eastward from stations along the line of the Southern.

While his men enjoyed a few brief hours of relaxation, Colonel Grierson called a conference of the field officers of the 6th and 7th Illinois cavalry regiments and plotted his next move. At 10 p.m. two battalions of the 7th Illinois, numbering some two hundred officers and men, left the Union bivouac under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Blackburn. Blackburn's instructions directed him to proceed swiftly to Decatur and from there to descend upon Newton Station on the Southern Railroad. After seizing the depot at that point, Blackburn was to tear up the track and telegraph line in the immediate vicinity of the station and "to inflict all the damage possible upon the enemy." 73

One hour after Blackburn's departure, Colonel Grierson
remounted the main column and followed the trail southwestward. Along with the colonel rode Captain Lynch and Corporal Bullard who had rejoined the command shortly after sunset, exhausted from their mission along the Mobile & Ohio. Although the two disguised horsemen had covered almost two hundred miles during the previous forty-eight hours, they had failed to reach the telegraph line which bordered the railroad. Finding the Noxubee River bridge near Macon destroyed, Lynch and Bullard had been forced to content themselves with intelligence extracted from unwitting Rebel pickets. Communications along the railroad remained intact, of course, but the pair of enterprising cavalrymen had nevertheless returned with a wealth of information concerning enemy strength and troop dispositions along the Mobile & Ohio. Moreover, a guard's off-hand remark had immediately alerted Lynch to the interesting news that Captain Forbes' company had approached, but had not attacked, the Confederate garrison at Macon. Unfortunately, however, the captain had been unable to ascertain whether Forbes was now attempting to overtake Grierson's fast-moving column, or if he had exercised his option to return to La Grange.74

Following a silent passage through the sleeping community of Decatur at three o'clock on the morning of April 24, Blackburn's command approached Newton Station just as the first rays of sunlight broke upon the eastern horizon. Surveying the town from a slight eminence one-half mile from
the depot, Sergeant Surby observed several persons milling about in the vicinity of a large building, which he correctly presumed to be a hospital. To the sergeant's immense relief, however, he could discern no evidence of the Rebel command which had been reported encamped at the station.

In the brightening dawn, three disguised Yankee horsemen casually slipped into the outskirts of Newton Station. Reining up in front of a house on the edge of town, Sergeant Surby questioned an unsuspecting civilian who readily informed the tiny band of strangers that a train was scheduled to arrive at the station within the quarter hour. Scarcely had this information been elicited, however, when the shriek of a locomotive whistle pierced the air in the eastern distance. The unexpected sound, as the sergeant quickly learned, heralded the approach of a west-bound freight due to pass through Newton Station at 9 a.m. Without a moment to spare, Surby dispatched one of his companions to alert Lieutenant Colonel Blackburn to push his command forward at once. The two remaining scouts, meanwhile, hastened to the depot in search of the telegraph, only to find that the Confederate authorities had inexplicably failed to equip Newton Station with a signal office.

Within minutes the cavalry thundered down the streets of the station. Posting pickets to prevent possible escapes from the town, the Federal lieutenant colonel ordered the remainder of his force concealed behind the depot buildings.
A single trooper lay prone beside each switch with instructions to throw the lever as soon as the approaching train had passed.

Blackburn had barely succeeded in hiding his command from view when a twenty-five car freight burdened with railroad ties, bridge timber and plank puffed laboriously into the station from the east. As the train slowed and drew abreast of the depot, blueclad soldiers suddenly burst forth from the shadows and bounded into the locomotive cab. With pistols drawn, the Yankee troopers ordered the startled engineer to bring his train to a halt.

No sooner had the locomotive and freight cars been switched onto a siding, and the Federal soldiers returned to their places of concealment, when another whistle sounded; this time from the west. In an instant a second train rounded the curve on the outskirts of the station and pulled slowly into the depot. Repeating their earlier stratagem, the Yankee troopers quickly brought the locomotive to a standstill. This latest prize, the bluecoated cavalrymen discovered, consisted of thirteen cars; one of which carried several extremely distraught passengers. Closer inspection revealed that four of the remaining cars on the eastbound train contained arms and ammunition, six held commissary and quartermaster stores, and two were crammed with the household furnishings and other personal property of frightened families fleeing the besieged city of Vicksburg.
Working quickly, Blackburn's troops carefully removed private property from the captured trains before kindling fires inside the wodden boxcars. By eleven o'clock flames were racing along the entire length of both strings of captured cars. As the heat increased in intensity, artillery shells erupted, rocking the morning air with deep reverberations. Reaching Colonel Grierson's ears, five miles north of Newton Station, the dull explosions suggested the possibility that Blackburn's detachment had encountered resistance at the depot and was under attack. The sharp command "trot, gallop, march" passed swiftly down the Federal column as Grierson advanced briskly to the rescue. Upon entering Newton Station, however, the colonel happily observed that all was secure and the work of destruction well under way. With considerably less pleasure, the Yankee commander also noted that many of the Illinois troopers were eagerly filling their canteens from a captured whiskey barrel. 75

While Grierson heartily congratulated Blackburn on his almost effortless success in capturing Newton Station, along with the two trains, he nevertheless recognized that much important work remained to be done before the Yankee raiders could afford to relax. The colonel immediately instructed Major Mathew Starr of the 6th Illinois Cavalry to proceed with two battalions of his regiment eastward to the Chunky River, destroying track, telegraph wires, bridges and trestles
along the way. At the same time, Captain Joseph Herring of Company K, 7th Illinois Cavalry, rode west along the tracks disrupting communications in that direction.

While detachments of his command ranged east and west along the Southern Railroad, Colonel Grierson supervised the destruction of government property at Newton Station. In addition to the thirty-eight railroad cars and their contents, the raiders committed to the flames five hundred stand of arms and a large quantity of clothing stored in the town. Each captured locomotive was ruptured by explosions, and the depot itself was destroyed. Finally, after paroling seventy-five prisoners who had been carefully coached to believe that their captors were heading toward Enterprise on the Mobile & Ohio Railroad, Grierson sounded the rally.

At two o'clock in the afternoon, the bluecoated horsemen moved out to a point four miles south of the railroad, where they halted to feed. With Major Starr's return, the Union colonel considered the work of destruction along the Southern Railroad complete. Track, telegraph lines, trestles and bridges had been rendered useless for a distance of eight to ten miles on either side of Newton Station. 76

After a three hour rest, the Yankee troopers were back in their saddles and proceeding south. As the advance guard approached the outskirts of the quiet rural community of Garlandville, shots rang out toppling one blueclad rider from his horse and sending another plunging to the ground
atop a mortally wounded mount. A swift pursuit handily rounded up the attackers, and within a short time a substantial collection of gray-haired gentlemen—most of them considerably beyond conscription age—stood silently before the Federal commander who used the occasion to deliver an impromptu address upon the subject of national union.

Following what was by now an established procedure, Grierson immediately posted guards inside Garlandville to seal off the town and to prevent looting. Enemy movements obviously afoot to intercept the pillagers of Newton Station weighed heavily upon the colonel's mind. Yankee troopers, therefore, rushed directly to the local post office and quickly emptied the building of its potentially informative contents. Moments later, the bluecoated soldiers once again disappeared at a weary trot into the Mississippi countryside. Not until near midnight did the welcome command to dismount pass down the long column. Twelve miles below Garlandville, on the Bender plantation, the exhausted troopers removed the saddles from their lathered horses for the first time in forty-eight hours, before wrapping themselves in blankets for the night.77

While his fatigued horsemen slept, Grierson pondered his next move. Captured communications and information gathered by Sergeant Surby's scouts clearly indicated that Rebel forces were swiftly converging from the east and west to block escape routes through northern Mississippi.78 With
the safety of his bedraggled command uppermost in his thoughts, Grierson therefore elected to undertake an easy march on the next day. Moving slowly south for a short time, he reasoned, would afford an opportunity to rest his small force, collect food and gather further information concerning enemy troop dispositions. Revitalized and better informed, he would then make the decision whether to move eastward and return to La Grange through Alabama or to drive south in an attempt to join either Grant at Port Hudson or Banks at Baton Rouge. 79

Consequently, at eight o'clock on an overcast Saturday morning, Grierson moved his command out in a serpentine course west and northwest, passing through the tiny village of Pineville about noon and halting at the Nichols' plantation to rest and gather forage. While men and mounts fed and released, the colonel threw small detachments northward in an effort to keep Confederate troops immobilized along the Southern Railroad by threatening the road at various points in the vicinity of Lake Station. With the return of these companies, the Federal cavalry remounted and galloped twelve miles to the southwest before reining up near nightfall on the Mackadora plantation west of Raleigh. 80

Information secured during the afternoon of April 25, indicated that a Rebel force had been dispatched from Mobile to intercept the Yankee raiders. Hoping to gain more definite intelligence of his pursuers, and to further confuse
the garrisons along the Southern Railroad, Grierson decided
to send a single scout north to strike the railroad near
Forest Station, some thirty miles distant, cut the telegraph
wires and, if possible, destroy a bridge or trestle. The
man selected for this hazardous assignment was one of
Sergeant Surby's resourceful scouts, Samuel Nelson of the
7th Illinois Cavalry. At about midnight, Nelson slipped
quietly out of the cavalry encampment and rode undisturbed
through the Mississippi darkness. Seven miles south of the
railroad, the butternut-clad trooper stumbled upon a
regiment of Confederate horsemen close upon the trail of
Grierson's column. Questioned by the Rebels, Nelson--his
disguise enhanced by a slight physical deformity--informed
his interrogators that he had been impressed as a guide by
the Yankee cavalry. When last seen, he continued, Grierson's
force, at least 1,800 strong, was moving directly upon the
Mobile & Ohio Railroad. Satisfied with Nelson's story, the
Confederate troopers released the scout and turned off the
trail in pursuit of a phantom force heading east. 81

Returning to the Federal camp shortly before sunrise,
Nelson informed Grierson of the command's close call and
reported his inability to approach the railroad. This
latest intelligence, coupled with information obtained during
the previous day, plainly revealed that the enemy had
strongly reinforced the stations along the Southern Railroad
from Jackson as far east as Lake. Furthermore, the Federal
cavalry's repeated feints toward the east and leaks of false information had apparently succeeded in drawing Confederate troops to the presumably threatened Mobile & Ohio. After nine days in enemy territory, the Yankee raiders suddenly found themselves hopelessly cut off from their base in distant west Tennessee.

Although serious, the plight of the Federal column was hardly unexpected, and Colonel Grierson calmly explored the options open to the bluecoated cavalry. Despite the absence of reliable information concerning General Grant's movements in the vicinity of Vicksburg, the colonel had noted with great interest the persistent rumors of an impending battle at Grand Gulf. With little actual choice in the matter, Grierson decided to gamble. Moving rapidly toward the southwest, the Federal cavalry would cross the Pearl River and strike the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad at Hazelhurst. Destruction of the rails south of Hazelhurst would effectively prevent the movement of troops and supplies between Vicksburg and Port Hudson, the two Rebel strongholds on the Mississippi River. This task accomplished, Grierson proposed to slip around the enemy's flank and to join Grant's army at Port Gibson or Grand Gulf. Alternatively, should the Rebel cavalry succeed in interposing itself between the railroad and the western river, the Yankee raiders might yet be able to run the gauntlet of Confederate horsemen behind Port Hudson and reach the Union lines at Baton Rouge.
Following a good night's rest and with a full supply of forage and provisions, the blueclad troopers broke camp at six o'clock on the morning of April 26. Safely across the Leaf River, Grierson ordered the bridge over that stream burned to forestall pursuit and pushed briskly forward to Raleigh, the seat of Smith County. Entering the peaceful community at 8 a.m., Sergeant Surby's scouts captured the surprised county sheriff, along with $3,000 in Confederate currency. The main column, close on Surby's heels, lost no time in moving through the silent streets of Raleigh and quickly disappeared into the pine forest west of the city. Nightfall found the Illinois cavalry almost forty miles beyond the previous evening's encampment and within a few miles of Westville, in the southwestern corner of Simpson County. After struggling beneath a torrential downpour through near impenetrable darkness, Colonel Grierson finally halted the 6th Illinois at 9 p.m. on the Williams plantation, two miles outside of Westville. Colonel Prince, meanwhile, was instructed to bivouac the bulk of his regiment on the Smith farm, one mile beyond the nearby Strong River bridge.83

For two hundred troopers of the 7th Illinois Cavalry, however, there would be little rest on the evening of April 26. In a brief conference at the Williams plantation, Colonel Grierson and his officers discussed the urgent necessity for seizing the ferry crossing on the Pearl River, some thirteen miles distant. Thus far, the Yankee raiders
had been remarkably successful in deceiving everyone, including their prisoners, into believing that they were in fact Confederate cavalry from Mobile en route to Vicksburg. Nevertheless, captured newspapers revealed that the southern Mississippi countryside had been fully alerted to the enemy's presence and indicated that the citizenry was frantically arming itself to contest the passage of the impudent Union horsemen. Grierson could reasonably assume, therefore, that orders would soon be issued to destroy the ferry in an effort to prevent him from crossing the Pearl. Consequently, with the adjournment of the late-night council of war on the east bank of Strong River, Colonel Prince hastened across the bridge to rejoin his regiment. Within moments, the colonel had assembled four companies of the 7th Illinois Cavalry and was rushing westward to capture the Pearl River ferry and to hold the crossing until the arrival of the remainder of the Federal column. 84

Rested and fed, the 6th Illinois Cavalry broke camp about midnight and advanced to join the remnant of the 7th Illinois bivouacked on the opposite shore. Two hours had now elapsed since the departure of Colonel Prince's detachment, and Grierson was anxious to close up with the advance without further delay. As the clatter of iron soled hooves echoed across the wooden planks of the Strong River bridge, however, the colonel's attention was suddenly distracted by a swelling wave of shouts and cheers which rolled swiftly
up from the long column of riders at his back. As Grierson shifted in his saddle, three beaming horsemen reined up sharply at his elbow. "Captain Forbes presents his compliments," an excited trooper blurted out, "and begs to be allowed to burn his bridges for himself." Astonished and amused, the smiling colonel eagerly granted the captain's request and posted a guard at the bridge to await the approach of the thirty-five lost souls of Company B.85

As Grierson would soon learn, Captain Forbes had spent the previous five days engaged in a frantic attempt to overtake the main body of Federal cavalry. After turning south-westward on the evening of April 23, Company B had ridden for twelve hours without rest, only to strike Colonel Grierson's cold trail at Philadelphia around noon on the twenty-fourth—some twenty-one hours behind the bulk of the Yankee raiders. A brief skirmish with a hastily assembled company of home guards had barely slowed Forbes' small band as it continued south, and near dawn on the twenty-fifth the forlorn Illinoisians had entered the still-smoldering ruins of Newton Station. In a gruelling full day's ride, Company B had gained scarcely six hours on Grierson's equally fast-moving column.

At Newton Station, Captain Forbes had unfortunately allowed himself to be misled by false information deliberately planted by his own commander in order to confuse Confederate pursuers. Aware of the possibility that, after accomplishing
their mission, the Federal raiders might swing east and then back north through Alabama, the captain had listened with naive credulity as frightened residents at the depot described Colonel Grierson's departure in the general direction of the Mississippi-Alabama border. Assuming that Grierson intended to cut the Mobile & Ohio Railroad at Enterprise before returning north, the unsuspecting Forbes had picked up the false trail leading eastward.

As it approached Enterprise at one o'clock on the afternoon of April 25, Forbes' command had been fired upon from a stockade which surrounded the depot. Expecting to find the town undefended, the Yankee captain left his troopers concealed beneath the crest of a hill and had advanced upon the makeshift fortification under a flag of truce. When three Confederate officers arrived to parley with the blue-coats, Forbes had calmly handed them a scrawled note demanding the surrender of the post by order of "Major-General Grierson." Granting the Rebels one hour in which to ponder the capitulation demand, Forbes had then boldly announced his intention to "fall back to the main column and there await the reply."

Upon rejoining his company, however, an understandably nervous Federal officer had breathed a quick sigh of relief before removing his column at a fast gallop beyond the reach of the enemy garrison.

As Captain Forbes later discovered, in those few anxious moments before the stockade, his miniscule command had more
than atoned for its earlier failure to reach the railroad at Macon. Only moments before Company B's appearance at Enterprise, the 35th Alabama Infantry had arrived by rail to garrison the previously undefended station. While the Confederates discussed the implications of the brash Yankee call for surrender of the town, Major General Loring had also arrived, reinforcing the supposedly beleaguered post with the 7th Kentucky and 12th Louisiana regiments fresh from Meridian. In effect, therefore, Captain Forbes' thirty-five lost troopers had successfully pinned down three regiments of potential pursuers and once again had focused the enemy's attention upon the Mobile & Ohio, while Grierson's raiders made their escape in the opposite direction.

At the same time, the unexpected presence of Rebel troops in Enterprise had alerted Captain Forbes to his error in assuming that the Union cavalry was moving toward Alabama. Ignoring the rapidly escalating odds against his success, the captain had turned back westward, praying desperately for that once-in-a-lifetime miracle which would enable him to overtake a column of hard-riding horsemen who not only were moving toward an unknown objective but were also assiduously attempting to disguise their movements. In the end, it had required an additional back-breaking thirty-four hour ride, through rain darkened forests, fording swollen streams and following a trail of fire-blackened bridges, to earn Henry Forbes his miracle.
While Colonel Grierson guided his command through the dismal piney woods, and as Captain Forbes hurried to rejoin the cavalry column, Colonel Prince approached the Pearl River at two o'clock on the morning of April 27. Information previously gathered indicated that the boat landing would be found on the east bank of the river. Much to the colonel's surprise, however, he now discovered the ferry swinging at its mooring on the western shore. Private Henry Dower of Company I responded eagerly to the call for a volunteer, and within moments horse and rider were plunging awkwardly through the swollen stream. After anxious minutes in which the swift currents carried Dower and his mount a considerable distance below their objective, the wet and exhausted private struggled ashore, thankful for his life.

Although Private Dower had failed in his hazardous mission, the commotion along the river bank finally succeeded in arousing the owner of the landing, and before long the sleepy gentleman emerged from his shed to inquire after the business of his unexpected visitors. Adopting his best southern accent, Colonel Prince responded that he commanded the 1st Alabama Cavalry from Mobile in search of conscripts and requested that the operator of the landing dispatch his flatboat to ferry the regiment across the Pearl. In relatively short order, an unstable appearing craft approached the east bank, and Prince began crossing his battalion over the treacherous stream.
As day broke and the last of Colonel Prince's two hundred horsemen clambered up the steep banks lining the western shore of the Pearl River, Colonel Grierson reached the landing with the remainder of the Federal column. Learning that Prince had intercepted a courier bearing orders for the destruction of the ferry, Grierson immediately issued instructions to speed up the crossing by crowding men and mounts twenty-four at a time onto the flatboat. As soon as the first boatload touched the opposite shore, the colonel dispatched a small detachment three or four miles above the landing to lie in ambush for an armed transport rumored to be at anchor seven miles upstream. Fortunately, the Rebel gunboat failed to make an appearance and, with the arrival of Captain Forbes' long-absent company at 2 p.m., the laborious task of transporting two regiments of cavalry across the turbulent Pearl River was accomplished.  

Aware that the Confederate authorities in Jackson, barely forty miles to the north, had been alerted to the presence of the Yankee raiders in the vicinity of Georgetown on the Pearl, Colonel Grierson had started Prince's battalion toward Hazelhurst, fourteen miles distant, while he personally supervised the crossing of the remainder of the command. Assuming their familiar position in advance of the mounted column, Sergeant's Surby's handful of butternut-clad scouts guided the two hundred troopers of the 7th Illinois Cavalry westward. It quickly became evident that Colonel Grierson's
premonition of spreading alarm and gathering resistance were well founded, as the disguised Yankee horsemen conducted a steady stream of prisoners back to the trailing column. Four miles outside of Hazelhurst, Colonel Prince handed Sergeant Surby a written dispatch, with instructions to send two men into the town where they would deliver the message to the telegraph operator. The communiqué, prepared by Colonel Grierson and addressed to General Pemberton, falsely informed the Confederate commander at Jackson that "the Yankees had advanced to Pearl River and finding the ferry destroyed they could not cross and had left taking a northeasterly course." 89

Entering the station, the pair of scouts encountered the telegrapher in the company of a half dozen or more Confederate officers. Apparently indifferent to the danger involved in this awkward situation, the Illinois troopers strode confidently into the depot and calmly handed their deceptive message to the operator. Surprisingly, only a handful of casual questions greeted the unfamiliar riders, and Surby's much relieved couriers watched impassively as their misleading information raced across the wires to Rebel headquarters in the state capital.

Good fortune, however, was quickly fading as the Federal cavalrymen remounted and announced their intention to proceed to the hotel for a meal. The two horsemen had covered barely half the distance to the square when, much to
their astonishment, a prisoner captured by the raiders on the previous day suddenly appeared brandishing a sword in one hand and a horse pistol in the other. A piercing cry for assistance in stopping "them d____d Yankees" immediately focused attention upon the now conspicuous strangers as they moved fully exposed through the hostile streets. With revolvers drawn, the unmasked Union soldiers instinctively wheeled in their tracks and spurred their mounts into a blind dash through the alarmed community. A mile east of town the fleeing riders encountered their sergeant and paused breathless to recount the tail of their narrow escape.  

With the realization that the element of surprise had all but evaporated, Surby hesitated only long enough to send a courier back to Colonel Prince with a request that the advance guard be ordered forward in double time, before dashing recklessly into the already virtually deserted village. Reining up in the midst of a torrential mid-day downpour, the thoroughly drenched Yankee scouts rushed headlong into the Hazelhurst depot. A quick interrogation of two noticeably unnerved senior citizens revealed that the building's previous occupants had unceremoniously departed, taking the telegraph key with them. Much to the sergeant's relief, however, it was also ascertained that in their haste the fleeing Rebels had neglected to countermand Colonel Grierson's forged dispatch.  

Following closely behind Surby's scouts, the vanguard
of Colonel Prince's column brazenly rumbled down the empty streets of Hazelhurst. In a now familiar movement, the bluecoated troopers swiftly fanned out in all directions and tightly sealed escape routes leading from the small community. Alerted to the momentary arrival of a freight train at the Hazelhurst depot, Colonel Prince, meanwhile, implemented the stratagem that had proven so successful at Newton Station. In an instant, all visible evidence of the Yankee presence disappeared as the quick-stepping Illinois horsemen slipped into places of concealment. Only after a wet and uncomfortable half hour of fruitless waiting did Federal soldiers gradually drift back into the open.

Forewarned of the appearance of Grierson's raiders at Hazelhurst, the engineer of the southbound Jackson train luckily chose this moment to creep slowly and silently into the outskirts of the depot town. Initially disinclined to credit fully an earlier warning delivered by a young messenger at Crystal Springs, the freight's conductor snapped rigidly alert at the first glimpse of a blueclad picket posted at the bridge north of town. Beyond the trestle, obviously preoccupied Yankee troopers milled listlessly about the plainly occupied village. Almost by reflex, brakes screeched and the Confederate engine flew into reverse. At the station, startled Federal soldiers shifted their attention sharply northward, only to watch in agonized frustration as the Rebel locomotive backed rapidly up the tracks,
carrying to safety a rumored cargo of "seventeen commissioned officers and eight millions in Confederate money, which was en route to pay off troops in Louisiana and Texas."\textsuperscript{92}

After discharging ineffectual shots at the fast-retreating train, Colonel Prince's disappointed troopers turned their full attention to matters close at hand. Gathering together commissary and quartermaster stores destined for Grand Gulf, Port Hudson and Port Gibson, along with four carloads of powder and ammunition, the Yankee raiders ran their captured booty a safe distance out of town where it was ignited. Squads of Federal soldiers, meanwhile, raced along the tracks north and south of the station tearing up rails, demolishing trestlework and disrupting telegraph wires. The depot at Hazelhurst, situated uncomfortably close to private residences, escaped the torch. But, "though every precaution was taken by the officers to prevent the destruction of private property," Sergeant Surby recalled, "the flames were soon seen to burst forth from a drug-store on the east side of the depot, resulting in the burning of three other buildings, two of which were empty stores and the third a private residence; none were of very large dimensions. Every exertion was made to extinguish the fire and prevent its spreading."\textsuperscript{93}

A loud series of dull explosions startled Colonel Grierson and the remainder of the Federal cavalry as they approached Hazelhurst from the east. In an instant the
orders "trot, gallop, march" flew down the column in rapid succession. Within moments, the bluecoated horsemen were flying to the aid of their presumably beleaguered comrades, only to discover that after the false alarm at Newton Station, "they had been sold again." The "bombardment," Grierson learned, was the result of the explosion of some five hundred rebel artillery rounds. Finding the shells crammed into two railroad cars parked near the depot, Colonel Prince had instructed his men to oil the wheels of the cars, ignite the frame carriers, and finally to start them rolling down a steep grade. As a fourteen-year-old resident of the area remembered, "before they went far explosions began which sounded like the siege guns at Vicksburg or Port Hudson." Relieved, and no doubt sharing a good laugh, Grierson's troopers broke ranks and proceeded to the hotel, where the early-arriving members of the 7th Illinois Cavalry were hosting a banquet prepared from captured stores of eggs, sugar, flour, ham and bacon.

At seven o'clock in the evening, the rested and refreshed Federal horsemen left behind the smoldering buildings and railroad cars at Hazelhurst and resumed their march toward the north and west. Fanning out in front of Colonel Prince's 6th Illinois Cavalry, Sergeant Surby's scouts once again assumed the advance as Grierson's raiders groped their way through the menacing Mississippi night. A mood of profound seriousness pervaded the command on this spring
evening, and each rider jogged forward with alert determination. Undoubtedly Sergeant Surby, in his lonely and exposed forward position, sensed the mounting danger even more acutely than his uniformed comrades who trailed at a respectable distance:

It now became necessary to use every precaution. We had passed within twenty-five miles of the capital of the State—cut the railroad and telegraph communications on the New Orleans and Great Northern Railroad. The enemy's scouts had been sent out, and were watching our movements; couriers were flying in every direction, spreading news, forces were concentrating and sent to intercept us. . . They certainly had every advantage on their side;—a perfect knowledge of the country—every road, public or private—every stream of water, small or large—the fodal places and bridges—forces above and below us on the railroad, in our front at Port Gibson, Grand Gulf and Hudson—following in our rear—retreat was impossible, even if such an idea had occurred to us, we having destroyed our only hope in that quarter—bridges and ferries. Colonel Grierson was not one of the retreating kind; his motto was "onward."96

Fortunately, Colonel Grierson's conduct of the expedition thus far had created a virtually unshakeable confidence among the Illinois troopers that, regardless of danger and the odds against their success, their commander was possessed of an almost uncanny ability to surmount every obstacle. Again, as the chief of the "Butternut Guerrillas" recalled in awed amazement:

In woodcraft I do not think I ever saw his equal. He reminded me of an old deer hunter; he understood the runways and the shortest way to get to them. . .
It was seldom that any citizen was found to act as a guide, except when dodging across through the woods from one road to another. With one of Colton's maps—a small pocket companion—with the states and counties on it, he made his way through the enemy's country. The road selected, it was then the duty of the scouts to keep its communication open, thereby causing no delay to the column.\textsuperscript{97}

Throughout the evening of April 27, Grierson's scouts were kept busy driving off or capturing small bands of Rebel scouts and videttes who repeatedly approached the front and flanks of the Federal column. At 9 p.m., the Yankee raiders passed swiftly through the small town of Gallatin, seat of Copiah County, expelling a tiny company of Confederate partisans.\textsuperscript{98} A short distance beyond the community, Sergeant Surby's "butternuts" unexpectedly encountered an ox-drawn wagon train. As the scouts pulled back undetected, the 6th Illinois Cavalry rushed forward, descended upon the train and, after a brief exchange of gunfire, captured the wagons. The prize, it was quickly discovered, consisted of a 64-pounder Parrott gun, machinery for mounting the heavy artillery piece, 1400 pounds of powder, two wagons and a quantity of provisions; all enroute to Grand Gulf. Grierson ordered the gun spiked and overturned in a bog, the oxen killed and the wagons, ammunition, machinery and other stores destroyed. These tasks accomplished, the command turned toward the southwest and proceeded to the Thompson plantation, three and one-half miles outside of Gallatin, where the Illinois horsemen encamped for the night. In spite of
the time involved in the disruption of Confederate lines
of communication in the neighborhood of Hazelhurst, the
Federal raiders had managed to cover some thirty-seven
miles during the twenty-four hours which had elapsed since
the previous night's bivouac.  

As Grierson's troopers turned out of their bedrolls at
dawn on April 28, Confederate forces were converging upon
the Union column from the north and west. In the wake of
reports of the destruction wrought at Hazelhurst, the Jackson
Daily Mississippian noted that "there is a good ridge road
leading from Hazelhurst into Natchez by way of Port Gibson--
the latter point being only eight miles from Grand Gulf--
so that the enemy, according to his audacity and force may
strike in either direction." Although the Jackson editor
presumed that the 2nd Iowa Cavalry still accompanied the
Federal raiders and therefore erroneously placed their
strength at 1500 men, he nonetheless discounted the possi-
bility that Grierson might attempt to turn back toward the
north, "as of course he is aware that he is watched for and
would probably be intercepted." Under the circumstances, it
seemed almost certain that the Yankee colonel would "attempt
to join Banks after committing further mischief at railway
stations."  

But General Pemberton, hard-pressed along the Mississippi
River at both Vicksburg and Port Gibson and at the same
time exceedingly irritated by the bothersome Union cavalry
operating in his rear, was not at all confident about the eventual destination of Grierson's raiders. Upon receipt of information of the enemy's appearance at Hazelhurst, the Confederate commander immediately sent a battalion of cavalry under the command of Captain W. W. Porter south from Jackson along the severed line of the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad. Colonel R. V. Richardson would follow early on the morning of the twenty-ninth with three companies of the 20th Mississippi Mounted Infantry. Although General Johnston had been trying since early March to have the unorthodox commander of the 1st Tennessee Partisan Rangers arrested for abuse of the conscript laws and for the apparent contempt with which he regarded higher authority, General Pemberton was temporarily placing all Confederate cavalry below the Southern Railroad under Richardson's orders. In the western part of the state, General John S. Bowen was ordered to collect Colonel Wirt Adams' cavalry at Grand Gulf and to send it eastward in an effort to cut off any Federal movement in the direction of Port Gibson. Upon forming a junction with Colonel Richardson, Adams was instructed to assume over-all command of the cavalry pursuit south of Jackson. Meanwhile, Colonel A. E. Reynolds, at Forest Station on the Southern Railroad, was directed to dispatch a courier to Prairie Mound in northeastern Mississippi with orders for Lieutenant Colonel C. R. Barteau to move without delay to join Adams and Richardson at Hazelhurst.
In Pemberton's bewildered mind, however, the greatest immediate threat appeared to be that the enemy would swing northward, cross the Big Black River and once again strike the Southern Railroad; this time interrupting communications between Jackson and Vicksburg. Unable to second guess the elusive Yankee colonel, the Confederate commander in Mississippi and East Louisiana continued to shift widely scattered cavalry units in a hopeless attempt to cover all possible danger points at once. At the same time that he initiated troop movements designed to intercept Grierson's raiders below Hazelhurst, Pemberton warned General Carter L. Stevenson, commanding at Vicksburg, that "it seems to me probable . . . [that Grierson's] intention is to reach Big Black Bridge." If Stevenson had not already posted artillery to guard the bridge behind the city, he was urgently instructed to do so. In an effort to bolster Confederate defenses along the thin lifeline connecting the river fortress with the state capital, Pemberton ordered General W. W. Loring back to Jackson with two regiments from Meridian. In the meantime, the garrisons at Lake Station and Forest Station were also being pulled back along the Southern Railroad to the capital.

With Confederate cavalry descending upon the steel arteries leading south and west from Jackson, Grierson's raiders broke camp at six o'clock on the morning of April 28, moving west and southwest. Dry, hard roadbeds afforded a
welcome contrast to the muddy quagmires of the past several days, and the Federal troopers pressed on quickly, albeit without any fixed objective. Four hours beyond the previous night's encampment, Grierson called a half-hour halt while he summoned his officers into conference. From bits and pieces of information gleaned from newspapers and from private citizens, it was beginning to appear that the Yankee raiders had perhaps moved too swiftly and, as a consequence, had outrun the Federal timetable on the Mississippi. Although Grierson could not yet be absolutely certain, General Grant apparently was still in front of Port Gibson, but it was impossible to determine when, or if, he would assault the Confederate stronghold. In council with his subordinates, therefore, the colonel elected to send a battalion under Captain George W. Trafton of the 7th Illinois Cavalry back to the line of the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern. Trafton's orders were to strike the railroad at Bahala, destroying the track and telegraph lines, together with any government property found at the station. This sudden dash eastward, Grierson reasoned, would lengthen the gap in Confederate communications between Jackson and Port Hudson, while at the same time diverting attention from the main Federal column in the event that he should eventually decide to dash for Port Gibson. 105

As Captain Trafton and Companies A, H, F and M of the 7th Illinois Cavalry filed off to the left, the remainder
of the blueclad horsemen resumed their march toward the southwest. At two o'clock in the afternoon, Colonel Grierson ordered his command to dismount and feed on the Snyder plantation, two miles northeast of the small rural community of Union Church. The Federal troopers were scarcely afforded time to relax, however, when the sharp reports of carbine and musket fire erupted from the direction of town. Moving out immediately, Grierson found the pickets posted along the road leading into Union Church pinned down under heavy fire on their front. Advancing at a gallop, the Union vanguard hurled itself against the enemy force, inflicting casualties and driving it through town. As prisoners drifted in, Grierson learned that he faced three companies of Confederate cavalry--some 100 men in all--under the command of Captain S. B. Cleveland. Apparently, the Rebel captain had accidentally stumbled upon the Federal raiders as he marched northeast from Natchez to join the remainder of Wirt Adams' column enroute from Grand Gulf. Satisfied that the force on his front posed no real threat, Colonel Grierson encamped for the night in and about Union Church.

Sometime between 3 and 4 a.m. on May 29, the Federal camp was awakened by the return of Captain Trafton's detachment. Now, for the first time, Grierson learned that as his command rested, the jaws of a Rebel trap had been poised to spring shut upon the Union cavalry from the front and rear. After leaving the main column, Captain Trafton
had proceeded swiftly to Bahala. Entering the town without incident at two o'clock in the afternoon, the men of the 7th Illinois had eagerly set to work destroying tracks, trestle, depot, a water tank and a small steam engine which was used to power a pump and a saw. After a short rest, the detachment had retraced its steps, carrying with it General Gardner's chief commissary of subsistence, who had been caught unaware at the station. 108

As Trafton's small command cut a zig-zag pattern through the Mississippi night, Sergeant Surby had once again proven his worth as a scout. Learning of Wirt Adams' presence in the vicinity of Union Church, Surby had left the column at about 1 a.m. and had pressed cautiously forward, accompanied by Private George Steadman. Six miles outside of town, the two Yankee horsemen had been brought up short by the unmistakable click of carbine hammers being drawn. Approached by Confederate pickets, the sergeant had quickly disguised his accent and had informed his interrogators that he and his companion formed the advance of a cavalry detachment marching to reinforce Colonel Adams. Satisfied that they were speaking to two of their own number, the Rebel guards had unhesitatingly provided Surby and Steadman with a wealth of information. "All right," one of the pickets had offered, ". . . we belong to old Wirt Adams' cavalry, and to-morrow we intend to give the 'Yanks' h__l." Moreover, the intent Yankee scouts had learned that "the 'Yanks' had
a fight going into Union Church last evening, and that Colonel Adams had gone to Fayette there to be reinforced by troops from the river, and they intended to ambush the 'Yanks' in the morning between Fayette and Union Church; that the 'Yanks' intended to make Natches [sic] but would get slipped up; they farther [sic] stated that they had been left on the corner where the Fayette road turned off to notify forces coming up where they could join Colonel Adams.¹⁰⁹

Wiping sleep from his eyes, Colonel Grierson listened intently to Captain Trafton's report before summoning Colonel Prince, Lieutenant Colonels Blackburn and Louis, and Adjutant Woodward to a pre-dawn council of war.¹¹⁰ Sergeant Surby's intelligence indicated that the Confederate force in the immediate neighborhood of Union Church numbered some four hundred cavalry supported by a battery of artillery. Even as the Federal officers conferred, Wirt Adams was passing around the Union flank enroute to join Captain Cleveland's three companies along the Natchez road. With the ambush thus set, speed and resourcefulness were once again critical to the survival of Grierson's raiders.¹¹¹

Accordingly, at six o'clock on the morning of April 29, the Yankee troopers mounted and rode out of Union Church along the Natchez road, apparently heading directly into the teeth of the rebel ambush. A short distance outside of town, however, Grierson detached a small company with orders to make a demonstration along the road leading to Natchez and
Port Gibson, while the main column turned sharply south-eastward in the direction of Brookhaven on the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad below Bahala. Again, the colonel's stratagem worked flawlessly. After a fruitless wait of several hours in a sprung trap, a frustrated Wirt Adams informed General Pemberton from Fayette that "I passed the enemy's flank last night and formed junction with three companies in enemy's front, intending to engage him. This morning, 8 o'clock, found he had marched rapidly in direction of Brookhaven. Thinking it was his intention to reach Rodney or Natchez, I marched my command to this point, where I have been joined by five companies. Shall now march to intercept his movement toward Baton Rouge."  

While Colonel Adams stewed in his embarrassment, the Federal raiders moved toward Brookhaven by a confused maze of obscure back roads leading through the piney woods. Sergeant Surby recalled that "considerable dodging was done the first three or four hours' march of this day," adding that "I do not think we missed traveling toward any point of the compass." Off in the western distance, the Yankee soldiers could distinctly hear the leaden reverberations of heavy artillery. As Colonel Grierson could safely surmise, Admiral Porter's gunboats had commenced the bombardment of Grand Gulf. With Adams' cavalry standing between the raiders and the river, however, there could be no question this morning of marching toward the sound of the guns.
Shortly after striking the Brookhaven road, the Federal column encountered a stream of ox- and mule-drawn teams apparently attempting to evacuate supplies from the depot on the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern in advance of the arrival of the Yankee raiders. Pausing only to fill their haversacks, Grierson's troopers destroyed the captured stores and quickly pressed forward, halting two miles west of their objective near nightfall. From prisoners taken along the line of march, Grierson learned that the Yankees were expected, and that a considerable force of citizens and conscripts had been organized to resist a Federal assault upon Brookhaven. Advancing to within view of the station, Sergeant Surby caught a clear glimpse of a considerable number of civilians milling about, but failed to detect the presence of any Confederate soldiers. As soon as the sergeant had returned with his report, Grierson ordered the advance battalion of the 7th Illinois Cavalry to charge into the village. Dashing forward in column of fours, Colonel Prince's troopers thundered down dusty streets, dispersing dazed residents and quickly enveloping the town. Although obviously forewarned, the citizens of Brookhaven were captured completely off-guard by the sudden appearance of the Yankee raiders. The only shot fired proved to be from a harmless signal gun discharged from the woods as the blue-coated riders approached the outskirts of the community.

While the 7th Illinois blocked exits and rounded up
prisoners, the troopers of the 6th regiment moved gingerly toward a grove of live oak a mile and a half south of Brookhaven, which was reported to conceal a substantial camp of instruction for Confederate conscripts. Charging blindly into the shaded timber, Lieutenant Colonel Loomis and his men suddenly found themselves in the midst of a picturesque cantonment of rude frame barracks, apparently capable of comfortably housing 1,200 to 1,500 men. Only recently, Loomis discovered, the camp had contained nearly 800 conscripts. Today, however, it stood deserted. General Pemberton, fearing that Grierson might return to the line of the railroad, had just the previous day ordered the camp's commandant, Major N. R. Clark, to evacuate all the men he could not arm and to scatter them throughout the countryside. As Pemberton was well aware, if captured and paroled, these hard-won and badly needed conscripts would remain ineligible for military service until exchanged.115

Lieutenant Colonel Loomis immediately set his men to the task of collecting and destroying arms, ammunition and other stores left behind during the hasty evacuation of the conscript camp. Captain John Lynch with Companies E and F, meanwhile, moved out in the direction of the railroad under instructions to demolish a mile of track and trestlework. Upon completion of the work of destruction south of Brookhaven, the 6th Illinois rode back into town, arriving in time to witness flames envelop the depot, a railroad bridge
and a dozen freight cars. To avoid a repetition of the indiscriminate arson which had accompanied the burning of government buildings and rolling stock at Hazelhurst, Colonel Grierson this time detailed an officer and some twenty men armed with buckets to police the frame structures adjacent to the depot. Due to the efforts of these impromptu fire fighters, civilian property at Brookhaven escaped damage.

Unquestionably, the hardest work of the day fell to Lieutenants Samuel L. Woodward and George A. Root, the young adjutants of the 6th and 7th Illinois regiments. Morale, never high in some of the southern counties of Mississippi, apparently could easily degenerate into open disloyalty when citizens were confronted with the immediate presence of Federal authority. A somewhat astonished Woodward recalled that at Brookhaven "over 200 officers soldiers and able-bodied citizens, who were captured in and about the town, were paroled. Indeed, when it was ascertained that the captives were being paroled and released instead of being carried away, it was surprising to see the eagerness with which every man liable for military duty, sought one of the papers which exempted him until exchanged. Many who had escaped and were hiding out were brought in by their friends to obtain one of the valuable documents." 117

As darkness settled over the blazing station, the Yankee raiders filed out of Brookhaven and rode slowly south
for a distance of eight miles. Grierson's troopers had covered almost forty miles since dawn and, as the command bedded down on the Gill plantation, at least some of the horsemen were allowed to remove the saddles from their weary mounts for the first time in thirty-eight hours. 118

At first light on the morning of April 30, girths were tightened around the underbellies of rested horses and the blueclad troopers resumed their southward march under bright spring skies. Still unable to learn anything concrete concerning General Grant's operations below Vicksburg, Grierson resolved to continue his descent along the line of the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern, tearing up track and keeping his eyes and ears open for reliable information describing the situation along the river. An easy two-mile ride brought the Yankee raiders to the first station below Brookhaven--Bogue Chitto, a forlorn cluster of perhaps a dozen buildings straddling the railroad. In relatively short order, the experienced Illinois cavalrymen destroyed the depot together with some eight or fifteen freight cars, tore up more than five hundred feet of rails and trestlework, demolished a substantial bridge spanning Bogue Chitto Creek, and were back in the saddle heading south. 119

From Bogue Chitto, the Yankee horsemen pushed on toward Summit, some twenty miles below, tearing up track and destroying bridges and trestles as they marched. Midway between the two stations, the Federal column crossed over the
tracks and followed the eastern embankment of the railroad into Summit. At noon, Grierson's troopers rode quietly and leisurely through the streets of the small community and dismounted. To the surprise of many Illinois soldiers, the local residents appeared both to expect and welcome their northern visitors. In Sergeant Surby's eyes, Colonel Grierson seemed at least as popular among the citizens of Summit as was General Pemberton, and the colonel himself recalled being promised by a woman who resided in the town "that if the north should win in the end and I should ever run for President, that her husband should vote for me or she would certainly endeavor to get a divorce from him."

Amidst pleasant surroundings and congenial civilians, the bluecoated riders lingered most of the afternoon in and about Summit. Discovering twenty-five freight cars laden with government supplies near the depot, the Federal troopers invited the townspeople to help themselves to the contents, after which the cars were rolled a safe distance out of town and burned. Grierson, noting the depot's proximity to private residences, ordered the building spared. As at Brookhaven, the regimental adjutants, meanwhile, busied themselves doling out paroles to prisoners captured during the day, as well as to residents of Summit eligible for Confederate conscription.

While the work of destruction and the granting of paroles proceeded at a carefree pace, Colonel Grierson suddenly
found his command threatened by "an enemy more dangerous
. . . than Wirt Adams' Cavalry."\textsuperscript{123} In their aimless
wandering through the streets of Summit, several enterprising
troopers had learned of the existence of some thirty or forty
barrels of Louisiana rum hidden in a swamp about a mile
outside of town. Before long, company officers noticed an
almost continual stream of traffic moving between town and
the swamp. Informed of the unusual activity, Colonel Grierson
immediately dispatched an officer with a squad of men to
investigate. Uncovering the cache of liquor—pronounced
by one imbibers to be "the meanest stuff in existence,
warranted to kill further than any rifle in Uncle Sam'e ser-
vice"—the detachment quickly, although perhaps reluctantly,
executed Grierson's orders, staving in the head of each
barrel and standing guard while "the balm of a thousand
flowers" mingled harmlessly with the dark Mississippi clay.\textsuperscript{124}

As the sun slipped below the western horizon, Grierson's
troopers filed out of Summit moving southwestward, away from
the broken railroad and in the direction of Liberty.\textsuperscript{125}
Unknown to the blueclad horsemen as they rode into the
descending darkness, earlier in the day the advance of Grant's
army, under Major General John A. McClernand, had landed
successfully at Bruinsburg, ten miles below Grand Gulf.
Before dawn on May 1, Grant would be at the outskirts of
Port Gibson.\textsuperscript{126} The delay at Summit, however, had brought
Grierson no new information regarding movements along the river. Consequently, the colonel reported, "I concluded to make for Baton Rouge to recruit my command, after which I could return to La Grange through Southern Mississippi and Western Alabama; or, crossing the Mississippi River, move through Louisiana and Arkansas." Near midnight, Grierson's men bivouacked on the Spurlark plantation, fifteen miles southwest of Summit.

While the Federal troopers clutched at a few fitful hours of slumber, Confederate cavalry still desperately struggled to overtake or intercept the elusive enemy column. Colonel R. V. Richardson, after an agonizing nine-hour delay in leaving Jackson, finally locked onto the trail of the raiders near Hazelhurst at about eleven o'clock on the morning of April 29. Notified of Grierson's departure in the direction of Union Church, the Rebel colonel marched westward before returning to the line of the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern at Brookhaven. Following a path of burned depots and twisted rails leading south—and picking up reinforcements along the way—Richardson entered Summit at three o'clock on the morning of May 1; nine hours behind his bluecoated prey. Informed that the Yankee troopers had left for Magnolia and Osyka, the next stations along the railroad, the eager Confederates pressed on in the hope of falling upon the rear of the Union column in the vicinity of Osyka. Meanwhile, Wirt Adams, who had marched directly for Liberty following the
skirmish at Union Church, on the evening of April 30 was apparently encamped within five miles of Grierson's sleeping raiders on the Summit road. Adams, like Richardson, was intent upon doing battle with the Federal cavalry near Osyka. 129

Other Confederate commands, in the meantime, were marching northeastward from Port Hudson under similar instructions to intercept the Yankee raiders. Colonel W. R. Miles had transferred his Louisiana Legion to Clinton on the twenty-ninth, only to set out for Osyka on the following day. 130 In compliance with General Pemberton's April 24 order, General Gardner had deployed the entire available force of Lieutenant Colonel George Gantt's 9th Tennessee Cavalry Battalion in the vicinity of Tangipahoa. 131 During the subsequent week, however, an almost totally bewildered Gantt had responded to one contradictory report after another, moving in rapid succession to intercept the enemy at Clinton, Woodville and Liberty before finally posting his command near Osyka in a position covering both Liberty and Clinton. 132

In the midst of the blinding confusion which clouded Confederate judgment in southern Mississippi and southeastern Louisiana, it would be easy to overlook a small detachment of Wingfield's Battalion of the 9th Louisiana Partisan Rangers—a mere eighty men under the command of Major James De Baun. On April 28, General Gardner had directed
Major De Baun to proceed to Woodville, Mississippi with his tiny force "for the purpose of intercepting a raid of Federal cavalry." Two days later, further instructions arrived directing De Baun to report with all the available cavalry at Woodville to either Colonel Miles or Lieutenant Colonel Gantt at Osyka. Augmenting his command with 35 men of the 9th Tennessee Partisan Battalion, the major lost no time in setting his detachment in motion toward the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad. By 11:30 on the morning of May 1, Major De Baun's troopers were resting comfortably along the Centerville and Osyka road at the Wall's Bridge crossing of the Tickfaw River, eight miles west of Osyka.

Only vaguely conscious of the scattered Rebel companies closing in upon them, Grierson's cavalrymen awakened to a breathtaking dawn on Friday, May 1. As the first narrow slivers of springtime sun sliced through the branches of fragrant towering pines, the men of the 7th Illinois Cavalry mounted their horses and guided the blueclad column south-eastward out of camp. Sergeant Surby, riding with the advance, was almost overcome by the grandeur of the setting. "The sun arose in all its glory," the lyrical trooper recorded, "not one cloud visible in the sky to obscure its dazzling brightness. A gentle breeze floated through the trees, causing a rustling among the branches was the mocking bird, singing a variety of notes, the whole
impressing the beholder with a sense of a Creator of all this beauty. The command felt inspired, and various were the conjectures as to what point on the Mississippi River we would make."

Colonel Grierson, however, could ill afford to allow his thoughts to dwell long upon the glories of nature. Well aware that Rebel cavalry was no doubt converging upon his column from both front and rear, and erroneously believing that a substantial Confederate camp of instruction was located at Osyka, the Yankee colonel determined to make another feint in the direction of the railroad in an effort to draw his pursuers off toward the east. Again, his scheme worked virtually without flaw. Leaving the Liberty road a short distance beyond the Spurlark plantation, Grierson turned his command due south and quickly disappeared into the dense woods. After an arduous ride of several miles through thick underbrush, interrupted by frequent halts to hand lift the small cannon over fallen timbers, the Federal horsemen finally stumbled upon a little-used path and resumed their march at a brisk trot.

Near mid-day, Grierson's raiders emerged upon the Clinton and Osyka road just west of the Tickfaw River crossing. It was immediately apparent that the Federal troopers were not alone in the neighborhood. Fresh hoofprints plainly indicated that a considerable body of cavalry had passed toward the east only a short time before the arrival of the
bluecoated riders. The Tickfaw, although only a few miles distant, was obscured by dense underbrush and the road itself disappeared from view after making a sharp bend as it approached Wall's Bridge. 137

Suspecting an ambush, Grierson ordered Sergeant Surby and his scouts to proceed cautiously toward the bridge while the bulk of the Federal column remained concealed behind the tree-covered bend in the road. As the disguised troopers advanced, they observed three dismounted men lounging beside their mounts on the edge of the timber lining the left side of the road. Sending one man back to notify Colonel Grierson, Surby rode forward with two companions to interrogate the unsuspecting rebels. In relatively short order, the Yankee sergeant ascertained that he was speaking to pickets belonging to a cavalry force in pursuit of the Federal raiders. The remainder of the Confederate command, he was informed, was bivouacked along the nearby river bank. Unfortunately, before Surby could elicit the strength and designation of the enemy force at the bridge, a shot rang out from the direction of the hidden Union column. Instantly, the sergeant demanded the surrender of the disconcerted rebels, whom he conducted at double-quick time to an anxious Colonel Grierson.

After discovering that the unexpected alarm was the result of a chance encounter between Union and Confederate stragglers at a nearby plantation house, Sergeant Surby
quickly returned to the place where he had stumbled upon the rebel outpost. Gazing off to his right, the scout observed two men sitting astride horses at the point at which the road reentered the timber after traversing an open field, perhaps a quarter of a mile distant. Undeterred by the intent stares of the enemy horsemen, Surby detached a man with instructions to halt the main column as it came up, while he rode forward in the company of Private Steadman. Privates Fowler and Wood, meanwhile, also cautiously advanced by a right-hand road. Riding out to meet the quartet of approaching butternuts, the two Confederate horsemen were barely afforded an opportunity to inquire, "what the h__l does all that firing mean?" before cocked revolvers were presented at their heads accompanied by a compelling demand for their prompt surrender.\textsuperscript{138}

Much to his delight, Sergeant Surby learned that his most recent prizes were Captain E. A. Scott, commanding two companies of Major De Baun's battalion of the 9th Louisiana Partisan Rangers, and the captain's orderly. The 115 men under De Baun's command, the prisoners revealed, had halted at Wall's Bridge scarcely fifteen minutes prior to the arrival of Grierson's column. Alarmed by the sudden gunfire in the west, the Confederate Major had ordered the bridge dismantled while he deployed his dismounted troopers in ambush. When ten minutes elapsed with no report from the Rebel pickets posted along the road, De Baun had
dispatched Captain Scott to ascertain the cause of the delay. It was while attempting to carry out these instructions, that Scott and his companion had unwittingly fallen into the hands of Sergeant Surby's disguised Yankee scouts.\textsuperscript{139}

Although aware of each other's presence, both Grierson and De Baun were forced to maneuver blindly, neither being able to see beyond the bend in the road which curved sharply toward the forest-draped bridge. Colonel Grierson, for his part, harbored no desire to bring on an engagement at Wall's Bridge. Much of the success attending the Federal raiders thus far could be attributed to the colonel's skill at employing surprise and subterfuge to gain swiftly and painlessly what could otherwise be obtained only at considerable cost in time and lives. Grierson, therefore, proposed to proceed cautiously toward the heavily camouflaged Confederate position on the east bank of the Tickfaw, showing a bold front and carefully feeling out the enemy's strength before passing rapidly around his flank. To this end, he instructed Lieutenant Colonel Blackburn to advance prudently toward the concealed bridge in an attempt to determine the disposition of De Baun's small force.\textsuperscript{140}

Unfortunately for Grierson's clever plan, the brash and excitable lieutenant colonel of the 7th Illinois Cavalry was itching for a fight. Earlier in the day, Blackburn had specifically requested permission to lead the Union advance, and now, under orders to reconnoiter the Confederate position, he rode off in eager search of adventure. In an
instant, Blackburn dashed past Sergeant Surby, who was still engaged in interrogating Captain Scott, and, without halting, shouted out, "Sergeant, bring along your scouts and follow me, and I'll see where those Rebels are." Calling for one of his men to escort the enemy captain back to the main column, Surby spurred his mount and, with his three companions, hurled forward in a frantic attempt to overtake his speeding lieutenant colonel. Crossing the clearing and reentering the timber near the point at which the scouts had recently encountered Captain Scott, Blackburn's small party caught a fleeting glimpse of a meandering stream. Off to the left, perhaps no more than seventy-five yards distant, a narrow plank bridge, some fifty yards in length, spanned the treacherous Tickfaw River.

Sharp carbine reports greeted the appearance of the Yankee horsemen. The burly Blackburn, in full uniform and still in advance of Surby's scouts, seemed oblivious to the scattered gunfire. Instead of checking his speed, the foolhardy lieutenant colonel spurred his mount onto the bridge, his tiny escort in close pursuit. As the Federal horses pounded across the wooden structure, the woods to the front and sides belched forth a solid sheet of flame. Blackburn's mount, pierced by a dozen balls, collapsed pinning its mortally wounded rider beneath it. Close behind the dying Blackburn, another horse reeled and fell, throwing a butternut-clad Yankee hard against the wooden planking
of Wall's Bridge. In the same instant, a Rebel ball burned across the neck of Sergeant Surby's mount, before burying itself in the sergeant's thigh. Clinging desperately to his reins, Surby wheeled about and sped back across the bullet-riddled bridge.

Safe upon the west bank of the river, the wounded scout encountered Lieutenant William H. Stiles racing forward with the twelve-man vanguard of the Federal column. Charging blindly across Wall's Bridge, Stiles succeeded in reaching the opposite bank before being checked by a deadly volley discharged from unseen carbines. Pausing to regroup his exposed and unsupported squad, the lieutenant boldly ordered a second assault, which quickly withered under a galling enemy fire. Repulsed, the battered handful of Yankee troopers scrambled back across the narrow bridge, leaving one dead and two wounded, along with seven disabled horses, on the east bank of the Tickfaw.

With his arrival upon the field, Grierson ordered Colonel Prince to dismount companies A and D of the 7th Illinois Cavalry and to deploy them to the left and right of the bridge. While the two dismounted companies pinned down the rebel marksmen, a section of Captain Smith's battery swiftly unlimbered and commenced throwing round shot and canister into the woods. When the replying volleys abated, the Union skirmishers cautiously advanced across Wall's Bridge, where they discovered that the Confederate cavalry had hastily
abandoned its position. Apprized of the enemy's departure, Grierson dispatched the 6th Illinois in pursuit of the fleeing rebels, while Prince's troopers turned their attention to the killed and wounded.\textsuperscript{141}

Assessing the results of Lieutenant Colonel Blackburn's imprudent action, Grierson counted 1 dead trooper and 5 of his command wounded--two of the latter, including the overzealous Blackburn, mortally.\textsuperscript{142} Major De Baun, meanwhile, placed the Confederate loss at "1 captain, 1 lieutenant, and 6 privates"--all captured by Sergeant Surby's scouts prior to the skirmish at the bridge.\textsuperscript{143}

Colonel Prince, sensitive to the fact that his regiment had born the brunt of the hardships attending the expedition, momentarily allowed his volatile temper to overcome sound judgment and insisted that Grierson halt the column while the 7th Illinois tended to its dead and wounded. Painfully aware that any delay at this point would most certainly invite attack and possible capture, the senior colonel firmly overruled the objections of his overwrought subordinate. While a burial detail interred Private George Reinhold of Company G, the wounded were carefully removed to the Newman plantation, about a mile distant, where they were left in the care of Dr. Erastus D. Yule, the surgeon of the 2nd Iowa Cavalry. Sergeant Major Augustus Lesieure and Private George W. Douglass of the 7th Illinois Cavalry volunteered to remain behind with the doctor and his helpless charges.
In a final gesture before departing, Sergeant Surby's comrades removed the scout's butternut garb and replaced it with a proper Federal uniform, thereby at least ensuring that upon falling into Confederate hands the "faithful and efficient" trooper would not face the ignoble death of a spy. 144

Leaving Wall's Bridge, Grierson's raiders moved swiftly south, paralleling the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad as they cut diagonally across a westward bend in the Tickfaw River. By 2 p.m., the blueclad horsemen were once again approaching the banks of the swollen stream, some six miles below their previous crossing. From their position in advance of the cavalry column, Grierson's scouts observed Major W. H. Garland's Mississippi Cavalry, some forty or fifty strong, advancing upon the Tickfaw Bridge by a side road which approached the river from the southwest. Pushing his command forward at a full gallop, the Yankee colonel succeeded in recrossing the stream before the arrival of the small Rebel company. Without halting, Grierson threw the advance battalion of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, supported by a section of artillery, out to the right to engage Major Garland's command. A few well placed rounds from Captain Smith's tiny guns quickly scattered the mounted Rebels, and within moments the bluecoated battalion fell in at the rear of the still moving Yankee column. 145

At 4 p.m., Grierson's troopers entered Greensburg,
St. Helena Parish, Louisiana.146 As he turned his column southwestward, the Federal cavalry commander could be certain that Rebel forces under Adams, Richardson, Miles and Gantt, which had been concentrating throughout the day to ambush the raiders near Osyka, had been alerted to the Yankee ruse and were now earnestly endeavoring to fall upon the rear of the Union horsemen. The colonel’s eyes, however, remained fixed upon the dangers lurking on his front. Two rain-gorged streams separated the desperately tired riders from the safety of the Union lines at Baton Rouge, seventy-six miles distant. Suddenly, Colonel Grierson’s most deadly enemy became time itself. His troopers must secure the Amite and Comite River crossings in advance of the alarmed Confederates, or forfeit the game.

Grierson’s first test would occur at Williams’ Bridge, sixteen miles beyond Greensburg. Connected by rail to Confederate headquarters at Port Hudson, this long, narrow structure afforded the raiders their only passage across the wide and raging Amite River, on the direct route to Baton Rouge. That General Gardner would dispatch troops to guard the crossing was a foregone conclusion. Earlier in the day, a captured Rebel courier had escaped from the Federal column near Liberty. Grierson could safely assume that he had made his way back to Gardner’s headquarters, carrying accurate information of the direction and intent of the Yankee cavalry. The only unresolved question seemed to be whether or not
the bluecoated colonel could push his men across the Amite in advance of Rebel forces undoubtedly marching east from the Mississippi River.147

A flat, hard-surfaced road stretched out before the weary horsemen as they pressed on toward the all-important river crossing. The night was warm and clear, with a dome of sparkling stars illuminating the heavens and a fragrant expanse of tall pines blanketing the earth. Nature's quiet spell proved hypnotic, and before long eyelids drooped and heavy heads pitched forward as exhausted riders drifted off into fitful slumber.148

Although a steadily increasing number of blueclad soldiers dozed in their saddles, the "Butternut Guerrillas" remained alert and active. Riding in front and along the flanks of the weaving column, the disguised troopers scoured the countryside in search of information concerning enemy troop dispositions in the immediate vicinity of Williams' Bridge. From the intelligence thus gathered, Grierson learned that a company of Confederate cavalry occupied the west bank of the Amite about one mile from the crossing. A ten-man detachment from the Rebel camp normally patrolled the bridge during the day, but only two men remained on guard after sundown.149

Shaking sleep from their eyes, the Yankee cavalrymen reined up a mile short of the Amite River bottom. In a now familiar routine, two nondescript riders advanced alone
down the darkened road. A calm whisper, projected only slightly above the liquid roar of the rushing stream, identified the grime-covered scouts as couriers bearing dispatches for Port Hudson, and in an instant a pair of chagrined Confederate pickets were silently and securely in Union hands. 150

As a bright moon rose to light the way, the iron-shod hooves of Federal mounts pounded across the wooden planks of Williams' Bridge. Repeating the time-saving maneuver employed during the Tickfaw crossing, Grierson urged the column steadily forward while a company of the 6th Illinois filed off to disperse the nearby enemy cavalry. An ear-shattering volley directed into the sleeping rebel camp quickly sent seventy-five partially clothed Confederate troopers scrambling for safety in the Louisiana darkness. After collecting a handful of the less fleet of foot, the small detachment swiftly rejoined the remainder of the Union command.

Less than an hour into the new day found the Yankees safe on the west bank of the Amite River and pushing on through the early morning darkness toward the Comite, some seventeen miles ahead. Feeling secure, and with only the occasional dull rumble of a distant mortar to disturb the springtime silence, one-by-one the jaded cavalrymen slipped back into senselessness. 151 As Captain Forbes recalled, "men by the score, and I think by fifties, were riding sound asleep
in their saddles. The horses excessively tired and hungry, would stray out of the road and thrust their noses to the earth in hopes of finding something to eat. The men, when addressed, would remain silent and motionless until a blow across the thigh or shoulder should waken them, when it would be found that each supposed himself still riding with his company, which might be perhaps a mile ahead. We found several men who had either fallen from their horses, or dismounted and dropped on the ground, dead with sleep. Nothing short of a beating with a saber would awaken some of them. In several instances they begged to be allowed to sleep, saying that they would run the risk of capture on the morrow. Two or three did escape our vigilance, and were captured the next afternoon."152 A handful of more or less alert officers and enlisted men passed continuously up and down the flanks of the extended column, riding herd upon straying men and mounts. But, Colonel Grierson related, "besides myself few of the command were awake that night."153

Daylight, May 2, broke with Grierson's raiders approaching Big Sandy Creek, just seven miles east of the Comite River ford. Instinctively, sleeping soldiers jerked stiffly upright in their saddles. As many as 150 tents, the scouts reported, dotted the opposite bank of the creek. Colonel Grierson immediately instructed Lieutenant Colonel Loomis to dispatch two companies of the 6th Illinois Cavalry to feel out the enemy's strength. Responding to Loomis' orders,
Captain Samuel Marshall dismounted Company H and advanced cautiously across the bridge, followed closely by the mounted troopers of Captain John Lynch's E Company. Within one hundred yards of the Rebel encampment—and as yet undetected—Marshall's men unleashed a terrifying yell and charged down the long white rows of canvass, firing as they ran. Ordinarily, it was later learned, the camp on the Big Sandy sheltered between 600 and 800 Confederate cavalry. On this morning, however, the entire effective force of the command was off in Mississippi attempting to intercept the Yankee raiders. Only a token company of some forty men remained behind to guard the crossing; all of whom, save one, fell into Grierson's hands. Leaving the 6th Illinois to destroy the camp and its contents, the colonel continued on toward the Comite with Prince's regiment.\(^{154}\)

As it moved across the flat, open Louisiana countryside, with its groves of moss-laden oaks and cypress, the Federal advance encountered and captured Lieutenant Joseph Hinson of Miles' Legion, enroute from Greenwell Springs to alert the pickets along the Comite River of the approach of Grierson's column.\(^{155}\) From the Rebel lieutenant and another officer seized along the way, Grierson learned that Roberts' Ford on the Comite was held by Stuart's company of Miles' Legion.\(^{156}\) A cautious reconnaissance of the ford confirmed the prisoners' statements. Returning from the river, the scouts reported the presence of an encampment pleasantly situated
amidst a small cluster of trees on the stream's eastern shore. The enemy's pickets appeared to be patrolling in the direction of Baton Rouge—a clear indication that the rebel commander at the ford was oblivious to the proximity of the Yankee cavalry in his rear. 157

Apprized of the situation at the Comite River crossing, Grierson carefully advanced to within three hundred yards of the Confederate cavalry post. With a quick glance across the terrain on his front, the colonel selected four companies of the 7th Illinois to conduct the assault upon the enemy position. Captain Charles Hunting was instructed to move the men of Company A across a field on the left, while Companies D, E and I followed the road leading into the camp. 158

Captain B. F. Bryan, commanding the Rebel guard at Roberts' Ford, later recalled that "on the morning of May 2, at about 9 a.m., I was surprised by a body of the enemy, under command of Colonel Grierson, numbering upward of 1,000 men. They made a dash and surrounded me on all sides before I was aware that they were other than our own troops, their advanced guard being dressed in citizens' garb.... Most of my men being on picket, and having only about 30 of them immediately in camp, there was no possible chance of my making a stand." A dozen shots from Yankee carbines instantly transformed the tranquil grove into a scene of chaos. In the confusion, the Rebel captain engineered his escape by hiding in the moss-draped branches of a nearby tree, but
few of his men proved equally fortunate. Upon the departure of the Federal horsemen, Bryan assessed his loss at "38 men, 38 horses, 2 mules, 37 pistols, 2,000 rounds of cartridges, and our cooking utensils." 159

Instructing the 7th Illinois Cavalry to collect prisoners and to destroy the enemy camp, Grierson led the 6th Illinois a half mile upstream and forded the swollen Comite. Safely on the opposite bank, and with Colonel Prince's regiment closing up upon the rear of the column, the cavalry commander marched three miles farther west in search of provisions and forage. A scant four miles from the security of the Union lines at Baton Rouge, the colonel ordered a halt to feed and rest his exhausted command before entering the Federal-held former capital of Louisiana. 160

For a vigilant Ben Grierson, however, sleep remained a luxury which must be deferred until the successful conclusion of his expedition. After posting a token guard around the impromptu bivouac, the Yankee cavalry commander rode with his adjutant to a nearby house, and there "astonished the occupants by sitting down and playing upon a piano which I found in the parlor." "In that manner," the colonel recalled, "I managed to stay awake, while my soldiers were enjoying themselves by relaxation, sleep and quiet rest." 161 Unfortunately, the incongruous charm of the brief wartime interlude was broken within the hour, as an excited orderly rushed into the parlor with news of enemy skirmishers
advancing upon the virtually defenseless camp from the direction of Baton Rouge. Confident that any troops approaching from the west must certainly be part of General Banks' command, Grierson abandoned his piano stool and, without awakening his fatigued troopers, rode out to meet the unexpected visitors.

Only a short distance from the cavalry encampment, the colonel scanned the scene which had prompted his subaltern's anxious report. A few hundred yards in his front, a thin, uneven line of dismounted cavalry marched cautiously in the direction of the sleeping Illinois horsemen. The uniforms of the distant troops were indistinct, but Grierson refused to entertain the suggestion that they might be anything other than those of the United States. Dismounting and handing the reins of his mount to his orderly, the colonel advanced alone across the open ground which separated him from the approaching force. With his handkerchief held high, the dust-covered cavalryman walked in slow, deliberate strides to within hailing distance of his suspicious observers who, in the meantime, had positioned themselves behind a rail fence. A shout identifying the solitary figure as Colonel Benjamin H. Grierson, commanding the 1st Cavalry Brigade, Army of the Tennessee brought an officer to the top rung of the makeshift breastwork. After a moment's hesitation, the blueclad form leaped from his wooden perch and, amid the lusty cheers of the men at his back, stepped forward to greet
the lanky traveler from Tennessee.

During the leisurely ride to the cavalry bivouac, Colonel Grierson learned that his welcoming party consisted of two companies of the 1st Louisiana Cavalry, commanded by Captain J. Franklin Godfrey. Apparently, one of the colonel's orderlies, asleep in his saddle, had not heard that morning's order to halt. Oblivious to his surroundings, the young trooper had blundered into the Union picket line on the outskirts of Baton Rouge, where he was awakened and interrogated. In a dazed stupor, the soldier had attempted to explain that he belonged to Colonel Grierson's command from LaGrange, Tennessee and that the colonel was only a few miles distant with the 6th and 7th regiments of Illinois cavalry. Cut off from direct communication with Union forces above Vicksburg, news of the Federal raid had not yet reached New Orleans and Baton Rouge via New York or Washington. General Christopher C. Augur, commanding at Baton Rouge, was therefore understandably skeptical of the youth's incredible tale of a mounted expedition which had traversed the entire length of the state of Mississippi. Suspecting a rebel ploy to lure troops from the Baton Rouge garrison into an ambush, Augur had instructed Captain Godfrey to conduct a careful reconnaissance in the direction of the Comite River and to report back to headquarters with the facts. 162

Once inside Colonel Grierson's aroused camp, Captain Godfrey's Louisiana bluecoats found themselves the subjects
of a steady barrage of taunts and verbal abuse from their greyclad neighbors among Stuart's captured horsemen. Baton Rouge soldiers, they were reminded, could never have cornered the men of Miles' Legion. As proof, the Yankee government had finally been compelled to send troops all the way from Tennessee to fall unsuspected upon the rear of the Confederate cavalry. Satisfied that the rumors which had reached Baton Rouge were confirmed, Godfrey led his men back to General Augur's headquarters with the welcome news. Grierson, in the meantime, prepared his command for a triumphant—if not at all elegant—entrance into the fallen Rebel capital.  

At three o'clock on the afternoon of May 2, an excited shout from the Union signal station perched atop the walls of the battered state house announced the appearance of a cloud of dust moving toward the city along the Bayou Sara road. The residents of Baton Rouge had been afforded little excitement since John C. Breckinridge's attack during the previous summer, and with the unexpected news of the arrival of a daring band of horsemen from far off Tennessee, the citizens and soldiers of the town, black and white alike, flocked to the streets. Those swift enough to occupy positions along the road west of the city captured the first view of the dust- and dirt-covered riders as they entered the outskirts of the community.

Marching four abreast, and with sabres drawn, the troopers of the 6th Illinois Cavalry led the vanguard of the
bluecoated column through the crowd-lined avenues of Baton Rouge. Behind the 6th, the four remaining guns of Captain Smith's battery wobbled ludicrously along on the makeshift wheels which had been improvised to replace those broken during the expedition. A hundred or more morose Rebel prisoners closely followed the swaying artillery pieces, and at their heels marched "five hundred niggers, in every conceivable style of plantation dress and undress, each one mounted, and leading from two to three other horses, and many of them armed with shot-guns and hunting rifles." A wondrous assortment of wheeled vehicles lumbered slowly behind the Negroes, bearing the sick and wounded of the Federal command, most of whom suffered from painfully swollen legs produced by extended riding. Colonel Prince's regiment, also in column of fours and with drawn sabres, formed the rear guard. In this order, Colonel Grierson paraded his motley but proud band through the cheering, flag-waving hordes, around the public square, and then directly to the Mississippi River, where his men were allowed to water their horses.

From the river, the colonel marched his command two miles south of the city and went into camp amidst a fragrant and blooming magnolia grove. 165 As the sun settled over the placid "Father of Waters," the tired and dirty Federal cavalrymen sat down to a meal prepared by the admiring members of the 116th New York and 48th Massachusetts infantry regiments. Their hunger satisfied, the weary troopers
politely thanked their New England comrades for their kindness and at long last "laid down to sleep among flowers and perfume, beside the deep waters of the great Mississippi river, without guard and without danger."\textsuperscript{166}

Colonel Grierson could slip off to a well-earned rest, confident that his daring expedition had been a masterful demonstration of the effective use of cavalry deep inside the enemy's homeland. Any lessons he may have learned from Earl Van Dorn during the previous winter's fruitless pursuit had been put to superb use and embellished with bold stratagems fresh from Grierson's own remarkably fertile mind. "A cavalry raid at its best," Sergeant Stephen A. Forbes emphasized, "is essentially a game of strategy and speed, with personal violence as an incidental complication. It is played according to more or less definite rules, not inconsistent, indeed, with the players' killing each other if the game cannot be won in any other way; but it is commonly a strenuous game, rather than a bloody one, intensely exciting, but not necessarily very dangerous."\textsuperscript{167}

In sixteen days of nearly continuous riding, the ex-musician turned soldier had played the game like no other Union cavalryman before or after him.

Instructed to sever Vicksburg's rail communications to the east and to divert the attention of the Confederate high command while Grant's army effected a crossing of the Mississippi River, Grierson had brilliantly accomplished
both objectives and more. With less than one thousand seasoned troopers, the Yankee colonel had traversed the interior of the state of Mississippi in a diagonal path stretching fully six hundred miles from north to southwest. In the process, he had disrupted between fifty and sixty miles of vital rail and telegraph lines leading from Rebel headquarters at Jackson east to Alabama and Georgia and south to the river strongholds of Port Hudson, Grand Gulf and Port Gibson. Grierson estimated the cost of the raid in terms of enemy personnel and material at 100 dead and wounded, 500 prisoners captured and paroled, 1,000 horses and mules confiscated, and 3,000 stand of arms seized and destroyed, along with quantities of army stores and other government property too vast to assess accurately. 168

Astonishing even to the Federal raiders was the relative ease with which they had passed through what was presumed to be the armed heartland of the Confederacy. In spite of the enemy's superior advantages in numbers and in the intimate knowledge of roads and terrain, Grierson's cavalry had encountered only token resistance--first at Union Church and later at Wall's Bridge. In addition to the surgeon of the 2nd Iowa Cavalry and the sergeant major and a private of the 7th Illinois, who had remained behind to care for the wounded at Wall's Bridge, the entire loss sustained by the two Illinois regiments during their exhausting and perilous ride amounted to 3 killed, 7 wounded, 5 left along the route
sick, and 9 men missing and presumed captured; a remarkably trifling price to pay for the results obtained.\textsuperscript{169}

In his own defense, General Pemberton went to great lengths in an effort to demonstrate to his superiors in Richmond that the success of the Federal raid was in large measure attributable to "the great deficiency--I may almost say absence--of cavalry in my department, and the absolute impossibility of protecting my communications, depots, and even my most vital positions, without it."\textsuperscript{170} Admittedly, Van Dorn's presence in Mississippi might well have tipped the balance toward defeat for the Yankee raiders. But still, the question of the Rebel cavalryman's return to Pemberton's department in April, 1863 remains moot. Just as Grierson's unexpected thrust against the Vicksburg lines of communication drew Pemberton's cavalry away from the river and into the interior of the state, the coordinated expeditions of Dodge and Streight simultaneously diverted Van Dorn and Forrest's commands eastward into northern Alabama and western Georgia. As one student observes, "before May 1, 1863, arrived every major Confederate cavalry command between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River was engaged in trying to contain the hydra-headed thrusts launched by the Federals."\textsuperscript{171} Although in many ways fortuitous, strategic planning at the headquarters of Generals Hurlbut and Rosecrans had thus effectively frustrated Joe Johnston's optimistic design for an interdepartmental cavalry force.
Consequently, even as he received the sad news of the surrender of Colonel Streight and his entire command to Confederate forces under Forrest near Rome, Georgia on May 3, General Rosecrans' chief-of-staff could derive consolation from the fact that "Colonel Grierson's raid in Mississippi was an associate part of the plan and that has been a brilliant success."\textsuperscript{172}

Nevertheless, the Confederate commander in Mississippi must shoulder much of the blame for his embarrassment at the hands of the Union cavalry. With a huge Federal army threatening Vicksburg, the startling appearance of Grierson's raiders along the river fortress' lifeline to the east threw Pemberton into a state of confusion and uncertainty. Instead of attempting to anticipate the Yankee colonel's next move and then concentrating troops to intercept the Federal column, the Rebel general committed the fatal error of scattering his depleted cavalry in a hopeless effort to cover all threatened points at once. Colonel R. V. Richardson experienced first-hand the penalty of vacillation and lack of direction at Confederate headquarters in Jackson. "We had forces enough to have captured and destroyed him [Grierson]," the partisan leader reminded his department commander, "but his movements were so rapid and uncertain that we could not concentrate our scattered forces or put them in concert of action. You had assigned me men enough to have whipped him, but they were so scattered that I could
not find half of them until the enemy had entered his own lines."

Ultimately, the credit for the astounding success of the Union raid through Mississippi rests solidly upon Grierson's shoulders. Speed and boldness, he realized, held the keys to success. Confident of the discipline and stamina of his veteran Illinois troopers, the colonel relied heavily upon his ability to elicit almost superhuman effort as a matter of routine. Sergeant Surby's "Butternut Guerrillas" riding in advance of the Federal column performed singularly valuable service, gathering information, spreading false rumors and guiding the cavalry through the hostile and unfamiliar Mississippi countryside. To Grierson's credit, he displayed an uncanny skill in sorting out and evaluating the reports brought in by his scouts.

Adroitly playing upon the enemy's natural concern for its lines of communication, the Yankee colonel repeatedly diverted his pursuers by detaching small commands to threaten rail and telegraph lines while the main column proceeded swiftly across country. Colonel Hatch's feint toward the Mobile & Ohio Railroad, followed by his hard-fought withdrawal to La Grange, was merely the first in a series of cunning maneuvers which succeeded in drawing off Rebel forces from the trail of the raiders. Of supreme importance were Captain Forbes' subsequent appearance at Macon, and his brash deception at Enterprise, which rivetted Confederate
attention to the eastern railroad at the very moment that the main body of Federal cavalry was tearing up tracks and telegraph wires between Jackson and Meridian.

Following the destruction of Newton Station, Grierson demonstrated considerable flexibility, coupled with a capacity quickly to seize the initiative. With enemy troops concentrated along the Mobile & Ohio, the colonel unhesitatingly abandoned whatever instructions he may have received from General Hurlbut directing him to return north through western Alabama. Instead, after a feint in the direction of Meridian, Grierson turned his horsemen southwestward toward the New Orleans, Jackson & Great Northern Railroad, the Confederate supply line to the riverfront strongholds below Vicksburg.

His primary mission accomplished, the Yankee cavalryman devised a bewildering array of objectives and carefully left his options open, thereby compounding the confusion at Rebel headquarters. After cutting the railroad at Hazelhurst, scarcely thirty miles below the state capital, the Federal raiders faced the choice of either attempting to join Union forces presumed to be landing at Grand Gulf, or to strike for General Banks' lines near Baton Rouge. Feints east toward the railroad and west in the direction of Natchez scattered Rebel pursuers in opposite directions, while Grierson searched for information regarding Grant's operations on the Mississippi River. Finally convinced that his
fast-moving troopers had outpaced Union forces along the river, the colonel elected to return to the railroad and to complete the work of destruction begun at Hazelhurst, while he plotted his next move.

Once again, the raiders succeeded magnificently in diverting the enemy's cavalry and in tying it to the line of the railroad. By the time Colonel Grierson made his ultimate decision to cut his way through to Baton Rouge, the bulk of his pursuers were concentrating to intercept an anticipated attack upon the railroad at Osyka. Much to the chagrin of the bewildered rebels, the Yankee colonel ignored the baited snare and turned his column sharply toward the southwest. Pushing his exhausted men and mounts to the very limits of physical endurance, Grierson completed the final 76 miles to Baton Rouge in twenty-eight hours, easily outracing all news of his approach to the guarded fords on the Amite and Comite Rivers. Notified of Grierson's success through southern newspapers at Port Gibson, General Grant pronounced the Federal raid "one of the most brilliant cavalry exploits of the war," and confidently predicted that it "will be handed down in history as an example to be imitated."

Undoubtedly, the most telling result of Grierson's cavalry raid was its effect upon Union and Confederate morale, particularly along the Mississippi River. Colonel Adam Badeau, Grant's future aide-de-camp and biographer, described the exploit as "having a moral effect upon the population of
the interior altogether unprecedented." The Union threat to Vicksburg, together with exorbitant prices, shortages in food and clothing, and mounting dissatisfaction over conscription had already created considerable uneasiness within Mississippi. Striking like a bolt of lightning from a cloudless sky, the Federal raid heightened popular distrust of military and civilian authority and threw the state into turmoil. Captured New York Tribune correspondent Albert D. Richardson discovered that "Grierson's raid . . . was the universal theme of conversation and wonder" at train stations across the state, while at Shreveport, Louisiana the British traveler, Sir Arthur Fremantle, found the Union cavalry movement the topic of much serious discussion around the table of General Edmund Kirby-Smith, the newly appointed commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department. "Nothing has ever equalled this raid in insolence and boldness," the angry editor of the Daily Mississippian declared. But, he sadly cautioned, "it is a mistake to say the Yankees rushed through the State with fear and trembling. They went through it as masters of the people. . . . Why Mississippi was made to suffer this deep humiliation--this damming disgrace--is a matter of inexplicable astonishment to us. But so it is. Fifteen hundred Yankees leisurely traversed the hitherto proud State of Mississippi, insulting and destroying as they went without having a gun fired at them! We deserve to bow our heads in lasting shame if we do not wipe out this
stinging blot upon our fair escutcheon." 178

In a desperate effort to allay fear and restore flagging confidence in his own administration, Mississippi governor John J. Pettus issued a bombastic proclamation on May 5, in which he urgently called upon an aroused citizenry to present a united front to the Yankee invaders. "Come and join your brothers in arms," Pettus pleaded. "Meet in every country with your arms, organize into companies of not less than twenty, under the late act of Congress--forward your muster rolls to this office, and you will be received into the service, with all the protection and right belonging to other soldiers in the field. Ammunition will be furnished you, and every aid in my power extended to you for your security and efficiency." "By this course," the chief executive promised, "you will enable our army in a short time to repel the invader--secure the safety of your homes and shed imperishable honor on your cause." The only alternative, Pettus reminded his constituents, would be to "hereafter wear the disgraceful badge of the dastardly coward who refused to defend his home and country." 179

Not surprisingly, the governor's belated appeal fell largely upon deaf ears, and before long Pettus himself was compelled to move his family from Jackson to Enterprise in order to ensure their safety. 180 From Mobile, Alabama a newspaper editor cynically observed that "the raid through Mississippi is waking up its people. They will, now that the
horse is stolen, lock the door." And meanwhile, an anonymous Mississippi unionist reported to General Grant that "Grierson has knocked the heart out of the State."

To a northern public weary of long months of inactivity both along the Rappahannock and in front of Vicksburg, news of the brilliant Federal cavalry expedition came from the west like an invigorating breath of cool spring air. The New Orleans Picayune of May 5, brought the first sketchy account of the "daring raid of Federal cavalry" to the Crescent City, and on the following morning astonished residents of New York City learned of Colonel Grierson's exploits through captured Confederate newspapers. Full details of the expedition were slow in reaching northern audiences, but when they finally did arrive, the New Orleans correspondent of the New York Times set the tone for reaction throughout the Union. "You have been so long accustomed, in the North, to keep your eyes intently fixed on Richmond and the Rappahannock," he good-naturedly chided, "that I can really imagine the surprise with which you must read the tidings which each successive mail brings you from this distant latitude. Be assured that you have only yet received the first instalment of events that will electrify the world. I should not be surprised if the Mississippi should prove, at last, the base of operations by which we can most instantaneously reach the innermost heart of the mighty rebellion."
While most New Englanders might question their western countryman's assessment of the importance of events in that remote theater, they were nonetheless eager to take the Times reporter's instructions to heart:

Let [the reader] . . . provide himself with a good map of the State of Mississippi, follow that description—mile for mile—think of the dangers these men had to encounter, the physical difficulties to overcome, their small numbers and the forces opposed to them, their hair-breadth escapes, the enormous amount of injury they have done to the enemy, and the terror they have inspired—and then ask himself whether, for rapidity of movement, strategic conception, and daring execution, courage, patience, and heroic endurance, he ever heard or read of anything to surpass it in the whole annals of warfare,—ancient or modern. 185

Even to those unversed in the history and art of warfare, it seemed exhilaratingly obvious that Grierson's spectacular feat surpassed even the boldest and most skillful exploits of the flamboyant "Jeb" Stuart. 186

More buoying to Union spirits than the mere fact of the remarkable expedition through Mississippi, was the cavalry commander's report of conditions inside the enemy's domain. After two devastating years of inconsequential chipping at the hard exterior of rebeldom, northern readers were anxious for signs of crumbling from within. Fresh from a first-hand tour behind the rebel lines, Colonel Grierson spoke directly to the earnest hopes of his fellow citizens. "The Confederacy," he informed a New England chaplain, "is an empty shell." 187 Before long, the phrase was a catchword in the North. The
portrait which the heroic cavalryman painted of imminent collapse seemed irresistible:

In passing through the Confederacy, I have had a good opportunity to form a correct opinion of its strength. That strength has been over-estimated. They have neither the armies nor the resources we have given them credit for, and we have been greatly deceived in regard to the means and power of the rebels. Passing through their country, (and the passage was not a very difficult one,) I found thousands of good Union men, who are ready and anxious to return to their allegiance the moment they can do so with safety to themselves and families. They will rally around the old flag by scores whenever our army advances. I could have brought away a thousand with me, who were anxious to come—men whom I found fugitives from their homes, hid in the swamps and forests, where they are hunted like wild beasts by the rebel conscription officers with bloodhounds. Having visited them in their homes, I have founded my belief upon what I heard and saw there, that the day is not far distant when we shall witness the downfall of the rebellion.188

Grierson's optimistic vision immediately stirred the fertile imagination of Whitelaw Reid, the radical correspondent for the Cincinnati Gazette. Mount a half dozen cavalry expeditions, he suggested, and send them simultaneously into the grain-producing regions of the South. Like Grierson's troopers, "they don't go to fight and need only to do so in the last extremity." Rather, these specially trained horsemen would make their objective the enemy's growing crops—in particular corn—destroying them as they passed. By at the same time dismantling mills, factories, foundaries and arsenal, and disrupting lines of communication, the lightning
columns of Federal cavalry could "do more in a fortnight to bring the rebels to the point of starvation, which must insure submission, than a dozen great victories." Quoting Grierson, Reid reminded his readers that "'the Confederacy is a mere shell' . . . Why not pierce it?" Unfortunately, two long, bloody years of civil strife remained to darkly overshadow the uplifting enthusiasm generated in the wake of the spectacular Yankee raid.

Ironically, the raiders themselves were slow to realize the moral dimensions of their arduous ride. Colonel Grierson apparently spoke for all when he wrote to his wife explaining that "I like Byron have had to wake up in the morning and find myself famous." After a few days of rest, the Illinois soldiers awoke to find themselves "privileged characters." General Augur cheerfully granted the men hard-earned leave, and the admiring citizens of Baton Rouge opened their homes and businesses to the raiders. Under the circumstances, it is hardly remarkable that the midwesterners took full advantage of the opportunity to unleash pent-up tensions. For the better part of a week, the military and civilian residents of the former Louisiana capital watched in helpless bemusement as the Federal troopers romped about the city, drinking, brawling and creating good-natured havoc.

Colonel Grierson, meanwhile, used the respite from active campaigning to do some sightseeing. On May 5, the
colonel, accompanied by Lieutenant Woodward, Major Mathew Starr and Captain Firth Charlesworth of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, and Colonel Prince and Lieutenant Root of the 7th, boarded a steamboat bound for New Orleans, under the pretext of supervising the repair of the Woodruff guns. While Grierson and his fellow officers paid their respects at the headquarters of General George F. Shipley, post commandant and military governor of Louisiana, news of the presence of the famous raiders raced through the city. The colonel emerged from his visit with the general to find the streets lined with cheering citizens.

At 9 p.m. an ebullient crowd filled the lobby and galleries of the St. Charles Hotel to catch a glimpse of the celebrities from Illinois. While the band of the 47th Massachusetts struck up "The Star Spangled Banner," Grierson emerged to greet the curious throng and, after an introduction by Captain J. L. Smith of General Cuvier Grover's staff, mounted a table from which he delivered a brief, extemporaneous address. On the following day, the fated cavalrmyen visited the Union warships and gunboats anchored in the Mississippi River, and were honored by a flag presentation at a local high school. In the evening the crowds returned in still greater numbers to the St. Charles, where Mr. L. Madison, in behalf of the loyal citizens of New Orleans, honored Colonel Grierson with the gift of a horse and Colonel Prince with a gold-embellished saddle and bridle.
Following the rousing ceremonies on May 6, the excitement in New Orleans gradually subsided. Grierson, with four months' back pay in his pocket, found time to visit the studio of Karl Jacobs, where he sat for a photograph which would later serve as the basis for cover illustrations in both *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* and *Harper's Weekly*.¹⁹⁴ The brief visit to New Orleans provided a delightful and refreshing interlude after an exhausting and nerve-wracking adventure. But the colonel, like his men, was growing anxious to be back in the saddle and among his western comrades in the Army of the Tennessee.

On May 9, the five Federal officers boarded the steamer *Sally Robinson* for the return trip to Baton Rouge. "Early in the week," Grierson expectantly informed his wife, "I presume we will endeavor to form a junction with the Forces of Genl. Grant, who are now said to occupy Port Gibson & Grand Gulf. We may perhaps go through La. on the left or west of the Miss. River and may go north from Baton Rouge passing near the line of the R.R. from Port Hudson to Clinton. We will endeavor to select the best possible route and inflict as much injury to the Rebels as possible."¹⁹⁵ In the meantime, however, the commander of the Department of the Gulf was formulating plans for the reduction of the Confederate stronghold at Port Hudson, above Baton Rouge. With an army seriously deficient in cavalry, Banks was hardly disposed to stand idly by while Grierson's hard-fighting troopers rode off to join General Grant.
NOTES - CHAPTER IV


3Hartje, Van Dorn, 274-75.


5S. A. Hurlbut to C. S. Hamilton, February 14, 1863, Ibid., 54.

6C. S. Hamilton to E. Hatch, February 20, 1863, copy in Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

7Hatch had already volunteered to command the expedition. The diversion toward Pontotoc was his suggestion. See, Ibid.

8In his instructions to Hatch, Hamilton listed as one of the expedition's major objectives "the seizure by night, if practicable, of the Head Quarters of the rebel General Johnston at Jackson, and the capture of the General himself." Ibid.


Ibid.


For a study which attempts to establish the exact relationships between the various mounted expeditions launched during April, 1863, see Edwin C. Bearss, "Colonel Streight Drives for the Western and Atlantic Railroad," Alabama Historical Quarterly, XXVI (Summer 1964), 133-86.


W. S. Rosecrans to S. A. Hurlbut, April 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIII, pt. 2, p. 215; G. M. Dodge to H. Binmore, April 4, 1863, Ibid., 214-15; S. A. Hurlbut to J. A. Rawlins, April 6, 1863, Ibid., 214; Hartpence, History of the Fifty-First Indiana, 117-18; Stanley P. Hirshon, Grenville M. Dodge: Soldier, Politician Railroad Pioneer (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1967), 71-72; Bearss, "Colonel Streight Drives for the Western and Atlantic Railroad," 136-38. Future U. S. President James A. Garfield, who organized the expedition at Nashville, entertained hopes of commanding the raid into Alabama and Georgia. Garfield's superior, however, vetoed the request, and on April 7, placed Colonel Abel D. Streight of the 51st Indiana Infantry in charge of the so-called "Provisional Brigade," which comprised the 51st and 73rd Indiana, the 3rd Ohio and the 80th Illinois infantry regiments, along with two companies of the 5th Tennessee (Union) Cavalry. Garfield, Wild Life of the Army, 255, 266; Hartpence,
History of the Fifty-First Indiana, 115-16; Bearss, "Colonel Streight Drives for the Western and Atlantic Railroad," 137.


29 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, March 15, 17, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

30 Quote from Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 259; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, February 23, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

31 Grierson watched the departure of his immediate superior with considerable satisfaction. "Hamilton," in the colonel's estimation, "was the most disgusting & disagreeable man I have ever been under." Confidentially, he admitted that "I have been earnestly praying for some time that he might be removed from command over me, and feel greatly relieved." B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, March 25, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; see also, Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 267-68. Hamilton, a West Point classmate of Ulysses S. Grant, also severely taxed the patience of his superiors. Following the siege of Yorktown, Va., on April 30, 1862, General McClellan had relieved him of command of a division in Heintzelman's III Corps of the Army of the Potomac. In spite of political pressure to reinstate Hamilton, McClellan had refused to reconsider his action, pronouncing the deposed officer "not fit to command a division." Special Orders No. 129, Army of the Potomac, April 30, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XI, pt. 3, p. 129; G. B. McClellan to A. Lincoln, May 22, 1862, Ibid., 185-86; Warner, Generals in Blue, 199. Transferred to the western theater, Hamilton had performed creditably in the field and had won promotion to major general of volunteers to date from September 19, 1862. As soon as notification of his appointment reached La Grange, Hamilton had aroused the anger of Major General Hurlbut by attempting to assume command of the District of West Tennessee. When Hamilton next attempted to assume command of McPherson's corps and privately accused Grant of being a drunkard, the department commander's patience came to an abrupt end. On March 23, 1863, the troublesome new major general was relieved of duty with the XVI Corps and instructed to report to General John A. McClellan. In transferring Hamilton, General Grant noted that "as a soldier, I have no fault to find with him further than his natural jealous disposition, which influences his military conduct and acts prejudicially upon the service." U. S. Grant to H. W. Halleck, March 24, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 3, p. 137. For details of the events prompting Hamilton's removal see Ibid., 136-43; U. S. Grant to L. Thomas, March 28, 1863, Ibid., 151; Catton, Grant Moves South, 395-96. Hamilton's resignation was accepted with alacrity on April 13, 1863. In a final
comment upon the affair, General Halleck cynically remarked that "no doubt he resigns to get a higher command. This game sometimes succeeds, but it also sometimes fails." H. W. Halleck to U. S. Grant, April 9, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XIV, pt. 1, p. 28. General Hamilton sat out the remainder of the war on his farm near Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. Warner, Generals in Blue, 199.

32Smith, four years younger than Grierson, was a West Point classmate of James B. McPherson, John M. Schofield, Philip Sheridan and John Bell Hood. After the war, Smith became one of the country's most prominent civil engineers, constructing the world's first all-steel bridge and designing skyscrapers adapted to the deep-bedrock structure of the earth beneath Chicago. He died on March 4, 1916, at the age of eighty-six. Warner, Generals in Blue, 464-65; DAB.

33B. H. Grierson to [A. K.?] Grierson, April 6, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 267-68, 278.

34Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 278-79; H. Binmore to B. H. Grierson, April 13, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, April 14, [16], 1863, Ibid.

35Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 281; S. A. Hurlbut to G. N. Dodge, April 8, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 3, pp. 181-82. Grant was in fact at that very moment setting into motion his final strategy for the capture of Vicksburg. On the evening of April 16, Admiral Porter's gunboats successfully passed beneath the Vicksburg batteries. The last phase of Grant's plan called for marching his army overland along the west bank of the Mississippi to New Carthage, transporting it across the river, and disembarking it in the vicinity of Grand Gulf. Once Grand Gulf was in Union hands, Grant proposed to conduct operations east and south of the Big Black River, "threatening at the same time both Vicksburg and Jackson, and confusing the Confederates as to his real objective." Charles A. Dana, Recollections of the Civil War: With the Leaders at Washington and in the Field in the Sixties (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1898), 30-31. If these movements proved successful, Grant felt confident that General Pemberton would be forced to come out from behind the Vicksburg defenses and give battle. Ibid., 31; Niers, Web of Victory, 138-39; Grant, Memoirs, I, 460-74; Porter, Incidents and Anecdotes, 174-75; Sherman, Memoirs, I, 345; Wilson, Under the Old Flag, I, 158-59; Catton, Grant Moves South, 407-14.


38 John Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, April 17, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 282.


40 W. S. Smith to S. A. Forbes, May 4, 1907, Forbes Collection. After the war, Wm. Sooy Smith apparently conceived the notion that the proposal for a cavalry raid into Mississippi was entirely his own. Writing in his mid-seventies, the ex-soldier recalled that he had travelled to Memphis with Grierson and there had presented the plan for the expedition to General Hurlbut. The district commander, Smith maintained, was reluctant to grant permission for so bold an enterprise, but did finally approve a quick dash as far south as Meridian. In Smith's scenario, Hurlbut then placed the entire question before General Grant, who then authorized a full-scale cavalry movement against the railroad behind Vicksburg. W. S. Smith to S. A. Forbes, November 10, 1905, November 25, 1908, Ibid. "The conception and general plan of the raid were mine," Smith brashly asserted. "Its masterly execution belonged to Grierson and to his able and gallant subordinate officers and brave men. And to them and him I have always gladly given the praise they so richly deserved. I do not know whether Hurlbut amended his orders in his report to adapt them ex post facto to the outcome of a successful expedition and I am sorry to feel that he may have been guilty of such reprehensible conduct." W. S. Smith to S. A. Forbes, May 4, 1907, Ibid. In preparing his 1907 article on Grierson's raid, Stephen A. Forbes relied heavily upon Smith's recollection in reconstructing the "Inception of Plans and Preliminary Orders" for the expedition. S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavalry Raid," 122-25. However, extended correspondence between Forbes and T. W. Lippincott, another veteran of the raid, who remained in close contact with his aging colonel, apparently convinced Forbes that Smith's claims were generally unfounded, and that in reality General Grant deserved credit for the conception of a
large-scale raid against General Pemberton's lines of communication. No mention is made of General Smith in Forbes' address to the Urbana, Illinois Rotary Club, delivered in 1928. For the correspondence between Forbes and Lippincott, and a typescript of Forbes' speech, see Forbes Collection. Grierson, in his memoirs, simply notes that "upon the brilliant success of that doubtful enterprise General Smith may have conceived the idea that he had sent it out." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 432.


42Surby, Grierson Raids, 20-21; S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavalry Raid," 103; Pierce, History of the Second Iowa Cavalry, 48; B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 522; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 287-88. John Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, April 17, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4 places the colonel's time of arrival at La Grange at "about Sun-down" on the sixteenth and sets the time of departure of the First Cavalry Brigade at just prior to seven o'clock on the morning of April 17.


45Through almost thirty years of military service together, Grierson and Woodward developed a close and enduring friendship. Born in Burlington County, New Jersey on October 28, 1840, Samuel Woodward was living with his parents in Paducah, Kentucky at the outbreak of the war. The young
man's outspoken Unionist sentiments quickly provoked the anger of his southern neighbors, and early in 1862 he found it necessary to appeal to the Federal commander at Cairo, Illinois for protection. General Prentiss, then in command of the military district which embraced Paducah, referred the matter to Colonel Grierson, who was at that time stationed with his regiment near Woodward's home. Grierson, helpless to intervene in the affair, advised the youth "to enlist in the Union army so that he could have a chance to retaliate on the rebels for the ill treatment received at their hands." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 174-75. Taking the colonel's advice, on February 1, 1862, Woodward enlisted at Cairo in Company G, 6th Illinois Cavalry. He was almost immediately detailed as a clerk in the assistant adjutant general's office of General William T. Sherman's division and in that capacity participated in the battle of Shiloh and in the siege of Corinth. Promoted to 2nd lieutenant on November 1, 1862, Woodward was temporarily assigned to duty as acting assistant adjutant general of Stuart's brigade of Morgan L. Smith's division. In late November, the lieutenant joined his regiment and, following the Confederate raid on Holly Springs, served as acting assistant adjutant general of the cavalry force organized to pursue Van Dorn. On December 30, 1862, Woodward was appointed acting assistant adjutant general of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, Army of the Tennessee. As Grierson's adjutant during the remainder of the Civil War, the young officer's star rose with that of his commander. On September 19, 1865, Samuel Lippincott Woodward was mustered out of the service with the rank of major and assistant adjutant general. Largely through Grierson's influence, Woodward reentered the army on June 18, 1867 as adjutant of the 10th U. S. Cavalry. For the next twenty years, the recommissioned 2nd lieutenant served with his old commander at isolated posts on the southwestern frontier, completing his last staff assignment on September 30, 1887; on which date he was relieved as assistant adjutant general of the District of New Mexico. As a forty-seven-year-old 1st lieutenant, Samuel Woodward was finally assigned to a field command with Company B, 10th Cavalry and on October 5, 1887 was advanced to the captaincy of Company I in the black regiment. The outbreak of the Spanish American War found the aging captain too ill to withstand the arduous journey to Cuba, where his regiment fought with distinction. Consequently, Woodward contributed to the haphazard American war effort as recruiting officer at Fort McPherson, Ga. On January 10, 1900, Captain Woodward was appointed major in the 1st Cavalry and dispatched to the Philippines, where he served until his promotion to lieutenant colonel of the 7th Cavalry on February 22, 1903. RG 94, S. L. Woodward ACP File, National Archives; Heitman, Historical Register, I, 1059; Surby, Grierson Raids, 17-18; S. L. Woodward
to B. H. Grierson, August 17, 1866, July 19, 1867, Grierson Papers, Roll 6; B. H. Grierson to E. M. Stanton, July 25, 1867, Ibid. S. L. Woodward retired from the army on July 9, 1904—"at his own request; after 40 years' service"—with the rank of brigadier general. Official Army Register, 1905, p. 425. Following General Grierson's death on September 11, 1911, his old adjutant travelled to Jacksonville, Illinois, where he participated in the Legion of Honor ceremonies performed at the general's funeral. Undated clipping from the Jacksonville [Ill.] Daily Journal, Grierson Papers, Roll 11. Woodward lived out his retirement in St. Louis, Mo., where he died on April 16, 1924, at the age of eighty-four. Official Army Register, 1925, p. 814.

46 Surby, Grierson Raids, II; Passes issued from the Office of the Provost Marshal, St. Louis, Mo., September 9, October 29, 1861, Grierson Papers, Roll 3; "Major General Benjamin H. Grierson," United States Service Magazine, V (1866), 432. For an interesting photograph of Colonel Grierson as he appeared at the time of his 1863 raid see, Francis Trevelyan Miller, ed., The Photographic History of the Civil War, 10 vols. (New York: Review of Reviews Co., 1911), X, 133.


48 Surby, Grierson Raids, 23; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, p. 688; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 288. The Union cavalry was apparently encamped upon the plantation of Dr. J. B. Ellis, a local physician. Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Mississippi, 2 vols. (Chicago: Goodspeed, 1891), II, 736. For Colonel Hatch and the men of the 2nd Iowa, the site of their bivouac was a familiar one. On July 28, 1862, the Iowans had visited the Ellis estate in a futile search for the encampment of a regiment of partisan rangers, which was then rumored to be forming in the vicinity of Ripley under Colonel William C. Falkner, a local lawyer, farmer and businessman, and the great grandfather of the novelist William Faulkner. Andrew Brown, "The First Mississippi Partisan Rangers, C. S. A.,” Civil War History, I (1955), 375. D. Brown, Grierson's Raid, 20 states that Falkner owned a "plantation" several miles east of the Ellis farm, and adds that on April 17, 1863, the colonel was absent with his command, the First Mississippi Partisan Rangers, "guarding the northern approaches to Vicksburg."
Actually, however, on the day of Grierson's arrival at Ripley, Falkner's partisans were serving with Chalmers' cavalry along the Coldwater, defending the approaches to Hernando. On April 18, Colonel George E. Bryant's 12th Wisconsin Infantry, part of the diversionary force sent south from Memphis to cover Grierson's movement, attacked the First Mississippi Partisans near Hernando, driving them south with severe losses. [Hosea W. Rood], Story of the Service of Company E, and of the Twelfth Wisconsin Regiment of Veteran Volunteer Infantry, in the War of the Rebellion (n.p., 1898?), 174-76. Brown, "First Mississippi Partisan Rangers," 383-85, incorrectly designates Colonel Bryant's regiment as the 12th Wisconsin Cavalry. In the opinion of at least one authority, "the defeat crushed Falkner militarily so completely that he never recovered." Thomas Felix Hickerson, The Falkner Feuds (Chapel Hill: Colonial Press, 1964), 26. Brown, "First Mississippi Partisan Rangers," 384n. also points out that the small farm Falkner owned in Tippah County . . . was in no sense a plantation as the term is generally understood. Falkner lived in Ripley." But, at the same time, he also inaccurately gives April 18, as the date of Colonel Grierson's departure from La Grange.


Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 288-89; Surby, Grierson Raids, 24; Pierce, Second Iowa Cavalry, 48-49; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, p. 68; B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 522; E. Hatch to W. H. Harland, April 27, 1863, Ibid., p. 529. Little more than a post office, Molino was situated on Wilhite Creek, one of the headwaters of the Tallahatchie, ten miles northeast of New Albany. In 1900, the hamlet contained a population of twenty-two. Rowland, ed., Encyclopedia of Mississippi History. Mr. Sloan, the owner of the plantation upon which the Illinois cavalry encamped, apparently spent most of the night sputtering in impotent rage over the Yankee despoilation of his barn and smokehouse. By morning, Colonel Grierson was willing to swear that the irate planter had made at least fifty vocal
demands that he be killed outright, rather than condemned to slow death by starvation. His patience at an end, the colonel finally announced his intention to grant Mr. Sloan's frequently repeated request. Summoning his huge, muscular orderly, Grierson instructed the soldier to escort the fuming squire out behind the barn, where he might quietly "cut his throat and be done with it." The apparent seriousness of the gigantic trooper, combined with the heartrending screams of Mrs. Sloan and the servants, quickly restored the planter's appreciation for even the thorns of mortal existence. Begging for his life, Mr. Sloan was at length returned to Grierson's presence, where he spent the remainder of the night in comparative quiet. Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 291-93; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, pp. 688-90.


53 Surby, Grierson Raids, 25.


B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 523; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, pp. 691-92; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 296; Surby, Grierson Raids, 27-28; S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavalry Raid," 104. Upon Grierson's recommendation, Edward Hatch was eventually commissioned brigadier general of volunteers to rank from April 27, 1864. Awarded a postwar commission as colonel of the 9th U. S. Cavalry, Hatch shared with Grierson the distinction of commanding one of the two black cavalry regiments in the regular army. Heitman, Historical Register, I, 510; Warner, Generals in Blue, 215-16. Another of Hatch's former commanders, James Harrison Wilson, painted an intriguing portrait of the Iowan: "He was a young man . . . of splendid constitution and striking figure . . . . He was brave, energetic, and aggressive, and needed only to be told what to do and then attended to the rest himself. He had only one fault. He was so ardent and active on the firing line and in pursuit, that he always said 'yes' to every suggestion and always declared himself ready without reference to food, forage, or ammunition. He always took the chances of getting them from the enemy or from the general trains and seemed to fear nothing but that he and his command might not do their full share of the work, or get their full share of the glory. It was a supreme pleasure to command such a man and to look out for the comfort and needs of such troops.

"Although Hatch was talkative and given to harmless gasconade, he never committed himself on any enterprise or adventure, however difficult or desperate, which he was not willing to undertake or which he did not throw himself and his command into with absolute fearlessness. Shortly after reaching our cantonments on the Tennessee, he fell sick from exposure and over-exertion, whereupon I ordered him on twenty days' leave of absence, suggesting that if well enough he might visit Sheridan in the Valley of Virginia and see how the cavalry of that incomparable leader was organized and handled. He seized the opportunity with avidity and made the visit before he was fully well. Shortly after his return, he was giving an account of his observations, concluding with the remark that he would be willing to die if he could 'have the command of Sheridan's cavalry for just one day.' One of his staff, bolder and perhaps more impudent than the rest, broke in with the inquiry: 'But, General, wouldn't you like to have just another day to brag about it?' The shot was a good one and brought a laugh to the party in which Hatch joined cheerfully with the rest. He was a generous and magnanimous soul who had the love of every officer and man in his command." Wilson, Under the Old Flag, II, 172-74.


Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, p. 692; B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 523. For a full and detailed account of the organization and activities of the "Butternut Guerrillas" see Surby, *Grierson Raids*, *passim*. Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 299-300, comments that "Sergeant Zurby [sic] proved to be a most excellent man for the position and the services of himself and scouts were invaluable and aided materially in the success of the expedition. They could not be at the time fully reported as it would have insured their hanging had they been taken as prisoners of war." Curiously, the idea of disguising scouts as civilians had also occurred to the ill-fated Colonel Streight. On April 9, 1863, the Indiana colonel had written to James A. Garfield requesting that "the rebels not having regular uniforms, would it be violating the rules of war should I see fit to dress any number of men, say two companies, after the promiscuous Southern style?" A. D. Streight to J. A. Garfield, April 9, 1863, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIII, pt. 2, p. 224. The historian of the 51st Indiana Infantry is undoubtedly correct in assuming that Streight "probably got a strong refusal to his . . . proposition, as no indication appears, neither [sic] in the *Official War Records*, nor [sic] in the conduct of the expedition, of any endorsement of it."
Hartpence, *History of the Fifty-First Indiana*, 118. A modern authority speculates that Rosecrans' reluctance to grant Streight's request stemmed from the fresh memory of the fate suffered by the disguised Andrew's raiders; a number of whom were hung as spies after falling into Confederate hands. Bearss, "Colonel Streight Drives for the Western and Atlantic Railroad," 139; William Pittenger, *In Pursuit of the General: A History of the Civil War Railroad Raid* (San Marino, Calif.: Golden West Books, 1965), passim.

B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 523; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, p. 692; Starkville *Banner*, quoted in *Memphis Daily Appeal* (Jackson, Miss.), May 7, 1863. The *Banner* estimated the strength of the Federal cavalry at 2,500 men. The *Jackson Daily Mississippian*, May 9, 1863, added that Grierson's soldiers "robbed the post office, but handed back a letter from a soldier to his wife containing $50, and ordered the postmaster to deliver it. . . ." Hale & Murdock's hat wagon, loaded with wool hats, passing through at the time was captured. They gave hats to the negroes, and took the mules. Starkville can boast of better head-covering for its negroes, than any other town in the State." See also, Frank Moore, ed., *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events*, 11 vols. and supplement (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1861-63; D. Van Nostrand, 1864-68), VII, 24-25. Newspaper reports also indicate that the success of the Union cavalry raid was beginning to produce a reaction among the black population in eastern Mississippi. The Starkville *Banner* article, reprinted in the *Memphis Daily Appeal* (Jackson, Miss.), May 7, 1863, commenting upon the Yankee appropriation of Negroes to serve as stock-drivers, noted that "we think that but few negroes were made to go, notwithstanding that they left it to the free choice of the negroes whether to go or not." In discussing the raid, the *Jackson Daily Mississippian*, April 24, 1863 reported that "yesterday morning [April 21], a gentleman, near Okolona, ordered his negro man, a wagon-driver, to harness his team, and prepare to leave. The negro replied that he had harnessed his last mule for him, whereupon the master shot and killed him instantly."


Bankston was a small community situated on McCurtain's Creek, several miles southwest of Winona, in Choctaw County. In 1902, the town was no more than a post office, and today it is extinct. Riley, "Extinct Towns and Villages of Mississippi," 328; Rowland, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mississippi History*.


78 B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 525; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, p. 700. Startled by the sudden appearance of Grierson's raiders at Newton Station, General Pemberton spent a considerable part of the day on April 24, franticly deploying troops in an effort to intercept the Federal cavalry. Chalmers was instructed to move with his entire mounted force and all of his light artillery from Panola eastward to Okolona. Similarly, Featherston's brigade was shifted east from Fort Pemberton, on the Yazoo River, to Grenada. At Canton, General Lloyd Tilghman was directed to send one half of his command to Carthage and to mount a Kentucky regiment to be held in reserve. In central Mississippi, Brigadier General John Adams was instructed to order two cavalry regiments and one battery east from Jackson along the severed Southern Railroad as far as Lake Station, while General Loring was authorized to mount as many men as possible to patrol the line of the Mobile & Ohio. As a final precaution, Pemberton wired General Franklin Gardner, commanding Confederate forces at Port Hudson, warning him of a possible attempt on the part of the Yankee raiders to join Banks at Baton Rouge. To forestall such a movement, Gardner was advised to shift all of his available cavalry east toward Tangipahoa. All Confederate cavalry below the Southern Railroad was placed under the command of Colonel R. V. Richardson pending the arrival of Colonel Virt Adams, who was charged with overall command of the pursuit in that sector. J. C. Pemberton to S. Cooper, August 2, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 254; J. C. Pemberton to J. Adams, April 24, 1863, Ibid., pt. 3, p. 781; J. C. Pemberton to J. R. Chalmers, April 24, 1863, Ibid.; J. C. Pemberton to W. S. Featherston, April 24, 1863, Ibid., 782; J. C. Pemberton to L. Tilghman, April 24, 1863, Ibid., 783; J. C. Pemberton to F. Gardner, April 24, 1863, Ibid., 782; Jackson Daily Mississippian, April 24, 1863.


H. C. Forbes, "Grierson's Raid," 15-22; S. A. Forbes, "An Adventure of Company B," 2-9; S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavalry Raid," 109-14; Henry Elsey, "The Grierson Raid," copy of unidentified clipping in Forbes Collection; B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 528. W. W. Loring to J. C. Pemberton, April 25, 1863, Ibid., 544, reported that the "enemy appeared here at 1 o'clock and demanded the town. They were represented as 1,500 strong." The Memphis Daily Appeal (Jackson, Miss.), April 27, 1863, also made the erroneous connection between Grierson's carefully planted misinformation and the subsequent appearance of Captain Forbes' command at Enterprise. "The Federals who were so successful at Newton," it reported, "did not fail to make good their promise to pay
Enterprise a visit, but we have the gratification of announcing that they were disappointed in their expectations, and had to flee the vicinity of the courted prize. Early Friday morning, after their proximity to Newton was known, communication was had with General LORING, who at once anticipated their purposes, and so disposed of his command as to ensure the safety of Marion, Meridian and Enterprise. At half past twelve yesterday, the enemy demanded the surrender of Enterprise unconditionally, doubtless anticipating an easy prize. Finding, however, that some enterprise had been exhibited to protect Enterprise, they incontinently left the vicinity. Of their subsequent whereabouts nothing has been reported. According to Stephen A. Forbes' account, Company B of the 7th Illinois Cavalry "was absent from the column five days and four nights, during which time it marched about three hundred miles in ten different counties and kept the attention of the enemy fixed on the defense of the Mobile and Ohio road. It captured and paroled forty prisoners, confronted and evaded several regiments of confederate troops at Macon and Enterprise, slipped through the home guards of six county towns, was twice misled and once lost, and had five bridges burned in its front, and in three successive night[s] it had in all but six hours' sleep, while rations for man and horse were, for the most part, conspicuous by their absence. We simply had not had time to eat." S. A. Forbes, "An Adventure of Company B," 8-9.


88 Describing Georgetown, Riley, "Extinct Towns and Villages of Mississippi," 335, observes that "at the time of its greatest prosperity this place contained from three to five hundred inhabitants and had five dry goods stores, one saloon, a blacksmith shop, and one drug store. . . . "When Grierson made a raid through Mississippi (1863) he burned the town. Since that time it has been in a very dilapidated condition. . . . The old time ferry boat at this place has been discarded, the river being spanned by a new iron bridge."

None of the participants in Grierson's 1863 raid mention the burning of this community.


90 Surby, Grierson Raids, 68.
Ibid.


Surby, Grierson Raids, 69-70; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, p. 708. One of the citizens taken prisoner earlier in the day by Sergeant Surby's scouts shortly thereafter penned a perhaps only slightly hyperbolic account of the actions of the Yankee raiders at Hazelhurst: "Col. Prince and all his men assured every one that they were gentlemen, men of honor, that they would not rob citizens or interfere with private property. But the guard robbed me while I was their prisoner.

"They robbed every store in the town, took whatever pleased their fancy, and called upon the negroes to 'help themselves to whatever they d____ d please.' Col. Prince saw this wholesale robbery enacted in his own immediate presence, and offered no remonstrance. They robbed private houses... and by terrible threats, and by presenting cocked revolvers to ladies, frightened them into bringing their watches, jewelry and money they had secured for safety. They robbed many plantations, those of the poor, as well as of the rich, of every horse and mule upon them.

"They shoot every citizen they can that attempts to escape with his watch and money, on their approach.

"They killed, by shooting five times, the only negro man belonging to Mr. Barlow, because he refused to go off with them... .

"Their officers assert that they did not order the burning of the town of Hazelhurst, but there were five of them present when that barbaric atrocity was perpetrated—one a slim, thin, black-bearded captain. I believe that he turned his back when he saw combustibles prepared, the inflammable liquids poured on them, and the match lighted—for they do sometimes turn their backs when one of them is doing any unusual crime, in order to say with a good conscience, 'I did not see it, and I was present.'"

"Perhaps the commander who was then present, the sleek, plausible hypocritical demagogue, Prince, did not specially order his noble Captain... to burn the town, without turning his back when the matches were applied but he seemed very complacent, and gratified, when the flames were destroying the only means of subsistence of many women and children—the accumulation of many years of economy and toil."

"When he was swearing most loudly that he would have the rascal who did it, I heard one of his own men say 'bosh!' That man knows what his Colonel means when he talks like an honest man.

"Of Grierson I say nothing, because I did not see him.

"There were several of the men who did look and talk and
and act, so far as I saw, like perfect gentlemen; but I am sure they must be greatly in the minority in that crowd, and that nothing less than great virtue could sustain uprightly, any one moving in such a corrupt mass.

"They professed to fight to open the navigation of the Mississippi river. . . ." Jackson Daily Mississippian, May 2, 1863.


95 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 319; Surby, Grierson Raids, 70.

96 Surby, Grierson Raids, 75-76.

97 Ibid., 76.

98 No longer in existence, Gallatin was located five miles west of Hazelhurst. Between 1824 and 1872, the small town served as the seat of Copiah County. Bypassed by the Illinois Central Railroad, the community gradually declined in importance during the postwar years, until it was eventually superceded by Hazelhurst as the county seat. As early as 1900, the very site upon which Gallatin once stood was cultivated field. Rowland, ed., Encyclopedia of Mississippi History; Riley, "Extinct Towns and Villages of Mississippi," 332-33.


100 Jackson Daily Mississippian, April 28, 1863.

101 R. V. Richardson to J. C. Pemberton, May 3, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 547; J. C. Pemberton to S. Cooper, August 2, 1863, Ibid., 254; J. E. Johnston to S. Cooper, March 6, 1863, Ibid., pt. 3, p. 654; Brown, Grierson's Raid, 169-71. Captain Porter's battalion arrived at Hazelhurst on the morning of April 28. One member of the rebel command, apparently familiar with members of General Pemberton's staff, expressed some alarm that department headquarters was greatly underestimating the strength and morale of the Yankee raiders. Eyewitnesses at Hazelhurst estimated Grierson's numbers at between 1,500 and 3,000.
"They are represented as splendid looking and [as a] daring set of men, well equipped and well horse[d]," the Confederate trooper reported. "Before I left Jackson I heard the opinion expressed by an intelligent military official, high in the confidence of the Department Commander, that they (the Yanks) were running for dear life—that their horses were jaded and worn down and the men in constant dread of capture. Such is just the opposite of the facts. They take their time—their horses are in fine order—their actions evinced not the slightest fear... Nothing can exceed the impunity and impudence of their conduct." Jackson Daily Mississippian, April 30, 1863.


103 J. C. Pemberton to C. L. Stevenson, April 27, 1863, Ibid., pt. 3, p. 794.

104 J. C. Pemberton to W. W. Loring, April 28, 1863, Ibid., 798; J. C. Pemberton to N. Farrell, April 28, 1863, Ibid.


106 Surby, Grierson Raids, 78; B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 526. Union Church is situated in the southeast corner of Jefferson County, "17 miles east of Fayette, the county seat... and about 40 miles east by north of Natchez." In 1900, the village had a population of only 136. Rowland, ed., Encyclopedia of Mississippi History.

107 B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 526; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 320; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 1, p. 709. At 8 p.m. on April 28, Captain Cleveland sent an urgent message to the telegraph operator at Fayette: "Notify Colonel [Wirt] Adams, Grand Gulf, General [C. L.] Stevenson, Vicksburg, and General [Franklin] Gardner, Port Hudson, that the enemy are at Union Church, on the Natchez and Hazelhurst road. Tell the operator at Natchez they may look out for them there. I have been skirmishing with them for some hours this evening. Cannot ascertain their strength.
They have four pieces of artillery. I have not more than 100 men in line." S. B. Cleveland to Fayette Operator, April 28, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 538. See also, Jackson Daily Mississippian, April 29, 30, 1863 and Memphis Daily Appeal (Jackson, Miss.), April 29, 30, 1863.


109 Surby, Grierson Raids, 89-92.

110 Ibid., 93-94.


118 The above account of Colonel Grierson's visit to Brookhaven is compiled from the following sources: B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 527; Surby, Grierson Raids, 96-99; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 2, pp. 100-101; Memphis Daily Appeal (Jackson, Miss.), April 30, 1863;
Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 324-25. When news of this most recent Federal success reached Jackson, the editor of the Daily Mississippian simply threw up his hands in resigned amazement: "Well, well! we are free to admit that Mr. (we beg his pardon) Colonel Grierson and his boys have had a 'good time of it' for the past week. It is actually amusing to think (although we confess, annoying) how they have roved around, within forty or fifty miles of the Capitol of the State—eating fried ham and eggs and broiled spring chickens every morning for breakfast, at the expense of the planters whom they choose to honor with a visit—luxuriating on fat mutton, green peas and (of course) strawberries and cream for dinner—and all this without caring for the terrible fact (confound their impudence) that they were within a few hours ride of Lieutenant General John C. Pemberton's headquarters, or thinking for an instant that the commander-in-chief of the 'State Troops' lived, moved, breathed and had his being in the city of Jackson. It is actually provoking to think how Colonel (we mean Brigadier General—begging his pardon) Grierson and his jolly riders have enjoyed themselves for a whole week. Why it is really worth a ten months' furlough of a Confederate soldier, this pleasure excursion of the roving blades of Iowa and Illinois in the heart of the 'Sunny South!' The fun they must have enjoyed is actually enviable!

"We hope Maj. Gen. Grierson (we have a penchant for long military titles) will not take off the wires of the telegraph as he proceeds—for, as it seems he can't be caught or headed off, we feel some curiosity to be regularly informed of his whereabouts." Jackson Daily Mississippian, April 30, 1863.


121 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 327; Surby, Grierson Raids, 100.

122 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 325; Surby, Grierson Raids, 100-101; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 2, pp. 101-102. Even the Jackson Daily Mississippian, May 1, 1863 seemed impressed by the magnamnity of Grierson's raiders: "They have passed several thousands bales of cotton,
but in no instance have we heard of its destruction. It is also stated that they have not destroyed the sugar and molasses on their route."

123 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 326.

124 Surby, Grierson Raids, 101; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 326.


126 Grant, Memoirs, I, 482-84; Catton, Grant Moves South, 424-26; Miers, Web of Victory, 155-59; S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavalry Raid," 116.

127 B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 527. Grierson's superiors were equally unenlightened concerning the whereabouts, direction and fate of the Federal expedition. General Grant recalled that "it was at Port Gibson I first heard through a Southern paper of the complete success of Colonel Grierson, who was making a raid through central Mississippi," adding that "this raid was of great importance, for Grierson had attracted the attention of the enemy from the main movement against Vicksburg." Grant, Memoirs, I, pp. 488-89. At Memphis, General Hurlbut first learned of the damage inflicted upon the Southern Railroad on April 29. Assuming that Grierson would attempt to return to La Grange through western Alabama, Hurlbut immediately ordered Colonel Hatch to make a diversion toward Okolona with 1,200 men gathered from the 6th Iowa Infantry and the 2nd and 4th Iowa Cavalry. S. A. Hurlbut to H. W. Halleck, April 29, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 247; S. A. Hurlbut to J. A. Rawlins, April 28, 1863, Ibid., 246. Upon his return from the Streight expedition, General Dodge was instructed to send all the cavalry at his disposal to join Hatch near Okolona and "to attack rebel force meeting there to intercept Grierson on his return." S. A. Hurlbut to R. J. Oglesby, May 1, 1863, Ibid., 261.


133 Special Orders No. 120, Port Hudson, La., April 28, 1863, Ibid., pt. 3, pp. 800-801.


135 Surby, Grierson Raids, 104-105.


143 J. De Baun to T. F. Willson, May 6, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 540. Major De Baun erroneously reported that "among the wounded were Colonel Prince and Lieutenant-Colonel Blackburn, of the Sixth Illinois Cavalry. Colonel Prince has since died." Ibid., 539.

144 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 331-32; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 2, p. 105; Surby, Grierson Raids, 112. The wounded Union soldiers, together with their doctor and nurses, were taken into custody by Col. W. R. Miles, whose
Louisiana Legion arrived at Wall's Bridge, enroute from Clinton, La. to Osky, Miss., about sunset on May 1. W. R. Miles to T. F. Willson, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 545; Surby, Grierson Raids, 153. Sergeant Surby, the least seriously wounded of the prisoners, was taken to Jackson and from there was transported to Libby Prison, in Richmond, Va., where he joined Dr. Yule and Sergeant Major Leslieure. Almost immediately paroled, Surby was spared the horrors of prison life and eventually rejoined his regiment at Colliersville, Tenn., on October 13, 1863. Surby, Grierson Raids, 154-81.


Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 333; B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 527. Unbeknown to Colonel Grierson, even as he rushed toward the Amite crossing, Maj. W. H. Garland was providing Gen. Gardner with a remarkably accurate forecast of the Union commander's intentions and probable route: "They stopped at a house and took some horses, and said that they were on the way to Baton Rouge. If such be the fact, they will cross at Williams' Bridge on the Amite River. If a force can be thrown there, they may yet be cut off." W. H. Garland to T. F. Willson, May 1, 1863, Ibid., 542. Fortunately for the raiders, Confederate authorities at Port Hudson were slow to react to the latest intelligence from eastern Louisiana. A resident of Clinton, La., writing on May 2, asserted that the Federal raiders had already crossed the Amite when the 4th Louisiana regiment was finally dispatched to guard the crossing. Jackson Daily Mississippian, May 9, 1863.

Surby, Grierson Raids, 116; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 333.

Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 333-34.

Ibid., 334.
B. H. Grierson to J. A. Rawlins, May 5, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 1, p. 527; A. J. Brown to T. F. Willson, May 2, 1863, Ibid., 537; Surby, Grierson Raids, 117-118; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 334; H. C. Forbes, "Grierson's Raid," 23-24; S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavalry Raid," 119-20. Perhaps confusing the Federal crossing of the Amite River at Williams' Bridge with the earlier contested crossing of the Tickfaw at Wall's Bridge, the Memphis Daily Appeal (Jackson, Miss.), May 4, 1863, the Jackson Daily Mississippian, May 5, 1863, and the Richmond Whig, May 6, 1863, all carried stories of a fight at the Amite Bridge. Confederate troops under Wirt Adams, it was announced, had ambushed Grierson's raiders as they attempted to gain the west bank of the stream. No doubt embellishing Maj. De Baun's erroneous report of Edward Prince's death at Wall's Bridge, the Confederate newspapers carried detailed descriptions of how the colonel of the 7th Illinois Cavalry had fallen mortally wounded after his regiment had refused to obey an order to charge the Rebel position.

H. C. Forbes as quoted in S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavalry Raid," 120.

Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 335.


Co. A, Miles' Legion. Captain J. D. Stuart, who organized the company, died on Jan. 14, 1863 and was succeeded in command by Captain B. F. Bryan. Booth, comp., Records of Louisiana Confederate Soldiers.

158 Surby, Grierson Raids, 122.


165 Quote from Bryant, ed., "A Yankee Soldier Looks at the Negro," 143; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 342; Woodward, "Grierson's Raid," pt. 2, pp. 111-12; S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavairy Raid," 120; Johns, Life with the Forty-Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, 213-14. For a remarkable set of photographs showing Grierson and his raiders shortly after their arrival at Baton Rouge taken by Confederate spy Andrew D. Lytle see, Millier, ed., Photographic History of the Civil War, X, 130-35. Regarding the large number of Negroes who followed his command into Baton Rouge, Grierson explains: "I tried at first to prevent them, knowing how rapidly we would have to march and fearing that they would not be able to keep up, and that they would be made to suffer if caught by their masters. But it was no use, come they would and come they did. They were mounted on all sorts of horses, mules, etc. Had come with all sorts of vehicles, carriages, wagons, carts, with their bundles tied about their persons and piled up and mixed in among their wholly heads with their white teeth and the whites of their eyes shining, all grinning, or singing, playing, and shouting, they presented the most wonderful appearance imaginable. Sometimes there would be a whole family on one mule or old horse every carriage, wagon, buggy and cart was filled to overflowing, besides the more able bodied men who marched along, all going to 'Glory Halleluiah' [sic] and making all sorts of characteristic remarks, singing all sorts of plantation melodies.
I never before during my life saw such a medly or motley crowd."  Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 341.

166 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 342; Surby, Grierson Raids, 126-27.


170 J. C. Pemberton to S. Cooper, August 2, 1863, Ibid., 255.

171 Bearss, "Colonel Streight Drives for the Western and Atlantic Railroad," 133.


175 Badeau, Military History of U. S. Grant, I, 189. Confederate President Jefferson Davis penned a totally different, but equally revealing, assessment of the psychologically shattering Union cavalry raid. "Among the
expeditions for pillage and arson," in Davis' opinion, "this stands prominent for savage outrages against defenseless women and children, constituting a record alike unworthy a soldier and a gentleman." Jefferson Davis, *Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government*, 2 vols. (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1881), II, 399. Accounts of participants, as well as of southern eyewitness, indicate that Grierson personally took pains to limit destruction to government property and that, largely as a consequence, indiscriminate acts of pillage were held to a minimum throughout the raid. Nevertheless, incidents such as the burning of a residence on the third day of the expedition and drunkenness, theft and destruction of private buildings at Hazelhurst, suggest that Federal officers were not always willing or able to exercise tight control over their high-spirited troops. While hardly so widespread as President Davis relates, it is undeniable that some looting and relatively minor damage to private property did occur, despite Colonel Grierson's stern prohibition against lawless behavior. Private Henry T. Johns of the 49th Massachusetts Infantry observed that upon the arrival of the Yankee raiders at Baton Rouge, "not a few sported watches and various articles of jewelry." Johns, *Life with the Forty-Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers*, 213.


177 Richardson, *The Secret Service*, 358; Sir Arthur James Lyon Fremantle, *Three Months in the Southern States, April-June, 1863* (Edinburgh and London: W. Blackburn & Sons, 1863), 83. Enroute from Natchez to Vicksburg, Fremantle recorded: "we passed the night in the verandah of an old farmer. He told us that Grierson's Yankee raid had captured him about three weeks ago. He thought the Yankees were about 1500 strong; they took all good horses, leaving their worn-out ones behind. They destroyed railroad, Government property, and arms, and paroled all men, both old and young, but they committed no barbarities. In this manner they traversed all the State of Mississippi without meeting any resistance. They were fine looking men from the Northwestern states." *Ibid.*., 101-102.

178 *Jackson Daily Mississippian*, May 7, 1863.


Mobile Tribune as quoted in Jackson Daily Mississippian, May 17, 1863.


Ibid.

The exuberant reception given Grierson's exploit in the northern press is discussed in Brown, Grierson's Raid, 222-25. For an example of the ludicrous extremes to which the hero worship bestowed upon the raiders was carried see, Allen M. Scott, Chronicles of the Rebellion from the Beginning of the Same until the fall of Vicksburg (Cincinnati: C. F. Vent & Co., 1864), 288-91. The Reverend Scott sets the tale of the cavalry raid in biblical verse. Even today, Grierson's expedition inspires dramatic treatment. In 1956, the raid formed the basis for a novel by Harold Sinclair, The Horse Soldiers (New York: Harper & Bros., 1956), which was eventually released as a motion picture under the same title. See, John Lee Mahin and Martin Rackin, "The Horse Soldiers or Grierson's Raid," Civil War History, V (June 1959), 183-87.

George A. Hepworth, The Whip, Hoe and Sword; or, the Gulf-Department in '63 (Boston: Walker, Wise & Co., 1864), 285-86.


Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 348. Captain Henry C. Forbes of Company B, 7th Illinois Cavalry, suddenly collapsed with a high fever following the raiders' arrival at Baton Rouge. Captain Forbes' brother recalled that Henry "was taken with cautious violence to the post hospital, tearing the curtains from the ambulance on the way, and swearing we might kill him if we would but we could never take him prisoner." S. A. Forbes, "Grierson's Cavalry Raid," 120; H. C. Forbes to Flavilla Forbes Bliss, May 23, 1863, Forbes Collection.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 6, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

193 New York Times, May 18, 1863; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 348-57; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 6, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; New York Herald, May 18, 1863, copy in Ibid., Roll 5. Colonel Prince no doubt angered some of the New England soldiers in the audience when he took this occasion to boast that "we have come from the West to your assistance, to put down treason." New York Times, May 18, 1863. D. Brown, Grierson's Raid, 231-32 erroneously attributes the remark to Grierson.

194 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 6, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Harper's Weekly, June 6, 1863; Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, June 6, 1863.

195 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 9, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.
CHAPTER V

"I am determined to go north"

When Major General Nathaniel P. Banks arrived at New Orleans on December 14, 1862, he turned his back upon an unbroken succession of military defeats in the East.¹ In assigning the forty-seven-year-old ex-speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives to replace another politician-general, Benjamin F. Butler, as commander of the Department of the Gulf, President Lincoln took particular pains to outline the precise nature of Federal priorities in the west. "The President," General-in-Chief Halleck impressed upon Banks, "regards the opening of the Mississippi River as the first and most important of all our military and naval operations, and it is hoped that you will not lose a moment in accomplishing it." The strategy hammered out by the high command in Washington drew heavily upon the Anaconda policy submitted by a doddering General Winfield Scott during the first weeks of the war. While a combined land and water expedition moved down the Mississippi from Cairo and Memphis under General Grant's command, General Banks and Admiral David G. Farragut would ascend the river to complete a pincers movement against the Confederate stronghold at Vicksburg. The line of division between Banks' Gulf
Department and Grant's Department of the Tennessee was deliberately being left unresolved for the moment. Once the two Union armies effected a junction before Vicksburg, however, Banks, as the senior major general, would presumably assume overall command.\textsuperscript{2}

In the winter and spring of 1862-1863, Confederate forces effectively controlled a 150-mile stretch of the Mississippi River, with defenses anchored in the north at Vicksburg and at Port Hudson in the south. Between these fortified positions, the mighty "Father of Waters" traced a serpentine course, occasionally beneath the shadow of towering bluffs. Some thirty miles above Baton Rouge, the river turned suddenly eastward, only to curve sharply back toward the south after a short distance. Within the angle formed by the Mississippi's capricious bend, and extending for more than a mile from north to south, the eastern bank of the river formed an almost perpendicular wall, rising to a height of eighty feet above the low-water mark. Upon a ravine-gashed plateau atop these imposing bluffs stood the nondescript village of Port Hudson--"a church, a schoolhouse, a railroad depot, and half a dozen sheds"--nestled within an irregular semi-circle of low hills which arched for perhaps seven miles, touching the river above and below the town. Steamboat landings offered silent testimony to a more tranquil and prosperous time when cotton, salt, sugar and tobacco arrived at the port via the Port Hudson & Clinton
Railroad, or over wagon roads which connected the riverfront community with the southeastern Louisiana towns of Jackson, Clinton, Bayou Sara and Baton Rouge. 3

It hardly required a trained engineer to appreciate the defensive possibilities afforded by the rugged terrain surrounding Port Hudson, and in July, 1862, preliminary plans were drawn up for fortification of the town. The original design envisioned a line some eight miles in length, manned by 35,000 troops and bristling with seventy or more pieces of artillery. This ambitious concept was almost immediately abandoned as impractical, and in late summer work commenced in earnest upon a modified system of defense. Under Brigadier General W. N. R. Beall's direction, "a continuous indented or angular line of parapet and ditch" was plotted to curve from a point on the river some two and one-half miles below Port Hudson, across "a broken series of ridges, plateaus and ravines," to Sandy Creek, one mile northeast of town. From the creek, the line arced back toward the Mississippi for a short distance and terminated in the impenetrable canebrakes and wooded marshes which bounded Port Hudson on the north. This contracted arrangement of redoubts and entrenchments, stretching some four and one-half miles, could adequately be garrisoned by between 15,000 and 18,000 troops. Eleven batteries, mounting thirty guns, would pose a formidable obstacle against amphibious assault along one and a half miles of
riverfront. At the time of Banks' arrival at New Orleans, however, less than 5,000 Confederate soldiers held the still largely unfortified ground atop the bluffs. Immediate and decisive action on the part of the new Federal commander in Louisiana might well have sealed the doom of Port Hudson with relatively little effusion of blood.

Fortunately for the sparse defenders who manned the unfinished works above Baton Rouge, General Banks confronted pressing problems upon assuming command of the Department of the Gulf which forestalled an assault upon the Confederate garrison along the Mississippi for several months. "My command, upon my arrival at New Orleans, with the troops that accompanied me, was less than 30,000," Banks reminded his superiors in Washington. "There were fifty-six regiments, of which twenty-two regiments were enlisted for nine months only, the terms of service of a part expiring in May, a part in July, and all in August. None of the regiments or men had seen service, and few had even handled a musket." On December 16, the department commander dispatched Brigadier General Cuvier Grover and 10,000 men, representing the total effective force then at New Orleans, upstream under instructions to re-occupy Baton Rouge. The only other offensive operation which Banks felt justified in mounting before spring consisted of a forlorn three-company contingent of the 42nd Massachusetts Infantry, under the command of Colonel Isaac S. Burrell. Departing New Orleans for
Galveston Island in late December, Burrell's tiny army was swallowed up whole by alert Texans in the dawn of the new year.  

As General Grover marched effortlessly into Baton Rouge, and while the hapless Burrell trudged off to Confederate prison, General Banks shifted his attention to the raw ninety-day recruits who lay in camp in and about the Crescent City. An order issued from the War Department on January 5, 1863, designated the troops serving in the Department of the Gulf the XIX Army Corps and named Banks as the corps' commander. Transforming this hollow decree into a military reality required that the department commander meticulously build an army from the bottom up. But, by painstakingly selecting and combining brigades and regiments, "so as to mingle the veterans with the raw levies, and to furnish, in sight of seniority, the more capable and experienced of colonels as brigade commanders," Banks patiently molded the soldiers of the Gulf Department into a semblance of military order.  

With the approach of spring, the Union commander in Louisiana proudly reported that the XIX Corps had been organized into four divisions of three brigades each: the First Division commanded by Major General Christopher C. Augur, the Second under Brigadier General Thomas W. Sherman, the Third under Brigadier General William H. Emory, and the Fourth under Brigadier General Cuvier Grover. On paper, Banks could marshal almost 40,000 troops for an assault upon Port Hudson.
It was left to the navy, however, to initiate operations against the Rebel stronghold on the lower Mississippi. As early as November, 1862, Admiral Farragut had expressed an eagerness to pass with his fleet beneath the bluffs at Port Hudson. But both General Butler and his successor had consistently declined to assist the navy in an attack upon what they believed to be a heavily fortified position, manned by anywhere between 15,000 and 20,000 Confederates. 12

Finally, the capture of the Federal gunboat Queen of the West, and the destruction of the Indianola near the mouth of the Red River by Rebel forces under Major General Richard Taylor, forced Banks' hand, and on February 28, 1863, the army commander notified General Halleck of his intention to cooperate with the navy in an attempt to re-establish Union control over the river above Port Hudson. 13

On March 7, General Banks marched north to Baton Rouge with between 15,000 and 17,000 men of Augur's, Emory's and Grover's divisions. According to prearranged plan, Banks moved out of Baton Rouge on the thirteenth and by the evening of March 14, was poised in the rear of Port Hudson with 12,000 troops. At five o'clock that evening, a dispatch arrived from Admiral Farragut announcing that he was stationed with the fleet below the Confederate defenses. Banks, however, was unprepared for the admiral's unilateral decision to discard the original plan to run the Port Hudson batteries "in the gray of the morning" and instead
to commence the fleet's movement at eight o'clock that very evening. Poor roads and damaged or non-existent bridges rendered army cooperation impossible on such short notice. Consequently, Banks stood idle through the evening and early morning hours of March 14-15, listening to the distant exchange of artillery fire which cost the navy one first-line warship destroyed and a number of gunboats seriously crippled.\textsuperscript{14} Farragut himself termed the naval action at Port Hudson "a disaster."\textsuperscript{15} The admiral's son, who served as signal officer aboard his father's flagship, the Hartford, however, passed a more positive judgment upon the navy's performance. "Although Farragut spoke of the action at Port Hudson as a disaster to his fleet," Loyall Farragut wrote, "yet it had resulted in placing two powerful vessels where they could blockade pretty effectually the mouth of the Red River, thus preventing the rebels from either bringing supplies down that great stream, or sending reinforcements up it to join the army of General Dick Taylor."\textsuperscript{16} It was an assessment in which General Banks enthusiastically concurred.\textsuperscript{17}

On March 25, Banks issued orders to take up the line of march toward Brashear City (present-day Morgan City) on the Atchafalaya River in southwestern Louisiana.\textsuperscript{18} Convinced that Port Hudson could not be taken by direct assault, the Federal commander had decided to cross west of the Mississippi, where he might ascend the navigable waterways
of the Atchafalaya and Bayou Teche as far as Alexandria, and possibly even to Shreveport, on the Red River. Federal occupation of the fertile Red River valley, Banks argued, would seal off Port Hudson's source of supplies and eventually compel the evacuation of the Confederate garrison. The prospect of removing General Taylor's army as a threat to communications with New Orleans and, incidentally, of seizing anywhere between $2,000,000 and $5,000,000 in livestock, provisions and cotton afforded strong additional incentives for the proposed invasion of the Teche country.\textsuperscript{19}

With 16,000 well-equipped Federal troops arrayed against Taylor's rag-tag army of not more than 4,000 Louisianans and Texans, Banks encountered scant resistance as he advanced at an almost leisurely pace through western Louisiana.\textsuperscript{20} On April 9, the 12,000 troops of Weitzel's and Emory's divisions crossed Berwick Bay and, on the following day, commenced a movement up the Teche against the Confederate garrison at Camp Bisland. It was General Banks' intention to employ a pincers movement against the modest enemy stronghold below Franklin. He therefore dispatched Grover with 4,000 men by transport, via Grand Lake and Indian Bend, to fall upon the Rebel flank and rear. Following a hard-fought battle during the daylight hours of April 13, Taylor quietly evacuated the Confederate position under cover of darkness and commenced a cautious retreat up the Teche. On the morning of April 14, the Rebel commander
encountered Grover's force at Irish Bend, in the vicinity of Franklin. In another hotly contested fight, the Confederate rearguard succeeded in occupying Grover until mid-afternoon. When the smoke of battle cleared, an embarrassed Union general painfully observed that his troops had been pinned down by an enemy detachment barely one-fifth their own strength, while Taylor made good his escape. 21

On April 20, General Banks occupied Opelousas. The road now lay open for the final push toward Alexandria, and, on April 25, the Confederates commenced the evacuation of that important point on the lower Red River. Banks, however, chose to linger for more than two weeks in central Louisiana, while he methodically stripped the region of cotton, sugar and molasses, along with thousands of head of cattle, mules and horses. Not until May 5, did the Federal commander demonstrate any sign of renewed movement. Seventy-six hours later, Union troops finally entered Alexandria. 22

Thus far, communication between the two Federal armies enjoyed to cooperate in wrestling the Mississippi River from Confederate control had been all but non-existent. On March 23, General Grant, operating before Vicksburg, had attempted to open correspondence with General Banks through Admiral Farragut and General Augur, suggesting that "I can send a force of, say, 20,000 effective men to co-operate with General Banks on Port Hudson. This force certainly would easily reduce Port Hudson and maintain a position on
high land near enough to Vicksburg until they could be re-
enforced from here sufficiently to operate against this
city."\textsuperscript{23} Grant's generous offer of assistance, however,
failed to reach the commander of the Gulf Department until
April 21.

Banks responded eagerly to his colleague's suggestion
and from Opelousas informed the Federal commander at Vicks-
burg that "we can co-operate with you in any manner you
suggest," strongly urging a junction of the two columns via
"the Atchafalaya, Grand River and Plaquemine Bayou to Baton
Rouge."\textsuperscript{24} But in the month-long interval between Grant's
message and Banks' reply, prospects for cooperation between
the two Union commanders had seriously deteriorated. Even
as Banks penned his response, Grant was launching a full-
scale assault upon Grand Gulf, designed to take Vicksburg
from the rear. Banks himself, meanwhile, was succumbing
to the lure of vast quantities of cotton and provisions
lying untouched in central Louisiana and along the fertile
Red River valley. Both generals would need all the troops
at their disposal for the hard campaigns ahead.

While the weary Illinois troopers from the Army of
the Tennessee congratulated themselves upon their astounding
success at eluding the enemy in Mississippi, Colonel
Grierson unexpectedly found himself and command hopelessly
trapped within the Department of the Gulf; caught in a
tug-of-war between General Banks and Grant. On May 10,
Grant informed General Banks that "Grierson's cavalry would be of immense service to me now, and if at all practicable for him to join me I would like to have him do it at once." Banks, however, who had been complaining since mid-January that "the almost total deficiency of cavalry in the department renders us almost helpless either for offensive or defensive operations," harbored no intention of allowing the lately-arrived horsemen from Tennessee to slip from his grasp. Department returns for April, 1863, showed a scant 815 cavalrmen present for duty in Louisiana, consisting of detached battalions of the 1st Louisiana, 2nd Rhode Island, 2nd Massachusetts, 14th New York and Edmund J. Davis' 1st Texas Cavalry. With Grierson's 900 additional troopers at Alexandria, an enthusiastic Banks informed Washington, "we could capture the Legislature that commences its session this month at Shreveport or compel their adjournment to Texas. I shall invite him [Grierson] to do so, assuring him in that event he may return, by way of Black River, through Arkansas, Illinois, and Kentucky, to Tennessee." 

Although unwilling to order Grierson's return to Grant's army, an alarmed General-in-Chief Halleck reacted instantaneously to the suggestion that Banks might turn his back upon the Mississippi in order to advance still farther up the Red River. "The opening of the Mississippi River,"
Halleck thundered, "has been continually presented as the first and most important object to be attained. Operations up the Red River, toward Texas, or toward Alabama, are of only secondary importance, to be undertaken after we get possession of the river, and as circumstances may then require." Grierson's veteran troopers, quietly bivouacked just thirty miles below Port Hudson, loomed even larger as Banks' attention snapped sharply back to the Confederate defenses guarding the river.

On the evening of May 12, Banks politely declined General Grant's request that the two Federal commanders join forces behind Vicksburg, on the grounds that the XIX Corps lacked water transportation. At the same time, he assured Grant that "I have written Colonel Grierson that you desire him to join you, and have added my own request to yours." Privately, however, Banks remained determined to retain the Illinoisians for service in the Gulf Department.

On the same day that Banks promised Grierson's return to the Department of the Tennessee, Colonel Nathan A. M. Dudley, commanding the 3rd Brigade of Augur's division, left camp at Baton Rouge pursuant to orders issued from department headquarters on the previous day. At the head of a large infantry force, Dudley cautiously advanced in the direction of Port Hudson. Approaching Cypress Bayou over dust-covered roads and under a blazing sun, Captain John F. Godfrey's forward pickets collided with a body of enemy
scouts presumably still on the lookout for Grierson's raiders. Returning the Rebel fire, Godfrey's Louisiana horsemen, supported by an artillery piece, drove the Confederate cavalry back almost four miles before breaking off contact. Dudley, wary of revealing his true strength before the arrival of Grierson's men, posted the 50th Massachusetts, with a section of artillery, at White's Bayou bridge and judiciously withdrew the bulk of his command to Merritt's plantation, where he encamped for the night.31

Colonel Grierson, accompanied by five hundred of the "most effective portion" of his mounted force, reached Merritt's plantation after dark on May 12. "Boots and Saddles" sounded at five o'clock the following morning, and the troopers of the 6th and 7th Illinois Cavalry swung briskly into their saddles to lead the Federal advance along the Bayou Sara road toward the Newport crossroads. Behind the celebrated horsemen rode Colonel Charles J. Paine at the head of his own 2nd Louisiana regiment, escorting the four guns of Arnold's battery and followed in close succession by Colonel William W. Bullock's 30th Massachusetts Infantry, Colonel Gabriel T. Harrower's 161st New York and six companies of the 174th New York commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin F. Gott. Captain Godfrey's company of Louisiana cavalry closed up the rear of the bluecoated column, while four companies of the 174th New York remained on guard over baggage and supplies at Merritt's plantation.
"Compelled," in Dudley's estimation, "to march through the heat of the day over the most dusty [sic] roads it has ever been my fortune to travel, the dust ground to powder by the travel of nearly 1,000 horses," the Federal infantry trudged heavily behind Grierson's troopers to within a mile of the first Port Hudson turnoff. As the blueclad horsemen emerged onto the plain, a heavy fire erupted from enemy cavalry posted in the distance. While the mounted advance exchanged shots with the rebel pickets, Grierson pressed on toward the crossroads. At the cutoff, the colonel learned that 900 Confederate infantry and two 12-pounder batteries had traveled over the road during the previous night and had taken position about a quarter of a mile beyond the next intersection. Cautiously, Grierson instructed a battalion of his Illinoisians to feel its way forward. Colonel Dudley, meanwhile, stationed infantry guards at each of the crossroads separating the Union column from its supply camp.

Gradually converging carbine and musket fire greeted the further advance of the Illinois troopers. But the weight of Federal numbers plainly tipped the balance as Grierson's men steadily forced a thin line of Rebel vedettes back to within two and one-half miles of Port Hudson. When a courier bearing instructions from General Augur finally halted the cavalry's forward movement, the Union horse had already pushed to within a half mile of the Port Hudson & Clinton Railroad. Advised of the division commander's limited objectives, and
realizing that the vanguard of Dudley's foot column had stalled at the crossroads, Grierson held the main body of his brigade in reserve while Captain Alonzo Pierce continued ahead with Co. A of the 6th Illinois Cavalry. Striking the nearby railroad within sight of the enemy's guns, Captain Pierce swiftly tore up several hundred yards of vital track and telegraph line connecting Port Hudson with the interior. Their work of destruction accomplished, Grierson's troopers ran an ineffectual gauntlet of enemy musketry and arrived unscathed in the midst of the Union infantry.

Colonel Dudley, satisfied that he had carried out his instructions as completely as possible without undue risk to his command, returned to Merritt's plantation during the mid-afternoon. The necessity of placing guards at the seven or eight crossroads intersecting the infantry's line of march, he explained, had so reduced his force that he deemed it hazardous to advance beyond the edge of the plain, some four miles east of the Confederate earthworks. Consequently, neither he nor Grierson had been able to carry out Augur's order to gather "full information as to the strength and character of the forces on the Clinton road." Dudley, therefore, requested further instructions clarifying whether the general expected a renewed movement upon Rebel lines of communication with Clinton. 32

May 14 found Ben Grierson back in the saddle. Accompanied by 350 troopers and a section of Captain Smith's Woodruff
battery, the Illinois colonel rode out to the Clinton plank road near White's Bayou. Placing Port Hudson at their backs, the Yankee cavalry advanced in the direction of Clinton until, about one and a half miles from Red Wood Creek, the bluecoated column once again encountered Rebel pickets. Taken from the rear, the surprised butternuts wheeled about and made a spirited stand. Carbines, however, proved a poor match against the tiny Union artillery, and a few rounds of two-pound shot easily cleared the approaches to the Red Wood Bridge. Safely upon the east bank of the creek, Grierson halted his command and instructed a single battalion to press forward with two mounted troops in close support of a pair of dismounted companies. When the vanguard collided with an almost equal enemy force posted a mile beyond the bridge, Grierson judiciously broke off contact and reported back to Merritt's plantation.33

Ten days had scarcely seemed sufficient time in which to recover from the back-breaking and nerve-wracking ordeal of a 600-mile raid behind enemy lines in Mississippi, and Colonel Grierson openly expressed his eagerness to rest and re-equip his command before undertaking a march to join Grant at Vicksburg. At an evening conference with Generals Banks and Augur, on May 14, the western cavalryman pressed his superiors in the Gulf Department for permission to lead his troopers back to Baton Rouge. Nathan Dudley, however, argued forcefully for the retention of the experienced
Illinois horsemen. Exposed and understrength, the infantry colonel hinted at disastrous consequences should he be deprived of virtually his entire mounted force. "I trust the commanding officer will not reduce the force under my command," he petitioned General Augur. "I have to guard the Springfield Landing, Bayou Sara, and Clinton Roads, and I do not think I have a man to spare." Besides, Dudley persuasively explained, "the Illinois troops can recruit here better, in my opinion, than at Baton Rouge." With Colonel Prince still not fully recovered from the debilitating effects of the late expedition, Grierson turned over command of the cavalry at Merritt's plantation to Lieutenant Colonel Loomis and returned alone to division headquarters.34

Arriving at Baton Rouge late that same Friday evening, Colonel Grierson boarded the steamboat Nassau on the following Sunday afternoon in the company of General Augur. At New Orleans, the newly famed cavalry officer dined and conferred with General Banks and Admiral Farragut, listening attentively as the army and naval commanders coordinated strategy for the impending campaign against Port Hudson. The warmth of fame, the confidence of superiors, and the languid charms of the Old World city slowly eased the colonel's taut nerves. Although still anxious to report with his command to General Grant, Grierson returned upriver on May 20, seemingly resigned to his fate as temporary prisoner in the Department of the Gulf. "I very much desire
to join Genl. Grant," he explained to Alice. "It will seem more like home to me there, although I am well treated here and well pleased with Genl. Banks." After his recent examination of the Confederate defenses along the river, the colonel could at least reassure himself that his detention under Banks' command would extend to no more than a few weeks at most. "The combined force which will be brought besides the fleet," he estimated will be about 20,000 men, and the Rebels have not more than 7000 & I think they have not over 5,000 effective men. My opinion is that the place can be taken in less than five days, if it is properly managed. The whole force will then move up the River & cooperate with Genl. Grant against Vicksburgh [sic]. ... I hope to join Genl. Grant inside of Ten days." Six weeks of dust, heat, monotony, mutiny and the constant stench of death would demonstrate to the Illinois cavalryman the human expense of that costly gap between "can" and "will" which seemed to open whenever Nathaniel P. Banks represented the critical factor in any military equation.

On the same day that Colonel Grierson departed New Orleans, Christopher C. Augur started up river with the remainder of his division to join Colonel Dudley behind Port Hudson. Included in General Augur's command were Dudley's 3rd Brigade, Colonel Edward P. Chapin's 1st Brigade, Grierson's 6th and 7th Illinois Cavalry, Godfrey's squadron of the 1st Louisiana Cavalry, two sections of
Lieutenant Jacob Rawles' battery, Captain Pythagoras E.
Holcomb's Vermont battery, and a single section of the 18th
New York Artillery under the command of Sergeant D. W.
McConnell—in all, approximately 8,000 men. While the main
Federal column under Banks moved upon the Rebel stronghold,
Augur was instructed to place his troops in a position to
block any attempted evacuation of Port Hudson and, at the
same time, to cover the disembarkation of Sherman's division
at Springfield Landing, below the city. Eventually, Augur
would link up with Banks' advance, marching south from
Bayou Sara.37

At six o'clock on the morning of May 21, Colonel Dudley's
brigade moved forward under orders to occupy the intersection
of the Plains Store and Bayou Sara roads, thereby seizing
"the enemy's line of retreat."38 About three miles from the
two-story frame building known locally as the Plains Store,39
Dudley's cavalry advance collided with a mixed force of
Rebel horse, infantry and light artillery commanded by
Colonel Frank P. Powers of the 14th Arkansas. A brisk
artillery duel lasting a full half hour afforded Dudley time
to deploy his troops and guns along the lip of the woods
opening onto the plain. Threatened with encirclement on both
flanks, Colonel Powers at length fell back. As Augur
approached the field with the remainder of his division,
Dudley advanced and occupied the open ground surrounding
the Plains Store.
When word of the sharp action at the crossroads reached Fort Hudson about noon, the garrison's New York born commander, Major General Franklin Gardner, immediately dispatched Colonel W. R. Miles with 400 infantry and Captain R. M. Boone's Louisiana battery to Colonel Powers' relief. Marching east along the Plains Store road to within two and one-half miles of its intersection with the Baton Rouge-Bayou Sara thoroughfare, Colonel Miles encountered Dudley's advance cavalry pickets and immediately opened fire, emptying three saddles and forcing the remainder of the bluecoated horsemen to retire. In the near distance, Miles could observe Companies A, K and L of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, under Major Charles Whitsit, drawn up in line of battle. Whitsit, however, swiftly retreated under a hail of well-directed artillery fire.

With two companies under Major James Coleman deployed to the right and three companies under Colonel F. B. Brand positioned on the left, the Rebel infantry emerged from the woods and advanced across the plain. The as yet only partially formed Union line extended roughly along the Bayou Sara road, with Dudley's brigade supporting Holcombe's guns on the right while Chapin's brigade, together with Rawles' battery, anchored the Federal left flank. Miles' attack caught Augur moving into position. The 48th Massachusetts, struck by the Rebel onslaught while posted in column on either side of the Plains Store road, crumbled,
the panic-stricken New Englanders pouring back in confusion through the advancing ranks of the 49th Massachusetts. Major Coleman, guiding his greycoated infantry through an apple orchard, suddenly noticed that the disorganized retreat of the Massachusetts regiment left Lieutenant William B. Beck's section of Light Battery G, 5th U. S. Artillery, exposed on the plain. Calling to Boone's Louisiana gunners for support, Coleman fell hard upon the flank of Beck's position, compelling the Yankee artillerists to abandon their gun as they scrambled to safety.

Rebel audacity and courage, however, could not long prevail in the face of overwhelming Union numbers. Ordinarily the Confederate commander might have derived encouragement from the knowledge that Colonel John L. Logan's 600 greyclad infantry and cavalry were poised along the Bayou Sara road in Augur's rear. But when Frank Powers had called upon Logan for assistance, his fellow Arkansas had refused to sacrifice his small command in what appeared a hopeless enterprise. Even without the prospect of reinforcement, Miles continued his vigorous assault upon the Union line for nearly an hour, until he found himself outflanked and in imminent danger of being surrounded. Without hesitation, Miles sent Lieutenant E. P. Harmanson's section of Boone's battery racing up the Plains Store road to take a position commanding the Yankee right. Unlimbering his guns, Harmanson unleashed a deadly enfilading fire into the bluecoated ranks,
checking the Federal advance and gaining time for Colonel
Miles to gather up his wounded before commencing an
orderly withdrawal toward the Port Hudson fortifications.

Although brief, the fight at the Plains Store had been
fearously waged, particularly on the part of the ludicrously
outnumbered Confederates. The artillery on the Federal
right, Colonel Dudley reported, had poured 45 rounds of
solid shot, 22 rounds of spherical case, 58 rounds of shell,
and 8 rounds of canister into the aggressive Rebel infantry.
According to Colonel Miles' calculations, the Yankee guns
had exacted a terrible toll. Eighty-nine Confederate soldiers
were listed as killed, wounded and missing at Plains Store--
nearly one-quarter of the assaulting force. Dudley, mean-
while, numbered the Union casualties at 100; most of them
drawn from among the 116th New York regiment, which had borne
the brunt of the rebel attack following the disorderly retreat
of the 48th Massachusetts.

Colonel Grierson, who had remained behind in Baton
Rouge to complete his report of the raid through Mississippi,
rejoined Augur's command on the day following the skirmish
at Plains Store. On May 23, the colonel left camp to lead
his troopers one-half mile north of the Clinton Railroad,
where he established contact with the vanguard of General
Banks' column. The department commander, Grierson learned,
had landed unopposed with the forward elements of Grover's
division at Bayou Sara at two o'clock on the previous morning.
Informed of the fight at Plains Store, Grover had pushed on through a violent rainstorm until reaching Thompson's Creek, where he discovered that the alarm had passed. General Halbert Paine, meanwhile, had bivouacked on the Perkins plantation, one mile in Grover's rear. Finally, General Sherman had placed his division ashore at Springfield Landing during the daylight hours of the twenty-second and by nightfall was in position on Augur's left. As the sun rose on the morning of May 23, to be greeted by the "glorious" news of General Grant's investment of Vicksburg, the Rebel garrison at Port Hudson was itself nearly surrounded. 42

Ironically, had General Banks delayed his advance upon Port Hudson by only a few days, he might well have walked into the river fortress without resistance. During the first weeks in May, Confederate authorities in the west seriously pondered the abandonment of defenses on the lower Mississippi and the transfer of the Port Hudson garrison to the more immediately threatened Vicksburg fortifications. On May 4, General Pemberton instructed Gardner to leave Beall in command of the artillery and a token force of infantry at Port Hudson and to march rapidly to the aid of Vicksburg with 5,000 troops. The brigades of Brigadier Generals Albert Rust and Abraham Buford departed for Mississippi immediately upon the receipt of Pemberton's anxious order. On May 5, General John Gregg's brigade moved out toward Brookhaven, and three days later General S. B. Maxey abandoned Port Hudson, followed closely by Miles' Legion.
Shortly after Colonel Miles' departure, General Gardner and his staff took leave of General Beall and rode out to overtake the troops enroute to Vicksburg. 43

General Pemberton, meanwhile, had experienced a dramatic change of heart. Upon reaching Osyka, a surprised Gardner was greeted by another telegram from the department commander insisting that Gardner "return with 2,000 troops to Port Hudson, and hold it to the last." The President, Pemberton explained, "says both places [Vicksburg as well as Port Hudson] must be held." 44 Dutifully, a perplexed General Gardner marched his command back to Port Hudson, where he immediately initiated preparations to withstand a long siege. 45

John C. Pemberton, however, was not the only Confederate leader with views upon the question of whether to hold Port Hudson. While General Grant completed his concentration at Port Gibson and commenced his advance upon the Vicksburg defenses, the reactions of General Pemberton and of his superior, Joseph E. Johnston, revealed a shocking lack of communication and a debilitating division of opinion within the Confederate high command in the west. Clearly, Joe Johnston did not share his subordinate's understanding that President Davis desired that both Rebel strongholds on the Mississippi River be maintained. On May 19, the over-all commander in the west penned a note to General Gardner explaining that "Lieutenant-General Pemberton has been
compelled to fall back to Vicksburg and abandon Haynes' Bluff, so that your position is no longer valuable. It is important, also, that all the troops in the department should be concentrated as soon as possible. Evacuate Port Hudson forthwith, and move with your troops toward Jackson, to join other troops which I am uniting. Bring all the field pieces that you have, with their ammunition and means of transportation; heavy guns and their ammunition had better be destroyed, as well as the other property you may be unable to remove." Banks' untimely arrival in the rear of Port Hudson thus forestalled any attempt on General Gardner's part to comply with Johnson's evacuation order and condemned both sides to a long, deadly siege.

On May 24, General Banks cautiously advanced to within a half mile of Port Hudson's outer defenses and carefully deployed his divisions along a curved line almost eight miles in length, "the flanks touching the river above and below the doomed place." Thomas W. Sherman moved into position on the Union left, resting the left flank of his division on the Mississippi River. On Sherman's right, C. C. Augur extended his line, under cover of woods, across the Plains Store road. Cuvier. Grover stood firmly entrenched athwart the Jackson road northeast of town, with the divisions of Halbert Paine, Godfrey Weitzel and William Dwight completing the extreme right flank of the Federal line. Grierson's cavalry, for the time being, remained attached to General
Augur's command. Nine gunboats and a mortar flotilla swinging at anchor in the river above and below the city completed the investment. 48

While the infantry marched into position and exchanged ineffectual shots with the enemy, Grierson's cavalry found ample employment behind the Union lines. On May 24, Colonel Grierson personally led two hundred men of the 6th and 7th Illinois Cavalry north to Jackson in East Feliciana Parish. Riding unopposed into the small community, the Illinois troopers easily rounded up 150 prisoners, including a captain on the staff of General Hamilton Bee. 49

Later that same day, or early on the following morning, Colonel Prince appeared at cavalry headquarters with a scheme to capture two Rebel steamers moored in Alligator Bayou, north of Port Hudson. Grierson, however, firmly rejected the colonel's plan as both useless and unnecessarily hazardous. As Adjutant Woodward explained to the enterprising officer, "the Colonel commanding thinks . . . it impossible to reach the boats. I was down the only road which could be found along Thompson's Creek, yesterday, and found the swamp, on both sides, impassable for man or beast. The Colonel wishes you to save the command, and rest men and horses as much as possible." 50

Undaunted by the veto of his immediate superior, Prince boldly decided to ignore Grierson's decision and to carry his plan directly to General Banks. Banks, concerned that, under cover of darkness, the Rebel garrison might slip out of its fortifications along the Bayou Sara road.
and utilize the steamers in Alligator Bayou to affect its escape hastily approved Prince's proposal and instructed the Illinois cavalryman to destroy the boats. The elated junior colonel, "careful not to tell Gen. Grierson anything about it," set out immediately along the river road, accompanied by 200 troopers of his own 7th Illinois regiment and two infantry companies detached from the 31st Massachusetts Volunteers.

Grierson's first inkling of Prince's insubordination came as a section of the 1st Maine battery rolled through the cavalry camp to join the battalion of 7th Illinois cavalry already on the road to Thompson's Creek. Incensed at his young subordinate's deceit and flagrant disobedience of orders, the cavalry commander halted Co. G of the 7th Illinois as it prepared to move out of camp and dispatched a mounted detail to overtake the errant officer with instructions to abort the mission and return immediately to brigade headquarters. Colonel Prince recalled that upon receipt of Grierson's strongly worded message, he simply "placed the order in my pocket, sent the escort back to Col. Grierson, and marched away to capture the steamboats if possible."

Fortunately for the commander of the 7th Illinois, fortune rode with him on that damp May morning in 1863. A dense fog blanketed the river and bayou, concealing the short ribbon of Union soldiers from the view of Rebel gunners manning the four 10-inch Blakely rifles which covered the steamboat landing from Port Hudson's upper battery. As he
approached Alligator Bayou, Prince could observe his twin prey at anchor in mid-stream. Forced to acknowledge the accuracy of Lieutenant Woodward's earlier assessment of the impossibility of reaching the boats through the deep and tangled marsh, the Yankee colonel carefully concealed his troops and brought his guns to bear upon the enemy vessels. With these dispositions completed, Prince hailed the nearest side-wheeler and, after a few nervous moments, succeeded in coaxing the watchman on board into sending a yawl ashore. Rowing out into the stream, the colonel and four or five of his officers clambered quietly onto the deck of the steamer *Starlight* and quickly overpowered the astonished guard. Brief minutes later, with the *Starlight* securely lashed to her nearby sister ship, the Union officers effortlessly seized control of the Rebel steamship *Red Chief*. Convinced that the captured vessels could be held by a small guard and run out into the Mississippi River in the event of danger, the colonel decided to disobey General Banks' order to destroy the boats. Leaving an infantry squad to watch over the steamer and some twenty-five prisoners, Edward Prince moved back with his cavalry to cover the enemy's northern escape route.  

Banks expressed much pleasure and relief at Colonel Prince's success in sealing off the Port Hudson garrison's sole avenue of escape and immediately signalled Commodore James S. Palmer, commanding the upper fleet, to train his
guns upon the road leading from the Confederate earthworks
to Thompson's Creek; ready to assist the 7th Illinois Cavalry
in deterring any attempted mass evacuation of the Rebel
works. At cavalry headquarters, however, Ben Grierson was
seething. Friction and jealousy had been mounting between
Prince and Grierson for some time, and Grierson viewed this
latest example of Prince's "unwarranted and unsoldierly"
conduct as a personal affront. "I [had] always treated him
with the utmost kindness and consideration," the brigade
commander explained, "and had, at a time when he was unpopular
among the officers of his regiment, strongly recommended him
for promotion to the colonelcy of his regiment. I then
believed, and so stated, that, in my judgment, Prince's edu-
cation, ingenuity, activity, and resolution, would enable
him to become a valuable officer to the Government, and had
therefore so commended him for advancement, to Governor
Yates. I was afterwards informed by some of Prince's college
classmates, that sooner or later his true inwardness would
be shown."53

Apparently, Grierson was induced to overlook the gun-
boat incident. But, several weeks later, when the cavalry
commander discovered that Colonel Prince had secretly
approached General Banks with a proposal to detach the
7th Illinois Cavalry from Grierson's brigade and to employ
the regiment as an independent mounted force within the
Department of the Gulf, the senior colonel exploded.
Assembling the staff and company officers of Prince's regiment, Grierson extracted a statement of their desire to return with the brigade to the Department of the Tennessee. When Prince next disobeyed an order, the commander of the Illinois cavalry fired off an angry dispatch to Banks' headquarters: "Colonel Prince has not reported with his command, in obedience to orders. I would respectfully recommend that he be placed under arrest for gross disobedience of orders." Once again, however, cool reason prevailed, and Prince was returned to Grierson's command with no official action taken in the matter. Still, Grierson cautioned, "that was not the last time ... that Col. Prince attempted to circumvent and deprecate officers, whom he could not rival."54

Shortly after dawn on the morning of May 27, 1863, the deafening roar of Federal artillery heralded the commencement of a general assault upon the Confederate works at Port Hudson. For twelve hours, wave after wave of blue-clad soldiers would ripple unevenly across the broken terrain in front of the Rebel fortifications, only to dash ineffectually against a solid wall of uncannily accurate rifle and cannon fire. At 2:15 p.m., after the failure of the attack upon the Confederate left, General Sherman, escorted by Captain Lucius B. Skinner and a detachment of the 6th Illinois Cavalry, emerged from near the center of the Union line in advance of his division. A galling crossfire of rebel
artillery ripped through the bluecoated ranks as they fit-
fully advanced across the open plain. Sherman and his
mounted escort, in their exposed forward position, fell
first prey to the deadly enemy guns. Caught amidst a dense
hail of iron pellets, the Federal division commander reeled
and pitched heavily to the ground, his leg shattered by
grapeshot. Three of Sherman's staff collapsed under the
same barrage. Among the Illinois cavalry, Captain Skinner's
horse suddenly shivered, then buckled, its fortunate rider
escaping with painful bruises and a scabbard cut in half by
a ball. Within moments, the Union assault was a confused
shambles. Twice the decimated Federals rallied and charged,
only to fall back again with horrendous losses.

When the sound of Sherman's advance reached Banks' ears,
the Union commander ordered Augur forward from his posi-
tion in front of Plains Store. Augur selected Colonel
Chapin's brigade to make the actual assault upon the Rebel
works from its position astride the Plains Store road.
Colonel Dudley's brigade, posted to the right of the road,
would form the reserve.

Quickly, Chapin deployed his troops. The 116th New
York stretched out to the right of the road leading into
Port Hudson, while the 49th Massachusetts occupied the
left flank of Chapin's brigade. The 48th Massachusetts, the
2nd Louisiana, and the reserve of the 21st Maine stood
in close support. Once these arrangements were completed,
a storming party composed of two hundred volunteers surged forward across Slaughter's Field under covering fire provided by skirmishers of the 21st Maine.

No sooner was the third Union assault of the day launched, than Augur's entire force found itself hopelessly pinned down under a murderous shower of shrapnel and minie balls. For a moment, the Massachusetts regiment faltered, threatening a gap in the Union center. Swiftly, Augur pencilled a desperate note to Colonel Grierson. "Send forward one of your regiments if you have no enemy in your immediate front." In prompt response, the cavalry dismounted and pressed forward to the assistance of the beleaguered 116th New York. But already it was clear that the attack upon the center of the Rebel lines had failed, and that the battle was irretrievably lost. As night fell upon the bloody field, General Banks grimly tallied the day's cost in Union lives—293 dead, 1,545 wounded, and 157 missing. Casual estimates placed the Confederate loss at somewhere between 250 and 275 men.

Despite the appalling carnage of May 27, Colonel Grierson remained optimistic that Port Hudson must soon succumb to the relentless pressure of overwhelming Federal numbers. A Massachusetts enlisted man, on the other hand, struck a considerably more realistic note as he analyzed the lessons to be learned from the indecisive and ill-advised assault:
The bloody result of May 27th, taught us that it is far easier to talk of taking a strongly fortified place than to do it; and we paid the dear penalty of that insane supineness which ever permitted such a fortress as Port Hudson to be built, when we could at one time have prevented it with scarcely more than a corporal's guard. 58

But Nathaniel Prentiss Banks was no more eager than his cavalry commander to accept the fateful implications of Federal failure on that dreadful spring day. Allowed time to bind its wounds, the XIX Corps would once again hurl itself against the tough Port Hudson defenses.

Unusually heavy casualties among the Union officer corps during the fighting on May 27, necessitated a major reorganization of the army of the Gulf Department. As a part of the organizational shake-up, "the cavalry, being of no further use to the divisions, but rather an encumbrance upon them, was massed, under Grierson, behind the centre, and assigned to the duty of guarding the rear, the depots, and the communications against the incursions of the Confederate cavalry, under Logan, known to be hovering between Port Hudson and Clinton, and supposed to be from 1,500 to 2,000 strong." 59 To accomplish these varied tasks, Colonel Grierson would have at his disposal some 1,700 men comprising the two regiments of his own brigade, augmented by the 14th New York Cavalry, the 3rd Massachusetts, and Captain Godfrey's battalion of the 2nd Louisiana Cavalry. 60

Grierson's first assignment was to remove the nagging
presence of Colonel John Logan's band, still lurking ominously in the rear of Banks' army. At five o'clock on the morning of June 3, the Union cavalry commander moved out along the Jackson road in the direction of Clinton, where he hoped to corner the bothersome Logan. Behind the Yankee colonel stretched a long column of 1,200 horsemen, consisting of the troopers of the 6th and 7th Illinois regiments, a pair of unassigned companies of Massachusetts cavalry, Godfrey's Louisiana battalion, two companies of Wisconsin mounted infantry, and a section of Nims' 2nd Massachusetts battery under the command of Lieutenant Richard B. Hall.61

As the mounted command neared Jackson, Grierson detached Captain Godfrey with two hundred Louisiana and Massachusetts troopers, under instructions to detour through the town while the main column continued directly toward Clinton. A swift dash through the modest Louisiana community resulted in the handy capture and parole of a number of stragglers and convalescents, after which Godfrey rejoined Grierson two miles out on the Clinton road. Pushing aside a Rebel line six miles outside of Clinton, the Federal cavalry marched confidently toward its objective.

Grierson, however, could ill-afford to relax his vigilance. Logan's sentries, fleeing eastward, soon alerted Colonel Thomas R. Stockdale, commanding a Confederate outpost on the Comite River, of the approach of the Union cavalry. Reacting quickly to the unexpected intelligence
of the proximity of a substantial body of Yankee horsemen, Stockdale frantically deployed his Mississippi battalion in a desperate effort to delay the Federal column long enough for a messenger to reach Colonel Logan's headquarters with news of Grierson's presence. A withering volley from Stockdale's concealed greyclads greeted the bluecoated vanguard as it felt its way toward the Comite River, one mile west of Clinton. A courier, meanwhile, raced into the Confederate encampment north of Clinton to interrupt a poker game in progress between Colonels Logan, Griffith, and Powers.

"Boots and Saddles" announced the hour of 3 p.m., as frenzied Rebel troopers poured headlong through the dusty streets leading toward the sound of earnest guns. Emerging from the western outskirts of Clinton, the lathered reinforcements found Stockdale's outnumbered battalion valiantly defending a strong post along Pretty Creek.

Logan's unheralded arrival upon the confused field of battle fully impressed Grierson with the precariousness of the position in which Stockdale's ambush had caught the Union cavalry. The dismounted men of the 4th Wisconsin and 7th Illinois regiments held positions along the west bank of Pretty Creek, supported by Lieutenant Hall's guns posted in clearings to the right and left of the road. A Battalion of the 7th Illinois Cavalry straddled a railroad on the right, while the two companies of Massachusetts Cavalry
under Lieutenant Solon A. Perkins\textsuperscript{62} attempted to secure the Federal left flank. Taken by surprise, Grierson had been forced to deploy his command in the midst of a swamp, upon terrain which severely restricted the Union field of maneuver. If hard-pressed, the Yankee cavalry's only avenue of retreat to the open plain in their rear lay along a slender corridor of high ground broken in five places by uncomfortably narrow bridges.

For a seemingly interminable hour and a half, Yankee and Rebel troopers exchanged heavy fire across the shallow stream separating the two forces. On the west bank, however, it was alarmingly apparent that the Union horsemen could not sustain a prolonged firefight. Just the day previous, Grierson had submitted a request to General Banks, explaining that almost one-half of his command was armed with Union and Smith carbines, for which there was no ammunition available in the Department of the Gulf. Could 500 Sharps' carbines be shipped immediately from New Orleans? Banks, of course, had not had time to act upon the colonel's requisition, and the deficiency in arms now began to tell as the battalion of the 7th Illinois Cavalry posted along the creek fell back, the ammunition for their Smith carbines depleted. Grierson rushed Captains Godfrey and Yeaton forward with their Louisiana companies to plug the gap in the Union line. But, it was obvious that the Federal troopers could not maintain their position for much longer. The opportunity to dislodge
the enemy from the east bank of the stream had long since passed.

Observing his opponent's plight, the Confederate commander carefully inched the ends of his line to the right and left, gradually overlapping the Union flanks. To counter Logan's enveloping movement, Grierson brought up the 6th Illinois from the rearguard. Battalions of the Sixth swiftly dismounted and assumed positions on either flank. The effort, however, proved futile. No sooner had the blueclad reserve fanned out along the creek than a brisk mounted attack by Colonel Powers' Arkansans succeeded in turning the Federal left. Desperately embattled, and nearly out of ammunition, Grierson prepared to fall back toward Port Hudson.

Thus far, Lieutenant Hall's guns had taken no part in the fighting near Clinton, the lieutenant finding it impossible to bring his artillery to bear upon the enemy in the low marshlands lining Pretty Creek. While the Union left crumbled, Grierson instructed Hall to withdraw to the brow of a hill about a mile in the rear and there to bring his guns into battery. As the artillery wheeled and fell back, the colonel directed the withdrawal of the 4th Wisconsin mounted infantry and scattered remnants of the 7th Illinois Cavalry. The Massachusetts and Louisiana companies, meanwhile, were posted in a bayou on either side of the road, under orders to delay the enemy's advance just long enough to allow the infantry to mount its horses and extricate
itself from the swamp. A battalion of the 6th Illinois was
detailed to support Hall's guns as they covered the Federal
retreat.

As the Union troopers reached high ground and fanned
out alongside the artillery, Logan's men raised the Rebel
yell and charged madly across Pretty Creek, catching Captain
Godfrey's company still on the ground. For some unknown
reason, Godfrey had failed to obey the order to fall back
with the Massachusetts cavalry and remained in his exposed
forward position in the bushes flanking the railroad tracks.
In their blind rush to close with the retreating Yankees
the screaming Rebels fell upon the left of the dismounted
Louisiana cavalry, cutting off and capturing a substantial
number of the hapless southern bluecoats.

Dense underbrush and persistent artillery fire defied
the best efforts of Confederate non-coms to maintain align-
ments in the scramble through the dismal swamp. Eventually,
the Rebel line stumbled scattered and broken onto the plain
leading up to the reformed Yankee position. Under a hail
of canister and cartridge, Logan's troops forded one last
stream and then paused to deploy for the uphill charge.
For nearly half an hour, the greycoated soldiers suffered
volley after volley of galling fire from the Federal guns,
before halting their attack. Taking advantage of the tem-
porary confusion in the Confederate ranks, Grierson commenced
pulling his command--its ammunition virtually exhausted--slowly back along the Port Hudson road, the mounted portion of Colonel Logan's force in cautious pursuit.

Within the security of the Federal cavalry camp, Colonel Grierson sadly assessed the cost of the three-hour engagement--8 dead, 28 wounded and 15 missing. Three of the Union dead and seven wounded troopers lay where they had fallen on the field of battle. Colonel Logan, meanwhile, numbered the Confederate casualties at 20 killed and wounded. Despite the failure of the Clinton expedition, and its toll in human lives, Grierson complimented himself upon an orderly withdrawal in the face of what he believed to be a superior enemy force.63

Visibly annoyed at Grierson's repulse, General Banks immediately assembled a large mixed command to rid the countryside behind Port Hudson of the cocky Rebel colonel. At 4 a.m. on the sultry morning of June 5, Brigadier General Halbert E. Paine, commanding the Union 3rd Division, marched northeastward at the head of an imposing column composed of seven infantry regiments, the bulk of Grierson's cavalry, and three sections of artillery drawn from Duryea's and Nims' batteries. Paine's instructions from Banks were short and explicit: "The object of your expedition is to attack and disperse the force of the enemy, supposed from 1,500 to 2,000 strong, which has been collected at Clinton." Moreover, the commanding general stressed, "it is essential that
this object shall be accomplished as speedily and thoroughly as possible." 64

Under the debilitating rays of a burning southern sun, the Yankee infantry trudged slowly and painfully over roads often four or five inches deep in swirling dust. At the noontime command to halt, scores of weary foot soldiers simply collapsed in their tracks, too exhausted even to extract rations from their haversacks. Allowing for a wrong road taken shortly before sunrise, the dirt-covered and perspiration-stained bluecoats had covered scarcely seven miles in as many hours.

When the march resumed in the afternoon, the intense heat and stifling dust began to take its toll. During the early mid-day hours, at least a full company of Federal soldiers dropped senseless along the road. After only a three mile march, General Paine finally took pity and called a second halt at the Redwood Bayou bridge.

With the sun clearly a more immediate and threatening foe than Logan's cavalry, Paine elected to conduct the remainder of his advance upon Clinton--still fifteen miles distant--in the cool morning and evening hours, resting his command during the heat of the day. Aroused in the pre-dawn hours of Saturday, June 6, the Federal column pressed on toward the Comite River bridge, where it bivouacked until midnight. Daybreak on Sunday morning found Paine's vanguard within three miles of its objective.
While the footsore infantry pitched camp along the road west of Clinton, Grierson's horsemen galloped cautiously eastward under orders to clear out the town and to take possession of everything that might be considered public property. Logan, Grierson quickly discovered, had taken full advantage of the forty-eight hour breathing space afforded by the tortoise-like Union advance. Upon examination, Clinton's warehouses provided a trifling quantity of grain and some five hundred barrels of potent Louisiana rum. Machine shops, a steam engine, textile and cartridge factories, all stood deserted and idle. Following instructions, Grierson applied the torch to the government buildings and their contents, along with a railroad bridge spanning the Comite. At least some of Clinton's liquor store, however, found its way into empty Yankee canteens, and more than a few Illinois soldiers swayed precariously in their saddles as the Union cavalry rejoined the infantry on the Jackson road.65

Returning to Port Hudson at 10:30 on the morning of June 8, General Paine reported the disappointing results of the second Federal expedition to Clinton. Colonel Logan evidently had evacuated the town, and information concerning the rebel colonel's present location, strength and intentions was conflicting and highly unreliable. After careful evaluation of the various statements and rumors gathered along the line of march, Paine concluded that Banks' estimate of Logan's effective strength at between 1,500 and 2,000 men
was very likely accurate. Most of these troops, he observed, were mounted and appeared to be supported by four nondescript pieces of artillery. "In my opinion," the Union brigadier gratuitously added, "Colonel Grierson would have routed them on Wednesday last but for their immense advantage of position." At the moment, the entire rebel command appeared to be moving northeast toward a rendezvous just above the Louisiana-Mississippi border near Liberty.66

Regarding the enemy's intentions, General Paine could only offer broad conjecture: "that they designed to attack Baton Rouge simultaneously with our attack on Port Hudson; that they intended a raid on our train near Springfield Landing; that they expected to get in the rear of my command; that they contemplated a junction with General Kirby Smith, who was said to be crossing the river at Natchez, with a view to relieve Port Hudson; that they were fortifying Whiteside; that the force was collected for General Johnston, to be used in an attack upon the Army of the Gulf, New Orleans, &c." As a precaution against any major Confederate operations originating from Clinton, Grierson had demolished the railroad bridges between that place and Port Hudson.67

With Logan's annoying cavalry temporarily rousted from its lair, General Banks turned his full attention back to the Rebel garrison at Port Hudson. Far into the night of June 13, the Union major general agonized with his staff
and field officers over plans for a full-scale pre-dawn
assault upon the enemy's works. Unbeknown to Banks, however,
one of his division commanders had already secretly determined
the independent role which his own troops would play in the
morning's drama.

According to Lieutenant William Trask of General
William Dwight's staff, the commander of the Federal 2nd
Division occupied the forenoon of the thirteenth drinking
heavily, while he formulated a scheme designed to shower
glory upon himself and his command. Finally, in the early
afternoon hours, Dwight summoned Colonel Grierson to his
tent. With the lanky cavalryman uncomfortably seated in a
camp chair, the division commander lowered his short, rotund
body onto a cot and, with red-faced excitement, unfolded
the details of his whiskey-inspired proposal.

At the extreme right of the Confederate works, near
the Mississippi River, stood a massive redoubt known as the
Citadel. Pointing toward the Rebel stronghold and the
narrow, sunken footpath which approached its sally port,
Dwight gravely confided that "I am going to surprise the
citadel and capture General Gardiner [sic], independently.
You will be notified of the time, and can have your cavalry
here. As soon as I give you the signal, you will charge
down this road by twos, at a gallop, and enter the fort."

Grierson, eyeing the torturous road and deep, briar tangled
ravine--its entire length open to the raking crossfire of
rebel muskets and artillery—sat silent for a moment, then asked: "What should I do then?" "File right and left, and dash along the parapet, sabering the cannoniers [sic] at their guns," the inebriated brigadier replied. In stunned disbelief, the Illinois colonel repeated his query: "What shall I do then?" General Dwight now paused briefly before responding: "Proceed to the centre of the town: I will be there myself."

Unfortunately, at this point Lieutenant Trask, the only eyewitness to the interview between Dwight and Grierson, left the general's tent on the verge of laughter. A short time later, Colonel Grierson emerged, mounted his horse, and according to the amused lieutenant, "rode off, apparently satisfied as well listening to Dwight's plan as a doctor would be with listening to the plans of a man in delerium tremens." From General Dwight's reaction and the events of the following day, it would seem that the cavalry commander had flatly refused to sacrifice his troopers in a foolhardy enterprise. "I soon saw the general again," Trask reported. "He seemed to be disgusted with Grierson and said of him: 'In spite of the reputation he has gained by his raid, that d___d militia officer was afraid to execute my plan.'"68

At 4:30 p.m., Colonel Grierson received official instructions from army headquarters outlining the cavalry's deployment during the forthcoming advance against the enemy's fortifications. The 1st Louisiana battalion and
two unattached companies of Massachusetts cavalry were
directed to report immediately to General Dwight on the
Union left. After posting pickets to cover all roads leading
through the Federal lines into Port Hudson, Grierson was
ordered to detach Colonel Prince with 300 troopers and all
of the artillery assigned to the cavalry brigade. Banks
anticipated that, finding their lines broken or heavily
assailed, the Confederates occupying the works north of town,
might take advantage of a small gap in the Union lines and
attempt to flee Port Hudson via the Bayou Sara road. Prince,
therefore, was instructed to position his cavalry astride
the road, thereby closing the interval between the right
flank of General Grover's division and the left of Colonel
John A. Nelson's 3rd Louisiana Native Guards. Colonel
Grierson, meanwhile, would report to General Banks' head-
quarters at seven o'clock in the evening with the remainder
of his command. 69

Final dispositions for the Federal attack were not com-
pleted until 11:30 p.m., and it was 1 a.m. before the last
sets of written orders found their way into the hands of
officers charged with their implementation. Consequently,
many regimental and brigade commanders scrambled frantically,
and inefficiently, to prepare for an assault scheduled to
commence just before three o'clock on Sunday morning.
According to General Banks' detailed instructions, at 2:45 a.m.,
General Augur would open an artillery barrage on his front,
followed one-half hour later by a feigned attack of skirmishers. General Dwight, moving "at such time after 3:30 a.m. tomorrow as he may deem most expedient," was directed to throw his reinforced division against the Citadel, in an attempt to gain entrance to the works on the extreme right of the Confederate line. The main effort, however, would be launched by General Grover against the Priest Cap, a salient angle northeast of Port Hudson at the point where the Rebel defenses bent sharply to the west and back toward the river. So confident was Banks in the success of his plan that he openly boasted of attending Sunday morning church services in Port Hudson. 70

Although the Federal commander had taken conscious pains to avoid the tragic confusion of May 27, the strength of the Confederate position once again combined with Banks' astonishing disregard for the peculiarities of the Port Hudson terrain to exact a grizzly toll among the assaulting columns. On the Confederate right flank, General Dwight found it impossible to force his way through the fallen timber and tangled brush which clogged the ravines on his front, and the movement of the 2nd Division simply fizzled out before it could blossom into a general assault. 71 With the collapse of Dwight's offensive, attention shifted to the Rebel left, where Grover's attempt to breach the Priest Cap degenerated into mass slaughter.

Cloaked in a mantle of darkness and fog, Grover's main
assault column, under Halbert Paine, approached to within ninety yards of its mist-shrouded objective. The order to charge fell with leaden dullness upon the damp spring air, and instantly the peaceful Sabbath morning erupted in a terrifying cacophony of light and sound. Scores of green New England infantrymen staggered and collapsed under a steady rain of grape and ball. No respecter of rank, the Rebel musket fire found General Paine, leading the Yankee advance, and toppled him wounded from his saddle. But still the stubborn New Englanders pressed forward. Ignoring the carnage of the initial charge, Paine's leaderless division repeatedly reformed and assailed the enemy's works. By 8 a.m., the ground in front of the right face of the Priest Cap was blue with the uniforms of the Union dead and wounded.

Grover's second column, scheduled to assault the left flank of the Rebel redoubt simultaneous with Paine's attack upon the right, was delayed until 7 a.m. When General Weitzel finally emerged from the narrow, sunken road leading toward the Confederate lines, he found himself compelled by the broken terrain on his front, to deploy his closely massed regiments in a confined space and under a devastating fire from the enemy's guns. Again, wave upon wave of Union soldiers dashed against the sides of the dirt embankment, until the ditch surrounding the Priest Cap overflowed with the bodies of the dead and the dying.72

For all practical purposes, the fate of the second grand
assault upon the Confederate defenses at Port Hudson was determined in the first hour after sunrise on June 14. Banks, however, was slow to appreciate the enormity of Grover's failure on the Union right. And, as a result, thousands of Yankee soldiers remained on the battlefield through the hot June morning, exposed to Rebel bullets and subjected to the cries of the wounded and the stench of the dead.

At 11:10 a.m., General Banks issued his single order of the day directed to the Federal cavalry. "General Paine, who was wounded to-day, and left on the field for several hours, reports movements of heavy bodies of the enemy's troops toward our right," he notified Colonel Prince. "This, with what is known of the condition of the enemy's troops, supplies of provisions and ammunition, is taken as an indication of an attempt to be made by him to escape by breaking through on our right. You will therefore be vigilant, and attack the enemy at once on his making such attempt sending prompt notice to these headquarters and to the nearest commander of infantry." To assist Prince in repulsing any attempted evacuation of the Port Hudson defenses, Banks ordered a section of the 4th Massachusetts battery to the Federal right, and instructed Colonel Grierson to reinforce the 7th Illinois with 300 troopers, holding "the remainder of his command in readiness to move at short notice." The anticipated breakout, however, failed to materialize, and
by noon there was little left to Banks than to assess the
day's terrible cost. One thousand eight hundred and five
blueclad bodies lay strewn in front of the Rebel fortifi-
cations, raising the total casualties in the two assaults upon
Port Hudson to almost 4,000 killed, wounded and missing.\textsuperscript{74}

Although the Union cavalry remained in reserve, and thus
escaped the horrors of the June 14 attack, Colonel Grierson
could not conceal his deep disappointment at the collapse of
the second Federal offensive. "I cannot now see any
immediate prospect of getting away from here," the colonel
confided to his wife. "General Banks [sic] forces have twice
stormed the works of Port Hudson and twice been repulsed, with
considerable loss. Eastern troops do not fight like Western
troops, and Genl. Banks has very few western troops in his
department."\textsuperscript{75} To add to the cavalry commander's anxiety,
General Richard Taylor returned to southern Louisiana during
early June and commenced operations in the Lafourche district
in a desperate effort to lift the siege of Port Hudson by
interrupting communications with New Orleans and perhaps
even attacking the Crescent City itself.\textsuperscript{76} "Rumors are
current," Grierson reported, "that forces are being sent by
the Rebels to attack Banks in the rear, and should that prove
true, Genl. Banks may be compelled to raise the siege."\textsuperscript{77}

For several days following the June 14 debacle, it
appeared that an extremely nervous Banks might launch yet
a third assault upon Port Hudson, hoping to reduce the
stubborn garrison before Taylor could interpose his small army between the XIX Corps and its base of supplies. "He is preparing for another assault," Grierson hopefully noted, "and I pray to God that it may be successful, Port Hudson in our possession and then Genl. Banks could immediately move with a portion of his force to Vicksburgh [sic] and join Genl. Grant." Personally, the colonel admitted, "it would be very gratifying to me & my command to go there at once, but Genl. Banks says he cannot get along without us."78

Once again, however, Grierson's speculation and prayers seemed unavailing. Although Banks did organize a "Forlorn Hope" storming party composed of one thousand volunteers, it was not called upon to sacrifice itself in yet another ill-advised attack. Instead, the Gulf commander resolved to conduct a full-scale siege. In the gruelling June heat, General Banks proposed to win the battle for Port Hudson one agonizing foot at a time.79

For most soldiers of the XIX Army Corps, the final twenty-four days of the siege of Port Hudson degenerated into an unpleasant melange of misery, death, and unseen danger. "We grew weak and nervous under the influences of summer heat, confinement, bad food, and constant exposure to danger," one volunteer recalled. "Men who had done well enough in battle broke down under the monotonous worry, and went on the rear invalidated. From rain, perspiration, sleeping on the ground, and lack of water for washing, our clothing became stiffened
and caked with inground mud. Lice appeared, increased, swarmed, infesting the entire gully, dropping upon us from the dry leaves of our bough-built shanties, and making life a disgrace as well as a nuisance." It is hardly surprising that under prolonged physical and emotional strain, complaint and disaffection grew endemic among the nine-month regiments whose terms of service would soon expire. A disgusted Ben Grierson recorded that the army of the Department of the Gulf contained "about 20 Regts of Eastern 9 month men . . . who are not reliable or to be depended upon."

The colonel's unflattering assessment proved uncomfortably accurate, and unrest finally came to a head in the open mutiny of the 4th Massachusetts Infantry.

Like their commander, Grierson's veteran Illinois cavalrymen viewed the low morale among the New England regiments with a chauvanistic degree of contempt. Posted in the rear of the Union army, well removed from the death and suffering endured in such powerful doses by the ill-used foot soldiers, the western horsemen slipped easily into the self-indulgent habit of passing smug judgment upon their less fortunate comrades in the front lines. The tedium and discomfort of siege warfare, however, infected even the relatively pampered cavalry. No less than their colonel, the Illinois troopers chafed at their confinement in the Department of the Gulf. "During all these operations in the vicinity of Port Hudson," Adjutant Woodward observed, "we of the Illinois
Cavalry were in a rather forlorn condition, having left our baggage, records and everything necessary for comfort & convenience, back in Tennessee, we were compelled to forage for such things as we could find to make our destitute condition endurable." Apparently, the officers of the 6th and 7th Illinois regiments shared privation along with the enlisted men, and Lieutenant Woodward added that "the General & myself lived for these two months in a swamp, with some old canvas, spread like an awning, for shelter, and with boxes of ammunition for a bedstead."82

Although Grierson continued to bemoan his uncomfortable position among the Yankee soldiers of the XIX Corps, a communication from the Secretary of War announcing the cavalry commander's appointment as brigadier general of volunteers injected a ray of hope into an otherwise dismal situation. The Illinois colonel displayed neither coy reluctance nor false modesty in accepting the long-awaited promotion. "I have this day received notice from the Secty of War . . . of my appointment by the President as Brig. Genl. of Vol. and have written my letter of acceptance," Ben informed Alice on June 16. "If all the Brig. Generals who have been appointed have worked as honestly, faithfully & well, and I might say successfully, as I have, then I think they have well earned the promotion or appointment. So far as I can learn every one here is glad of my promotion and I suppose my friends at least in Illinois will be glad."
It is well not to have it take place before it is thought I am deserving."  

General Grierson, however, was afforded precious little opportunity for the leisurely enjoyment of his new status. The Rebel colonel Logan, encouraged by his defeat of the much glorified Federal cavalry in the skirmish at Clinton, decided in mid-June to launch a series of lighting raids upon the rear of Banks' besieging army. Although inflicting scant material damage upon the well-supplied Union corps which encircled Port Hudson, these bold forays nonetheless played havoc with the already tenuous morale among the Yankee nine-month men and represented a serious embarrassment for Grierson's cavalry. 

Early on the morning of June 15, Logan descended in broad daylight upon the camp of a battalion of the 14th New York Cavalry charged with the defense of the roads and rails at Newport crossroads. A piercing Rebel yell and the sharp crack of carbine fire caught the New Yorkers engrossed in breakfast chores or off in the bushes collecting blackberries. Cut off from their weapons and mounts, the astonished Yankee troopers meekly surrendered to the greyclad riders. Only an alert Lieutenant William T. Hodges managed to retain his composure and escaped with a contingent of Co. C. of the 14th regiment. 

Leaving Newport crossroads as swiftly as he had arrived, the Rebel colonel continued on toward the Federal hospital
housed in the Clinton residence, one mile distant. A frightened surgeon, no doubt thinking of the three hundred helpless sick and wounded under his care, quickly agreed to surrender the building, and the infantry guard at the Clinton House lay down its arms without offering even token resistance. Grierson, arriving fast upon the heels of the Confederate horsemen, angrily assailed the Yankee doctor for gross cowardice. Logan, in the meantime, had already fallen well back along the Clinton road, carrying with him "100 prisoners, including one major, 2 captains and 3 lieutenants, many wagons, teams, salt, arms and negroes."84

Five days after the raid upon Newport crossroads, Logan's adventurous band struck again; this time ambushing a large Federal wagon train as it gathered forage in the vicinity of Jackson. One of the infantry guard, Corporal James K. Hosmer of the 52nd Massachusetts, graphically described the pandemonium created by the Rebel charge:

We had just begun to open our haversack's, when "crack, crack!" The Philistines were upon us. In an instant came the summons, "Battalion!" and we flew to our pieces. Pickets came galloping in from the outposts. The story is, that two rebel regiments and a body of horse bivouacked the night before at the farm on the right, where the teams are loading. The artillerymen are at their pieces; and all over the field, to the skirts of the distant woods, squads of cavalry are seen on the gallop,—most of them Grierson's famous men. Presently the wagons come back in the wildest confusion, pell-mell, helter-skelter. The mules are in full gallop, some with, some without drivers; over ditches and fences, crash
through groves of young pines, over logs and stumps. Sometimes the body is jarred off the wheels; sometimes one mule has broken loose, leaving three behind, with the broken harness dragging about them. The negro-drivers yell, and brandish their whips. All is perfect uproar and panic. 85

While the Yankee artillery held the enemy at a distance, Colonel Halbert S. Greenleaf struggled frantically to restore order among his panic-stricken command. In a short time, the bluecoated infantry commenced a slow, disorganized withdrawal toward the Union lines at Port Hudson, where they finally arrived at ten o'clock in the evening. Eight or ten Union cavalrymen had fallen during an afternoon of almost continuous skirmishing, and, when Colonel Greenleaf paused to assess the loss in government property, he counted some sixty wagons missing from an original complement of one hundred and sixty vehicles. In the eyes of at least one enlisted man, much of the blame for the stampede on Saturday, June 20, rested squarely with Grierson's mounted command. "The cavalry," he observed "were [sic] unmanageable; and mules and wagons fell easy prey, when a smart body of rebs dashed out of an ambuscade, and swept like a whirlwind through our long, straggling line. They had nothing to match our cannon. If it had not been for them, we might all have been on the way to Richmond." 86

As soon as Colonel Greenleaf’s bedraggled command limped into camp, General Banks summoned Grierson to headquarters and instructed the cavalry commander to place his
entire disposable force in readiness to march. Shortly after midnight, the Union cavalry moved out at the head of Weitzel's infantry brigade in pursuit of Logan's raiders. On the evening of June 22, the Federal troops halted near Jackson. Aside from occasional skirmishes with small bodies of enemy horsemen, General Grierson had failed to uncover any sign of Logan's encampment. Consequently, Weitzel abandoned the pursuit and conducted a relaxed march back to the Port Hudson lines. Halting "at nearly every plantation they came to, on their return . . . to fill their large wagon train with corn and provisions," the column covered barely five miles in one day, and it was near eleven o'clock on the morning of the twenty-fourth, when Grierson's troopers preceded the infantry into camp. 87

Because of the inability of the Yankee horse and foot to flush the annoying Rebel band from its hiding place, Logan continued to make his presence felt behind the Union lines. On the evening of June 30, a platoon of Confederate scouts succeeded in capturing the proselytizing prohibitionist brigadier general, Neal Dow, from his temporary headquarters several miles in the Federal rear. Wounded in the leg and arm during the May 27 assault upon the Port Hudson defenses, Dow had elected to risk the danger of capture while he recuperated in exposed but comfortable quarters, rather than endure the heat, dust and constant disturbances which prevailed near the front lines. Well enough to mount a
horse, the teetotalingbrigadier had visited his brigade on the afternoon of the thirtieth and had decided to rejoin his command that night. Returning to the plantation house about 9 p.m. to collect his personal effects, Dow stumbled upon a squad of grimly determined Rebels waiting in the yard. At the authoritative command to "surrender, or I'll kill you," the unarmed Yankee officer calmly surrendered and was quietly led into captivity. 88

Finally, at nine o'clock on the morning of July 2, Colonel Logan descended in force upon the Union supply depot at Springfield Landing. The pickets of the 162nd New York, apparently mistaking Colonel Frank Powers' Arkansans for a detachment of Grierson's cavalry, allowed the enemy to approach to within 150 yards of the Springfield Landing road before sounding an alarm. So unexpected was the attack, that the Rebel cavalry dashed unopposed among the startled Yankees and took possession of the huge stockpile of stores scattered about the landing. Federal officers and government employees fortunate to be stationed near the dock scrambled in a panic-stricken mass aboard the transport Suffolk, which swiftly cast off its moorings and steamed to safety in the middle of the river. Only as they approached the levee did the greyclad troopers encounter stiff resistance. A brisk fire from the thirty-two concealed muskets of Captain A. J. Hersey's provost guard sent a strong enemy contingent reeling with three dead and five wounded. Hersey's
determined stand afforded time for Colonel J. W. Blanchard to rally the badly confused 162nd New York. Arriving at the levee in double-quick time, Blanchard instantly threw his regiment into line of battle and advanced against the Rebel cavalry, forcing the enemy horsemen back in disorder down the old Springfield Landing road. Scarcely twenty minutes had elapsed from the moment that Logan's troopers broke madly through the Federal picket line to Colonel Blanchard's arrival at the levee. In that short period, however, the Confederate raiders had succeeded in burning a quantity of clothing, equipment and supplies sufficient to maintain one thousand men in the field. Federal losses in the confused engagement totalled 1 dead, 11 wounded, and 21 captured and missing. Colonel Logan estimated his own casualties at 4 killed and 10 wounded. 89

Minor clashes between detachments of Union and Confederate horsemen became almost daily occurrences during the first week of July, as both Banks and Grierson watched closely for any effort to relieve the beleaguered Port Hudson garrison. On July 6, Banks notified his cavalry commander that information received at corps headquarters indicated "that the enemy's cavalry has concentrated at Jackson with a battery of artillery, and that they intend to make a dash upon our rear at several points to-morrow or the next day, in the morning." Following the major general's instructions, Grierson alerted the scattered elements of his command in
an effort to prevent still further humiliation at the hands of the brash and resourceful Logan.  

Already, by the end of June, it seemed clear that the plight of the Confederate garrison at Port Hudson was indeed critical. "Our men are in places within twenty feet of the Rebel works, and have powerful batteries within two or three Hundred feet of the same," Grierson wrote. "The garrison is very short of provisions, and it is reported by deserters who are every day coming into our lines, that the Rebels in the fort are living upon mule meat & corn, in small or short rations at that. . . . The effective force of the enemy inside the Fort is pretty surely known to not be over 3000 men, and they are short of ammunition as well as food." Considering the near desperate condition of the vastly outnumbered defenders, the new Yankee brigadier felt reasonably confident that even "should Genl. Banks [sic] forces fail to assault Port Hudson this week, which it appears to me could be done any day successfully (if the troops would fight) I think the place will be surrendered before very long, unless relieved by Rebel forces from the outside, which I do not think very probable under the circumstances."  

Grierson's evaluation of the situation at Port Hudson struck very close to the mark. The anticipated attack by Colonel Logan's small Rebel band failed to materialize, and, on July 7, Colonel Thomas Kilby Smith of Grant's staff
arrived at General Banks' headquarters with "glorious" news of the capitulation of the Vicksburg garrison on July 4. In the immediate excitement, an aide-de-camp ripped a page from a field order book and scrawled out the message, "Vicksburg surrendered on the 4th of July." Wrapping the note around a lump of clay, the young officer hurled the missile into the Confederate trenches. Pandemonium, meanwhile, erupted in the Union lines, and at noon a cacophony of cheers and patriotic airs blended with a deafening one hundred gun artillery barrage to celebrate the Federal victory.  

Although weary and starving--reduced for the past week to eating mule meat--the defenders of Port Hudson greeted the news of Vicksburg's collapse with incredulity. "This is another damned Yankee lie," an Arkansas officer shouted out. But, before nightfall, Confederate and Union soldiers mingled freely in the small interval separating the opposing trenches.

During the evening of the seventh, General Gardner summoned his division commanders to a moonlight conference on the veranda of Confederate headquarters, overlooking the broad, moody waters of the Mississippi. After sixty-one days of bombardment and siege, recognition of the futility of continued resistance came hard to proud and stubborn rebel officers. But the dictates of duty--both moral and martial--seemed painfully clear; Port Hudson, it was
quickly agreed, must be surrendered. Hopefully, Gardner could delay the actual capitulation long enough to afford time for those troops unwilling to give up the fight to slip through the relaxed Union lines.\(^96\)

Shortly before one o'clock on the morning of July 8, a small party of Confederate horsemen, bearing a message from General Gardner, appeared under a flag of truce at Colonel Charles J. Paine's headquarters along the Plains Store road. Paine entrusted the dispatch to Lieutenant Orton S. Clark of his staff, who raced through the darkness to General Banks' abode.\(^97\) Aroused from his slumber, the Federal commander eagerly opened the envelope which was placed in his hand. "Having received information from your troops that Vicksburg has been surrendered," General Gardner informed his Union counterpart, "I make this communication to ask you to give me the official assurance whether this is true or not; and, if true, I ask for a cessation of hostilities, with a view to consider terms for surrendering this position."\(^98\)

Eager—and yet wary—Banks dispatched a courier to the Rebel lines with a copy of Grant's letter announcing the fall of Vicksburg, to which the Gulf commander appended a note warning his adversary that "under the present circumstances, I cannot consistently with my duty consent to a cessation of hostilities for the purpose you indicate."\(^99\) Upon receipt of confirmation of the capitulation of
Pemberton's army, General Gardner notified Banks that "having defended this position as long as I deem my duty requires, I am willing to surrender to you." To this end, the Confederate commander requested a general cease fire and proposed that a commission composed of three officers from each side meet at 9 a.m. for the purpose of drawing up the terms of surrender. Banks readily agreed to Gardner's proposals, and at 2:30 on the afternoon of July 8, the opposing generals affixed their signatures to articles of capitulation.

Promptly at nine o'clock on the morning of July 9, Brigadier General George L. Andrews, Banks' chief-of-staff, entered Port Hudson through the sally port on the Jackson road at the head of the Federal column of occupation. Advancing to meet the Union officers, General Gardner presented his sword to Andrews, explaining that "having thoroughly defended this position as long as I deemed it necessary, I now surrender to you my sword, and with it this post and its garrison." General Andrew's reply was delivered in a hushed whisper, and, in a profoundly simple gesture, the Federal brigadier returned the naked blade to the unrelenting defender of Port Hudson: "I return your sword as a proper compliment to the gallant commander of such gallant troops--conduct that would be heroic in another cause." "This is neither the time nor place to discuss the cause," the Rebel general proudly responded as he slammed his saber back into
its scabbard.\textsuperscript{102}

While six thousand frustrated and vocally bitter Rebel soldiers stacked their arms,\textsuperscript{103} General Andrews graciously conducted the Confederate commander down the line of Union officers in attendance at the brief surrender ceremony. In particular, General Gardner requested an introduction to the Yankee cavalryman who had recently created so much confusion behind Vicksburg and Port Hudson. According to Grierson, the two men discussed the events of the raid through Mississippi "in a very pleasant social manner," with Gardner displaying "a handful of conflicting telegrams and letters he had received." When the Rebel general remarked that "had his orders been obeyed," the Yankee cavalry would most certainly have been cornered, Grierson offered a polite smile and charitably refrained from any further comment. Privately, however, the Illinois brigadier was quick to note that General Gardner's "troops ambushed us where we did not go, and waited for us until morning, while we passed unmolested during the night. Those who slept while we rode did not catch us."\textsuperscript{104}

General Grierson, like most Federal officers and enlisted men, greeted the fall of Port Hudson with an almost inexpressible sense of relief. In forty-five days of actual investment, Banks' army of anywhere between 30,000 and 40,000 men had sustained in excess of 8,000 casualties.\textsuperscript{105} By
comparison, the Confederate loss in manpower as a result of the siege of Port Hudson seems remarkably small; amounting to perhaps 700 killed and wounded, and an additional 200 dead from disease. Moreover, a large proportion of the 405 rebel officers and 5,935 greyclad enlisted men captured and paroled at Port Hudson eventually returned to active service with the Confederate army. 106

In terms of battlefield losses, the cavalry attached to the XIX Army Corps had suffered relatively little at Port Hudson. "Our loss since entering the Department of the Gulf has been small in men," General Grierson reported, "but heavy in animals, having had in the two Illinois regiments between 75 and 100 horses killed and badly wounded." 107 The hard-fought skirmish at Clinton on June 3 had claimed the bulk of the 94 casualties incurred by the mounted brigade during the siege, with Godfrey's unfortunate Louisiana company--cut off and captured during the Federal withdrawal from Pretty Creek--comprising fully forty percent of Grierson's total loss. The modest toll among the 6th and 7th Illinois regiments, meanwhile, stood at 1 dead, 10 wounded, and 6 captured or missing. 108 But it would require more than comforting statistics to assuage Grierson's continued impatience with his forced captivity in the heat-, dust- and Yankee-ridden Department of the Gulf. "Genl. Banks will dislike to have us leave as he is much in need of good Cavalry," the Illinois brigadier reminded his wife one last
time, "but I am determined to go north after the capture of this place." 109

Grierson hardly underestimated the department commander's reluctance to release the western cavalry. The collapse of Port Hudson scarcely signalled an end to Banks' concern in Louisiana. Dick Taylor still roamed at will in the Lafourche district and, during the first week in July, had even succeeded in placing twelve guns on the river below Donaldsonville. For three anxious days, water communication between Port Hudson and New Orleans was interrupted. Taylor's mounted scouts, meanwhile, spread additional panic as they ranged as far south as Kenner, barely sixteen miles from the heart of the Crescent City. 110 Responding to the renewed enemy activity in the south, Banks informed Grant on July 18 that:

about 12,000 or 15,000 of the enemy have been threatening my communications, and have occupied the La Fourche districts. I shall move against them forthwith. My disposable force is about equal to their number if I detain Grierson's cavalry. This I hope to do for a term of not more than two weeks, when I will return him in good condition to your camp. He has been of infinite service, and I know not in what way we could have supplied his place. 111

Fortunately for Grierson's long-cherished plans to rejoin the Army of the Tennessee, Taylor, with less than one-third the troops attributed to him by Banks, evinced no desire to remain in the Lafourche region once all hope
of relieving Port Hudson had vanished. On the evening of July 10, the Rebel commander in west Louisiana commenced preparations for a careful withdrawal up the Teche, taking his plunder with him. Three days later, Weitzel's and Dudley's brigades of Cuvier Grover's command collided with 1,500 Confederates under Brigadier General Thomas Green and Colonel James P. Major at Cox's plantation on the Lafourche near Donaldsonville. Surprisingly, the outnumbered Rebels not only held their ground, but repulsed the advancing Federals with heavy losses. And yet, the heartening, and relatively inexpensive, Confederate victory clearly came too late to influence Taylor's decision once again to abandon southern Louisiana.112 Aware of the Rebel general's intentions, and unable to interdict the enemy's line of retreat, Banks, Grover and Weitzel cautiously agreed that "it was inexpedient to press Taylor or to hasten his movements in any way."113

Banks' decision to forestall harrassment of the Rebel evacuation of the Lafourche district suddenly rendered Grierson's cavalry expendable. Consequently, on July 16, a battalion of Illinois troopers boarded the steamer Imperial as a escort to 189 Confederate prisoners enroute to Vicksburg.114 Two days later, General Banks issued orders releasing Grierson from duty in the Department of the Gulf and instructing the cavalry commander to proceed with the remainder of the 6th and 7th Illinois regiments and
Captain Smith's battery to Vicksburg, where he would "report in person to Major General Grant, for duty in the Department of the Tennessee." "It is with extreme regret," Banks belatedly added, "that the Major General commanding sees this gallant officer and his brave cavalry leave this Department, in which they have rendered such brilliant and useful service; but it is due to both commander and command that they should no longer be detained absent from their comrades of the Department of the Tennessee."\(^{115}\)

Later that day, General Grierson and his command accompanied General Beall and twenty-two Rebel officers on board the transport Planet for the slow journey up river.\(^{116}\)

A much relieved Ben Grierson found that the week-long "trip up the Mississippi River on steamer was a pleasant change and recreation for myself and the cavalry, after so many months of constant and active service."\(^{117}\) Stopping briefly at Natchez, the cavalry commander renewed an old acquaintance with Brigadier General Thomas E. G. Ransom--formerly colonel of the 11th Illinois Infantry--who, on July 13, had brilliantly seized the Mississippi market place together with 5,000 head of prime Texas beef and a considerable quantity of Confederate ordnance stores.\(^{118}\)

Several days later, the Planet docked at Vicksburg, where General Grierson went ashore for several hours to inspect the fortifications and to confer with General Grant. The department commander expressed intense interest in
launching an overland campaign through Mississippi to Mobile, Alabama. Sherman, who was anxious to start the movement at the earliest possible date, had already requested the services of Grierson and his tested troopers. But, as Grant explained, it seemed more expedient at the moment to return the Illinois cavalry to General Hurlbut in west Tennessee. "Grierson is very anxious to get back there, to get his troops together. By having him there," the commanding general reasoned, "I can organize a large cavalry force under his command, to make a big raid through the eastern part of the State, or wherever required." Grierson agreed, but nevertheless extracted a promise to be included in any pending plans for an advance upon Mobile.119

Leaving Grant's headquarters, the Illinois cavalryman mounted his horse for the ride back to the steamer. Immense stockpiles of government stores crowded the Vicksburg docks and afforded scant room for maneuver. As the lone rider carefully negotiated the narrow passageway leading to the landing, his New Orleans gift horse suddenly panicked, kicking at Grierson's mount and landing an iron hoof squarely upon the general's knee. "Had it not been for the high-topped, heavy-legged boots, that I was wearing," the twice unfortunate horseman ruminated, "my leg would, no doubt, have been badly broken. As it was, it proved to be a severe sprain which crippled me for many months, and was the most annoying and serious injury received by me during
the war."^{120}

On July 22, the first contingent of Illinois cavalry disembarked at Memphis, followed, two days later—amid cheering crowds and booming artillery—by General Grierson and the remainder of the 1st Brigade. After a three-month separation from friends and possessions, the Yankee troopers revelled in the simple pleasures of camp life. Sergeant Forbes of the Seventh no doubt echoed the sentiments of many of his long-suffering comrades when he informed his sister that "we are now encamped near the city, sleeping under tents for the first time since the seventeenth of April. It is a grand relief I can assure you, to get where we can have a little more personal property than just what we can strap behind our saddles. . . . Let me see, I have never written you a word of the 'famous raid,' have I, but I guess that it is just as well; I suppose that you have heard of it in some way, and I am heartily sick of it."^{121}

Ben Grierson greeted the eagerly awaited return to Memphis with particular gladness. The relentless monotony of siege warfare inevitably weighs heavily upon besieger and besieged alike; and perhaps upon high-strung cavalrmen most of all. In addition to the physical and psychological strains imposed by heat, dust and almost constant danger endured without the most rudimentary comforts of camp, the newly appointed brigadier had suffered the frustration of virtual entrapment in an unfamiliar theater of war under
the most agonizing of circumstances. Having tasted fame, and eager for further glory, the highly acclaimed Federal raider had been compelled to stand guard at a side show while, a short distance to the north, his fellow officers of the Army of the Tennessee captured the attention and applause of the Union, as they battered the mighty river fortress of Vicksburg into submission. Bitterness between Colonels Grierson and Prince, culminating in overt insubordination on the part of the commander of the 7th Illinois Cavalry, and defeat at the hands of the rebel colonel Logan had served only to exacerbate Grierson’s profound dissatisfaction with his lot among the strange crowd of Yankees that formed Banks’ XIX Corps and to underline the cavalry’s poor performance behind Port Hudson.\(^1\)\(^2\) Now, once again among friends in west Tennessee, General Grierson gratefully accepted command of the cavalry division of the XVI Army Corps and eagerly anticipated the forthcoming advance upon Mobile.\(^1\)\(^2\)\(^3\)
NOTES - CHAPTER V


N. P. Banks to H. W. Halleck, December 18, 1862, Ibid., Vol. XV, 613; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 61.


Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 66-67.


16 Farragut, Life of David Glasgow Farragut, 335.


20 Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction, 151-52, states that his force did not exceed 2,700 men. Less than two weeks prior to Banks' offensive, however, General Edmund Kirby-Smith, commanding the Trans-Mississippi Department, informed Confederate Adjutant-General Samuel Cooper that Taylor had approximately 4,000 troops at his disposal. E. K. Smith to S. Cooper, April 3, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XV, 386. Kerby, Kirby Smith's Confederacy, 97, estimates that Taylor had 9,000 soldiers available in the entire District of West Louisiana, with no more than 4,000 concentrated on the lower Atchafalaya and Teche. Harrington, Fighting Politician, 119, places Banks' strength at 15,000 and Taylor's at 5,000.


34 Ibid.


36 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 21, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.


39 Johns, Life with the Forty-Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, 235, describes the Plains Store as "simply a drug-store and postoffice on the lower and a Masonic lodge on the upper floor." The building was 'situated where . . . [the Bayou Sara] road crosses the Clinton and Port Hudson road."


41 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 21, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

42 G.B. Halstead to Signal Officer in command of Signal Telegraph, near Placien Church, May 23, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, p. 84; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 159-60; Surby, Grierson Raids, 134.


45 Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 40.


47 Clark, One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment of New York State Volunteers, 83.

48 Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 165-66; N. P. Banks to E. M. Stanton, April 6, 1865, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, pp. 12-13; Clark, One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment of New York State Volunteers, 83; Frank M. Flinn, Campaigning with Banks in Louisiana, '63 and '64, and with Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley in '64 and '65 (Boston: W. B. Clarke & Co., 1889), 72-73; Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 47.

49 Francis Preston, Port Hudson: A History of the Investment, Siege and Capture (Brooklyn: privately printed, 1892), 20. On this, or a similar scouting expedition, Colonel Grierson was the uninvited guest of Mrs. Anna Eliza Davis Smith, a sister of Confederate President Jefferson Davis. Mrs. Smith resided at Locust Grove plantation, near St. Francisville, in West Feliciana Parish. Sergeant Richard Surby records that, "while on a scout Colonel Grierson had occasion to call and pay his respects to this lady, who received him rather coldly. Not knowing who the Colonel was
she very uncourteously left him and his adjutant alone in the drawing-room. In the room was a splendid piano. A request was made through the Adjutant for the ladies to play, which they declined. The Colonel was not to be bluffed in this way, so seating himself before the instrument he soon filled the room with the notes of a very difficult but popular air. This had the desired effect of bringing all the ladies to the room. They were very inquisitive to know who the player was, that he would not be any ordinary man to produce such beautiful music. Upon hearing his name they evinced much surprise, and apologized for their rudeness, they became extremely sociable, particularly with Adjutant Woodward, who is a great favorite with the ladies. Surby, *Grierson Raids*, 137-38; Haskell M. Monroe and James T. McIntosh, eds., *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, 2 vols. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971), I, 329. In all fairness, however, it should be noted that the Davis relations residing at Locust Grove hardly emerged from the war filled with fond recollections of their Yankee visitors. According to Miss Nan Smith, the granddaughter of Anna Eliza Davis Smith, her grandmother's house was "pillaged by Yankee vandals who wantonly destroyed what they failed to appropriate and most interesting relics were lost." Whether Grierson's troopers were responsible for any of the destruction is not known. Louis Butler, "West Feliciana: A Glimpse of its History," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, VII (January 1924), 105. See also, Joseph E. Davis to Jefferson Davis, June 25, 1863, Jefferson Davis Papers, Transylvania University, Lexington, Kentucky.

50 S. L. Woodward to E. Prince, May 5, 1863, as quoted in the Washington, D.C. *National Tribune*, April 28, 1904.


On January 26, 1864, Colonel Prince revealed his true sentiments in a letter to Brigadier General William Sooy Smith concerning the court-martial of Captain Milton L. Webster of his regiment for drunkenness: "I have prepared these papers, to show you what the facts were, in one & many particular things about which I spoke to you. You will pardon me for saying that my connexion with the Cav. Div. & Corps is loathsome in the extreme and that such affairs as are here set forth make me blush for the officers under whom I am placed, and make me weep for the fate of that noble republic, whose welfare is entrusted to their guardianship. At home where I live I only associate with those men whom I think noble and honorable, why should I be compelled to do so here. Every officer ought to be more lofty in thought and purer in purpose than any citizen, because he is a sentinel [sic] upon the outer wall of his country and has the safety of those within more directly under his charge.

"If you choose to explain matters to Genl. Sherman, Capt. Webster might perhaps be dismissed from the service, and the regt. will then be relieved of one of several incompetent officers.

"I have to request that you will not however show this to Genl. H.[urlbut] or G.[rierson] as they would only put me under arrest and keep me so, so long as they were able. If I could get a court of enquiry [sic] I could prove that my energy and vigilence [sic] accomplished the labor which gave Genl. G.[rierson] his honor, and that Genl. H.[urlbut] without any fault on my part, or intentional wrong, placed me under arrest and so pretended to keep me for 40 days without charges and in violation of the acts of Congress appd. July 17th 1862." General Smith apparently placed a copy of this remarkable letter in Grierson's hands. E. Prince to W. S. Smith, January 26, 1864, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. Prince did not reenlist upon the expiration of his term of service and relinquished command of the 7th Illinois Cavalry on October 15, 1864. Captain Webster of Co. H left the service on the same day. Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Illinois, 1861-1866, III, 68, 73.

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Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 66.

B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, May 28, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. Grierson, like many other Union soldiers, obtained his first view of Negro troops in combat during the May 27 assault upon Port Hudson. "The negro Regiments fought bravely yesterday, charging up to the enemies [sic] works," the colonel informed his wife. "There can be no question about the good fighting qualities of negroes hereafter, that question was settled beyond a doubt yesterday." Ibid.

Flinn, Campaigning with Banks, 77.

Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 188-89.

Ibid., 187, 189. The 3rd Massachusetts Cavalry, commanded by Col. Thomas E. Chickering, arrived at Port Hudson from the Teche country on June 2. Officially, the regiment retained its original designation as the 41st Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, although it was armed with carbines, revolvers, and sabers and had been serving on horseback since May 17. On June 17, 1863, by order of Gen. Banks, three unattached companies of Massachusetts cavalry were consolidated with the 41st Massachusetts Infantry to form the 3rd Massachusetts Cavalry. James K. Ewer, The Third Massachusetts Cavalry in the War for the Union (Privately printed, 1903), 79, 88, 99; Adjutant General of Massachusetts, comp., Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in the Civil War, 8 vols. and index (Norwood, Mass.: Norwood Press, 1931-1935, 1937), VI, 329.

B. H. Grierson to R. B. Irwin, June 12, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, p. 134; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 190; Whitcomb, History of the Second Massachusetts Battery, 49; Ewer, Third Massachusetts Cavalry, 106-107. In his official report, Grierson states that he was accompanied by two companies of the 2nd Massachusetts Cavalry. Since the 2nd Massachusetts served exclusively in the Eastern Theater throughout the war, it would have been impossible for two companies of that regiment to have participated in the Clinton expedition. In all likelihood, Grierson is referring to Lieutenant Solon A. Perkins' 3rd Unattached Company of Massachusetts Cavalry (later Co. M, 3rd Massachusetts Cavalry) and one other unattached mounted company later incorporated into the 3rd Massachusetts regiment. See, Adjutant General of Massachusetts, comp., Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in the Civil War, VI, 228-29, 329, 395; Ewer, Third Massachusetts Cavalry, 333.
During the opening moments of the skirmish a rebel bullet put an end to the life and promising career of this well-liked twenty-four year old bookkeeper from Lowell, Massachusetts. Lieutenant Colonel Richard B. Irwin, adjutant of the XIX Corps, sadly noted that "among the killed, unfortunately, was the young cavalry officer, Lieutenant Solon A. Perkins, of the Third Massachusetts, whose skill and daring had commended itself to the notice of Weitzel during the early operations in La Fourche, and whose long service without proper rank had drawn out the remark: 'This Perkins is a splendid officer, and he deserves promotion as much as any officer I ever saw.'" Perkins was posthumously awarded the brevets of Captain and Major of volunteers to rank from the date of his death, June 3, 1863. Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 190-91; Adjutant General of Massachusetts, comp., Massachusetts Soldiers, Sailors and Marines in the Civil War, VI, 405; Ewer, Third Massachusetts Cavalry, 332-33.

This account of the fight at Clinton, La. is compiled from the following sources: B. H. Grierson to R. B. Irwin, June 12, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, pp. 134-36; B. H. Grierson to H. Binmore, September 1, 1863, Ibid., 138; J. L. Logan to J. E. Johnston, June 3, 1863, Ibid., 181; A. Curl, "The Fight at Clinton, La.," Confederate Veteran, XIII (March 1905), 122-23; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 190-91; New Orleans Daily Picayune, July 30, 1905; Whitcomb, History of the Second Massachusetts Battery, 49; Ewer, Third Massachusetts Cavalry, 332-33; Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 49. Both Logan and Grierson overestimated each other's strength. In fact, the opposing forces were evenly matched, both consisting of approximately 1,200 men. Colonel Logan placed the Federal loss at 20 dead, 50 wounded, and 40 prisoners, while Grierson estimated Confederate casualties at between 20 and 30 killed, more than 60 wounded, and 20 captured. J. L. Logan to J. E. Johnston, May 29, June 3, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, pp. 180-81; B. H. Grierson to R. B. Irwin, June 12, 1863, Ibid., 135-36.


67. H. E. Paine to R. B. Irwin, June 9, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, p. 127; B. H. Grierson to R. B. Irwin, June 12, 1863, Ibid., 137. While Grierson's troopers were sacking Clinton at their leisure, Colonel Logan reported to General Johnston from a camp located ten miles north of the abandoned town. "The enemy," he notified his superior, "is moving a column of cavalry, infantry, and artillery, 4,000 strong, upon Clinton." Referring to the skirmish on June 3, Logan announced that "I have met his cavalry, and whipped it, but, of course, will have to retire before a heavy column of infantry and artillery." Still, if Johnston would reinforce him with ten thousand additional troops, Logan promised to raise the siege of Port Hudson. In the meantime, the rebel colonel intended to "range through the country, and, when an opportunity offers, strike his cavalry." J. H. Logan to J. E. Johnston, June 7, 1863, Ibid., 181. With Pemberton hard-pressed at Vicksburg, Johnston had no intention of detaching troops from Mississippi to augment Colonel Logan's small command behind Port Hudson. In response to Logan's request, General Johnston dispatched a tersely worded note reprimanding the colonel for allowing himself "to be driven back by 4,000 Eastern troops." J. E. Johnston to J. L. Logan, June 8, 1863, Ibid., pt. 2, p. 39; Williams, Lincoln Finds a General, V, 39-40.


had assumed command of Sherman's division on the Union left after Sherman fell wounded during the assault on May 27. Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 187.

71 Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, 170-86; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 199-200; Irwin, "Capture of Port Hudson," 595; Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 91; Harrington, Fighting Politician, 122.


75 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 16, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.


77 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 16, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

78 Ibid.

De Forest, *A Volunteer's Adventures*, 144.


Notation added to copy of report of B. H. Grierson to R. B. Irwin, June 12, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 387-88; Surby, *Grierson Raids*, 137.


*Ibid.*, 202-204. Stone, *Rhode Island in the Rebellion*, 371-72, states that the train guard "consisted of the 2d Massachusetts regiment (250 men), one section of artillery, 122 Rhode Island cavalrmen, and 250 men of the 6th and 7th
Illinois cavalry. They were attacked by two Arkansas regiments, a heavy cavalry force and two pieces of artillery. Colonel Corliss was in the advance, and held the enemy in check, while he sent three times for the artillery to come up. He then went and brought it up himself, and fired twenty rounds of spherical case shot, killing one of the enemy and wounding seven. He also captured four prisoners." There is no evidence to suggest that General Grierson personally commanded the cavalry on this expedition.


88 Frank L. Byrne, Prophet of Prohibition: Neal Dow and his Crusade (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1961), 96-97; Neal Dow, The Reminiscences of Neal Dow, Recollections of Eighty Years (Portland, Me.: The Evening Express Publishing Co., 1898), 694-703; J. L. Logan to R. S. Ewell, July 1, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, p. 182; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 215-16; Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 115. Dow was imprisoned in Richmond and Mobile until March 14, 1864, when he was exchanged for Robert E. Lee's son, W. H. F. "Rooney" Lee, who ironically had been captured while convalescing from a wound received at Brandy Station, June 9, 1863. Dow, Reminiscences, 709-733; Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 115; Fairfax Downey, Clash of Cavalry: The Battle of Brandy Station, June 9, 1863 (New York: David McKay Co., 1959), 151; Byrne, Prophet of Prohibition, 103-104. Byrne incorrectly states that Dow was exchanged for General Fitzhugh Lee.

89 R. B. Irwin to N. P. Banks, July 3, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, pp. 72-73; J. L. Logan to J. E. Johnston, enclosed in T. B. Lamar to S. Cooper, [July] 6, 1863, Ibid., 182; Townsend, History of the Sixteenth Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteers, 249-51; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 216. A private in the 49th Massachusetts regiment described the panic which seized the contrabands and civilians encamped at Springfield Landing: "several hundred contrabands were living there in mud huts, and at the first alarm rushed on board the steamboats, twenty-one being drowned in their frantic efforts to secure their safety. That panic spread to our cook-stands, a mile to the rear of the regiment, and to see our butcher pick up his small demijohn of whiskey, which he sells at two dollars a pint bottle, and rush for the before carefully avoided riflepits, followed by some of the cooks, who hastily upset their coffee and beans, resolved that the rebels should not breakfast thereon, was one of those rich incidents that
need to be seen to be fully appreciated." Johns, Life with the Forty-Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, 342. Banks ordered the 114th New York to march to the relief of its sister regiment at Springfield Landing, but the order was almost immediately countermanded. Beecher, Record of the 114th Regiment, N.Y.S.V., 220. Logan's unexpected raid upon the Federal supply depot apparently was sufficiently unsettling to cause General Banks to dispatch his adjutant with instructions to make a thorough investigation of the situation at Springfield Landing and to draw up specific suggestions for preventing a recurrence of so disgraceful an affair. Lieutenant Colonel R. B. Irwin reported that while he was completing his inspection at the landing on the afternoon of July 3, "the contrabands, seeing Lieutenant Sayles with 20 men coming from the same direction as yesterday's raiders, raising a wild cry of 'Rebels!' 'The rebs is comin'!' rushed in a frantic terror-stricken mass of men, women, and children, with loud cries, toward the river. At the bluff they were stopped by the bayonets of the Sixteenth New Hampshire, which formed with great promptitude behind the levee. The One hundred and sixty-second New York got under arms at once, came up at double-quick, and in about five minutes was in line at the road, but by this time the alarm was over. Two negroes rushed into the river and were drowned. This affords a pretty fair idea, I think, of the alarm of yesterday." R. B. Irwin to N. P. Banks, July 3, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, p. 73; Townsend, History of the Sixteenth Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteers, 251-52.


91 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, June 28, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

92 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 6, 1863, Ibid.

93 Irwin, "History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 226-27; Irwin, "Capture of Port Hudson," 597; Hesmer, The Color-Guard, 216; Johns, Life with the Forty-Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, 358; Townsend, History of the Sixteenth Regiment, New Hampshire Volunteers, 279; Beecher, Record of the 114th Regiment, N.Y.S.V., 222; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, July 7, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Preston, Port Hudson, 5; "Fortification and Siege of Port Hudson," 341; Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 117; Walter George Smith, Life and Letters of Thomas Kilby Smith (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1898), 74.
"Fortification and Siege of Port Hudson," 339.

Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 227.

Crawford M. Jackson, "An Account of the Occupation of Fort [sic] Hudson, La.," Alabama Historical Quarterly, XVIII (October 1956), 477-78; "Fortification and Siege of Port Hudson," 341; McMorries, History of the First Regiment Alabama Volunteer Infantry, 68.

Clark, The One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment of New York State Volunteers, 104-105.


N. P. Banks to F. Gardner, July 8, 1863, Ibid., 53.

F. Gardner to N. P. Banks, July 8, 1863, Ibid.

N. P. Banks to F. Gardner, July 8, 1863, Ibid., 53-54; Articles of capitulation proposed between the commissioners of the garrison of Port Hudson, La., and the forces of the United States before said place, July 8, 1863, Ibid., 54; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 230-31; "Fortification and Siege of Port Hudson," 340-41.


Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 390; Surby, Grierson Raids, 143; Preston, Port Hudson, 10.

Army strength and casualty figures are taken from Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 121-23. Officially, General Banks placed his losses at 45 officers and 663 enlisted men killed, 191 officers and 3,145 enlisted men wounded, 12 officers and 307 enlisted men captured; for a total loss of 4,363 officers and enlisted men. Returns of Casualties in the Union Forces at Port Hudson, La., May 23-July 8, 1863, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXVI, pt. 1, p. 70. Banks' figures, however, do not take into
account an unusually high number of casualties from sunstroke and disease.

106 Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 233-34; Cunningham, Port Hudson Campaign, 123-24.


108 Returns of Casualties in the Union Forces at Port Hudson, La., May 23-July 8, 1863, Ibid., 70.


112 T. Green to L. Bush, July 14, 1863, Ibid., 230-32; C. Grover to R. B. Irwin, July 14, 1863, Ibid., 204-205; N. A. M. Dudley to W. W. Carruth, July 15, 1863, Ibid., 208-209; Taylor, Destruction and Reconstruction, 174; Clark, One Hundred and Sixteenth Regiment of New York State Volunteers, 110-14; Johns, Life with the Forty-Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, 373-75; Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 251-53; Kerby, Kirby Smith's Confederacy, 119. Federal casualties at Cox's Plantation amounted to 465 killed, wounded and missing, as compared to a Confederate loss of 33.

113 Irwin, History of the Nineteenth Army Corps, 254.


115 Special Orders No. 174, Department of the Gulf, July 18, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.


Ibid.; Williams, *Lincoln Finds a General*, V, 68-72. Upon the occupation of Natchez, Ransom's thoughts had turned immediately to Grierson, and on July 14, he had ordered a hasty note penned to the Illinois cavalryman: "If you could manage in any way to get a troop here, you would be doing very good service, almost indestructible service. I spoke of you and for you to General Grant; and said all that you wanted me to say. [Emphasis added] I wish you could get up on some of the transports we send down with cattle, say the Imperial. She is a splendid boat. Put 100 on her anyhow. It is of the last importance that you should have a command here." It should be noted that the actual author of this letter was General Ransom's aide-de-camp, Colonel Thomas Kilby Smith. Since Smith had visited Port Hudson during the previous week bearing the official dispatches which announced the surrender of Vicksburg, it seems evident that Grierson had availed himself of the opportunity to engage the colonel's services as an emissary to General Grant; no doubt in a covert effort to convince the commander of the victorious Army of the Tennessee to exert pressure upon Banks to release the Illinois cavalry from further service in the Gulf Department. It is understandable, therefore, that Smith should have cautioned Grierson that "I have not written upon the subject of cavalry to General Banks. You must show him this letter, so that he will understand. Don't do anything to cripple his movements." T. K. Smith to B. H. Grierson, July 14, 1863, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXIV, pt. 3, p. 511; Smith, *Life and Letters of Thomas Kilby Smith*, 76-77.


120 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 396.

121 S. A. Forbes to Nettie Forbes, August 2, 1863, Forbes Collection; Surby, *Grierson Raids*, 143-44.

122 In fact, Grierson's task was virtually impossible. With scarcely 1,200 effectives--only a fraction of whom were under his direct control at any given time--the cavalry commander was expected not only to protect the rear of the Federal siege works, but also to provide escort service for wagon trains, defend the supply depot at Springfield Landing and cover lines of communication which stretched to Baton Rouge and beyond to New Orleans. The late-arriving colonel of the 6th Michigan Volunteers found the situation behind Port Hudson strange and alarming. "I inquire what guards the communication of the besieging army with Springfield Landing," Colonel Edward Bacon related, "and am informed
that Grierson's cavalry are the only protection of the rear of Banks' army and that in reality they are not numerous enough to guard much of the long stretch where attack may be expected, but that Grierson's raid has made his name such a terror to the rebels that he guards where he is not almost as well as where he is." Bacon, Among the Cotton Thieves, 126-27. Through no fault of Grierson's, the inadequate mounted force at Port Hudson was virtually immobilized. Not only was the rugged terrain in the vicinity of the river stronghold unsuitable for the deployment of mounted troops, the cavalry was also tied down to picket duty and occupied in guarding large forage and supply trains. Unable to conduct frequent scouts into the Louisiana countryside, the Union cavalry remained virtually blind to the enemy's whereabouts in the rear of Port Hudson. It was the absence of accurate intelligence that led Grierson into a dangerous and humiliating trap at Clinton on June 3. With the myth of Grierson's invincibility exposed, Colonel Logan's Confederate horsemen thereafter struck with boldness and daring at widely separated points behind the Union lines--first carrying off a Federal brigadier and then destroying supplies and transportation.

CHAPTER VI

"I do not think I could have sent you a better man."

On a fresh early autumn day in 1863, a tall familiar figure descended unsteadily onto the platform of the Jacksonville, Illinois depot. Although nearly ten weeks had elapsed since the unfortunate accident which had crippled the newly appointed brigadier and commander of the cavalry division of the XVI Corps, General Grierson remained frustratingly dependent upon a crutch and cane. Enthusiastically embracing his new duties, the cavalry commander had repeatedly ignored the stern advice of army physicians and had travelled frequently and far to inspect and deploy the mounted detachments scattered along the railroad between Memphis, Tennessee and Corinth, Mississippi. Finally, on September 21, the corps medical director had joined with the division surgeon to obtain a twenty-day leave of absence allowing Grierson to journey north to rest and recuperate.¹

Relaxation, Ben Grierson quickly discovered, could be as rare a commodity in peaceful Jacksonville as it most certainly had been in war-torn west Tennessee. The popular musician and political enthusiast, who some twenty-eight months earlier had marched reluctantly off to war, returned
a national hero. A steady stream of friends, neighbors and casual acquaintances flowed through the Grierson homestead on East State Street. Festivities culminated on Friday night, October 9, as a large and enthusiastic crowd packed Strawn's Hall to pay public tribute to "their beloved fellow-citizen and their favorite General."  

"We are living many years in one," General Grierson informed his attentive audience on that fall evening in 1863. The bloody rush of events since that fateful cannon shot in Charleston harbor had, in two short years, generated alterations in the very fabric of American government and society so profound as to be revolutionary. "Amid all this strife," the Union cavalryman confidently predicted, "we are, as a nation, making rapid strides to greatness. ... elements of power are being developed, and changes transpiring wonderful to behold."  

As much as the country he served, Ben Grierson had also been "living many lives at once," and the changes wrought in his personal fortunes at times seemed almost as momentous as those affecting nation. Two years of military service had unexpectedly transformed the thirty-four-year-old failure of 1863, into the most successful and most widely acclaimed Federal cavalry commander in the western theater of war.

For the Union hero of 1863, however, the final eighteen months of conflict in the West were to be a long, gruelling
period marked by tedium, hard work and repeated frustration. "The brilliant ovations . . . tendered me after the 'great raid,'" the unlikely cavalryman observed, "did not altogether spread my bed with rose-leaves. I had been called upon for perilous duty . . . had performed what was deemed impossible, and there were those who looked for greater achievements at every turn; if I had won the heights its [sic] was to find them perilous. . . . Possibly I had been treading too near the toes of some one more ambitious, for I unexpectedly found myself during the year 1864 placed subordinate and under the control of officers with less experience and not so capable of conducting a separate or independent command successfully as myself." 4

During the cold winter months of January and February, 1864, Generals Grant and Sherman patiently plotted a coordinated military effort designed to knock Mississippi effectively out of the war. The Federal objective was Meridian—the point at which the north-south railroad crossed the east-west road. While Sherman marched east from Vicksburg at the head of 20,000 infantry, a large cavalry force would descend from west Tennessee along the Mobile & Ohio Railroad. If all went well, the two columns, united at Meridian, might push into the industrial heartland of Alabama. Speed was essential. Sherman intended at all cost to be back on the Mississippi River by March 1. 5
As commander of the Union cavalry in west Tennessee, General Grierson naturally expected to lead the mounted expedition along the Mobile & Ohio. His hopes, however, evaporated when, on January 9, Brigadier General William Sooy Smith—now Chief of Cavalry for the entire Military Division of the Mississippi—arrived at Corinth at the head of 2,500 fresh troopers from middle Tennessee. Much to Grierson's disappointment, on January 27, Sherman placed all the cavalry in the Department of the Tennessee under Smith's command. It was only after considerable cajoling on Sherman's part, and a promise "that after the cavalry reached him at Meridian he [Sherman] would relieve General Smith and send him back to Nashville, giving me my own independent command again; that he would cut me loose there to create as much havoc as possible among the rebels throughout that section of the country," that the unhappy junior brigadier finally consented to accompany the cavalry expedition as a "supernumary" [sic].

In conference with General Smith at Memphis on January 27, Sherman set February 1 as the date on which the cavalry would move out of its camps near Collierville, Tennessee. The infantry, under Sherman's personal command, would leave Vicksburg on the third and would rendezvous with the mounted column at Meridian on or about February 10. With barely ten days in which to cover almost 250 miles of Mississippi countryside, the movement of the cavalry must
be swift and sure. "This will call for great energy of action on your part," the department commander cautioned, "but I believe you are equal to it, and you have the best and most experienced troops in the service, and they will do anything that is possible. General Grierson is with you, and is familiar with the whole country." Above all else, Sherman advised, "do not let the enemy draw you into minor affairs, but look solely to the greater object, to destroy his communication from Okolona to Meridian and thence eastward to Selma." 9

Much to Sherman's eventual disgust, Smith remained in camp until February 11--one day after his expected arrival at Meridian--awaiting the appearance of Colonel George E. Waring, Jr.'s brigade enroute from icebound Union City, Tennessee. 10 When the cavalry finally did move, it was at a snail's pace, affording Forrest ample time to concentrate forces to block the Federal line of march.

On February 21, the advance of General Smith's 7,600-man column collided with 2,500 Rebels under Forrest near West Point, Mississippi. Believing himself greatly outnumbered, the ailing and considerably overwrought Union commander ordered a slow withdrawal toward the north. On the following day, another series of clashes commenced at Okolona and continued for fifteen miles northwestward, where the virtually leaderless bluecoats were put in full flight. It was at this critical moment, a member of the 2nd Iowa
Cavalry recalled, that "Gen. Grierson, rather by common consent as well as from the necessity of things, assumed the direction of affairs . . . and to him we owe our salvation." Under the Illinois cavalryman's direction, the demoralized Union troopers limped into camp near Memphis on February 26. General Smith, meanwhile, learned that after waiting six days at Meridian, an enraged Sherman had finally despaired of the cavalry's arrival and on the twentieth had stormed back to Vicksburg.

General Grierson's skillful conduct during the retreat from Okolona fortunately preserved his reputation from the harsh censure levelled by Sherman against Sooy Smith and the cavalry. But much to the discomfiture of the Memphis cavalry commander, Forrest was not yet finished with the Yankees in west Tennessee. Emboldened by his easy victory over Smith, the Rebel captain struck out in mid-March upon a daring raid which carried him as far north as Paducah, Kentucky and which culminated on April 10-13 in the controversial storming of Fort Pillow, barely forty miles above Memphis. Grierson, his cavalry poorly mounted, widely scattered and severely weakened by the absence of large numbers of recently reenlisted troopers enjoying veteran furlough, proved woefully unequal to the formidable task of running the resourceful Forrest to the ground. For the first time in the war, the hero of the "Great Raid" felt the bitter sting of public criticism.
Effectiveness in dealing with Forrest was fast becoming the single most important criterion by which military commanders in west Tennessee were to be judged. The Meridian debacle sent Sooy Smith back to Nashville under a cloud. Stephen A. Hurlbut's subsequent failure to deal with Forrest during the Fort Pillow campaign produced yet further displeasure at the headquarters of Generals Grant and Sherman resulting, on April 17, in the appointment of Major General C. C. Washburn to command at Memphis. Briefly, Grant considered relieving Grierson from command of the cavalry in west Tennessee, but then decided to allow the heretofore effective cavalryman another chance. Nevertheless, Sherman concluded to send Brigadier General Samuel D. Sturgis, commanding the cavalry corps in the Department of the Ohio, to Memphis "to give life to that command." 15

With reorganization underway in west Tennessee, General Sherman, who on March 18 had replaced Grant in command of the Military Division of the Mississippi headquartered at Nashville, turned to preparations for a major offensive into Georgia carefully timed to coincide with a similar advance against Richmond in the east. 16 By the close of April, the western army was ready, and on May 5, two massive pincers forged to strangle the rebellion at its heart were simultaneously set in motion in northern Virginia and in middle Tennessee. 17
One concern loomed large in the mind of the Union commander in the west, as his impressive military machine surged forward to do battle with Joe Johnston's 65,000 Confederates. To an almost critical degree, the success of Sherman's ambitious campaign depended upon the integrity of four hundred and seventy-three miles of single-track railroad stretching from Louisville, through Nashville and Chattanooga, to Atlanta. Over this slender steel thread, "so delicate, that one man could in a minute have broken or removed a rail," Federal quartermasters must maintain a massive and uninterrupted stream of supplies flowing south. Should the Rebels succeed in seriously damaging the invitingly long Yankee umbilical cord, Sherman's army of 100,000 men and 35,000 animals must retreat or perish.\(^\text{18}\)

Acutely conscious of the tantalizing vulnerability of his fragile line of communication, and fearing that Forrest might slip across the Tennessee River and sever the steel artery pumping life-blood to the western army,\(^\text{19}\) Sherman instructed General Washburn to send the rough-hewn, hard-drinking Sturgis\(^\text{20}\) into eastern Mississippi. According to orders issued on May 31, Sturgis was instructed to proceed directly to Corinth and to then move south along the Nobile & Ohio Railroad to Tupelo and Okolona, destroying the tracks as he marched. If the Federal column should meet Forrest's cavalry at any point along the route of march, Sturgis would either destroy or disperse the Rebel command.
Encountering no resistance, the Union commander was authorized to push on as far as possible toward Columbus and Macon before returning to Memphis by way of Grenada. Even should Sturgis fail to defeat Forrest, he might at least create sufficient alarm and havoc along the Mobile & Ohio to keep the Rebel cavalry pinned down in Mississippi. 21

Accordingly, on June 1, Sturgis marched out of Memphis at the head of an impressive Federal host, consisting of 4,800 infantry under the immediate command of Colonel W. L. McMillen and 3,300 cavalry commanded by General Grierson. Encumbered by 250 wagons and 22 pieces of artillery, the long bluecoated column lumbered slowly south under a steady downpour which soon transformed the Mississippi roads into muddy quagmires. On June 9, Grierson's mounted division encamped at Stubb's plantation, just fourteen miles southeast of Ripley, to allow the plodding infantry and baggage train to catch up. The expedition dispatched to run Forrest to earth, the cavalry commander sadly reflected, was covering less than eight miles per day. 22

"At Stubb's Plantation," General Grierson recalled,

. . . I again informed the General that I was confident from what I had learned then and the day previous, that the enemy was in large force and not far off, and learning that the mules of the train were exhausted and in bad condition, after their great exertion in pulling the heavily loaded wagons through the deep mud, in which they were frequently mired thus far, I advised the General to remain where he was, as the position was a good one, and
that in my judgment the enemy would attack us there if no further advance was made, and our chances for victory would be greatly strengthened if the Infantry and Artillery could be quietly put into position for battle, while the Cavalry, unencumbered, continued to operate in such a manner as to fully develop the enemy's strength and draw him forward to a general engagement. 23

Confident that "the enemy would not be found in force nearer than Tupelo or Okolona," 24 Sturgis disregarded the advice of his cavalry chief and, on the sultry morning of June 10, ordered the bulk of Grierson's division to proceed in the direction of Guntown, about fifteen miles distant. It was after one o'clock in the afternoon, when the infantry again overtook the mounted command near the intersection of the Baldwin-Pontotoc and Ripley-Guntown roads, known locally as Brice's Cross Roads. Much to his alarm, Sturgis discovered that Grierson had been engaged at the crossroads since 9:45 a.m. Facing Grierson's 2,400 troopers was a force of 4,700 Confederate cavalry and 12 pieces of artillery, all under the personal command of Nathan Bedford Forrest.

Frantically, the Federal commander struggled to bring up his infantry—exhausted from a long march under a hot sun and strung out in extended column five miles to the rear of the cavalry—and to form in line of battle. But the cunning Forrest had carefully chosen his position on the high ground east of Tishomingo Creek. Like a naval commander crossing the enemy's "T," he compelled Sturgis to advance his already flagging footsoldiers in column across
a narrow bridge and onto a small, open field which afforded little room for maneuver.

For four blazing, desperate hours, Grierson's dismounted troopers withstood the withering enemy fire until, near two o'clock, Sturgis committed the final, fatal error. As Colonel McMillen's infantry trickled onto the field, the Union commander instructed Grierson to withdraw the cavalry from the center of the line and to post his tired horsemen in the rear and upon the flanks of the footsoldiers. Observing the movement of the Yankee horse, Forrest struck, throwing his dismounted troopers and artillery at the weakened Union center, while hard-riding Rebel horsemen simultaneously hurled themselves against the rear and flanks of the bluecoated line. Enveloped on the right and left, its baggage train thrown into confusion, the Union infantry crumbled and fled in a panic-stricken mass across Tishomingo Creek.

Throughout the remainder of the day and until nightfall on June 11, Forrest's victorious Confederates chased the disorganized Yankee horde. Grierson, with a handful of troopers, alone offered even token resistance to the repeated assaults of the Rebel cavalry. One final charge on the outskirts of Ripley secured the balance of the Union wagon train and fourteen additional pieces of artillery. Satisfied, Forrest broke off the pursuit and allowed Sturgis to race undisturbed toward an awaiting court of inquiry at
Memphis. The Federal disaster was near complete, and it proved of small consolation to Ben Grierson that once again "he was the only general officer who came out of the campaign with credit." 25

For a second time, Forrest had humiliated a vastly superior Federal force, and the road remained open for an assault upon vital Union lines of communication in middle Tennessee. No sooner, therefore, had Sherman learned of the disaster to Sturgis' command than he ordered General Washburn to outfit yet another expedition for the purpose of preventing Forrest from moving east. "I wish you to organize as large a force as possible at Memphis," he informed the Union commander in west Tennessee, "with Generals A. J. Smith or Mower in command, to pursue Forrest on foot, devastating the land over which he has passed or may pass, and make him and the people of Tennessee and Mississippi realize that, although a bold, daring, and successful leader, he will bring ruin and misery on an country where he may pass or tarry." "If we do not punish Forrest now," Sherman reminded Washburn, "the whole effect of our past conquests will be lost." 26

Consequently, on July 1, Major General A. J. Smith concentrated his command at La Grange, Tennessee. As finally arrayed, Smith's force consisted of the First and Third Divisions of the XVI Army Corps, under the command of Brigadier General Joseph A. Mower 27 and Colonel David Moore,
respectively; Colonel Edward Bouton's 1st Brigade of U. S. Colored Troops; and the Second and Third Cavalry Brigades of the XVI Corps, under General Grierson. With 14,000 soldiers and twenty artillery pieces at his back, the Union commander felt confident of success. 28

On the morning of July 5, A. J. Smith's expedition broke camp—the infantry and cavalry moving by parallel roads in the general direction of Ripley. While Grierson's mounted advance fenced with small bands of Rebel cavalry, the long double column of blueclad soldiers pressed steadily southward and entered Pontotoc on the eleventh, following a sharp skirmish with a portion of Brigadier General James R. Chalmers' First Division of Forrest's command. The main body of Confederates—7,000 strong under Forrest and S. D. Lee—Grierson's scouts reported, occupied a strong position along the Okolona road, about twenty miles farther south.

In conference with General Smith, both Grierson and Mower emphasized the manifest danger involved in attacking Forrest on his own ground. Instead of continuing south, they argued, Smith might attempt to throw the Rebels off balance by marching rapidly toward Tupelo, eighteen miles east of Pontotoc. Outflanked, Forrest would be compelled to advance and do battle with the Yankees on terrain of their own choosing.

After some discussion, the Federal commander concurred with his lieutenants, and, on the morning of July 13,
General Grierson's horsemen led the advance eastward. Forrest, although surprised by the unexpected movement, reacted swiftly. Six miles west of Tupelo, Chalmers struck the flank and rear of Mower's division. Swinging quickly into line of battle, the surprised bluecoats confronted Colonel Edward Rucker's mounted brigade and drove the outnumbered Rebel horsemen back with heavy losses.

As the rattle of musketry abated along the Pontotoc road, a message arrived from Grierson, informing Smith that the cavalry had occupied Tupelo and was holding the high ground west of town, near the hamlet of Harrisburg. In the deepening afternoon shadows, the Federal infantry and train moved into position about two miles outside of Tupelo. Facing about, Smith formed his command on a two-brigade front into double line of battle. Mower's First Division rested its left upon the Pontotoc road, while Moore's Third Division formed with its right flank upon Mower's left. Colonel Bouton's colored brigade, meanwhile, occupied a position in the rear of the Third Division, facing the left flank. Finally, Grierson's cavalry took post behind the Union line, protecting the train and the right flank.

Near dawn on the fourteenth, Smith advanced his entire line and occupied a slight elevation in the center of an open field. At 6 a.m., Forrest launched an assault upon the Union left and center. Four times the impetuous Rebels hurled themselves against the Yankee position, and each time
they recoiled with staggering losses. Finally, after the failure of a desperate attack upon Mower's division, Forrest retired to the cover of the woods, where he erected earthworks and awaited a Federal advance.

Much to the amazement of the decimated butternuts, the morning of July 15 brought no Union attack. Instead, the Federal commander dispatched Grierson's cavalry to tear up the railroad for five miles on either side of Tupelo. In the meantime, Smith--his bread spoiled and his ammunition nearly exhausted--prepared to retreat. With Grierson's return at about noon, the bluecoated column commenced a slow withdrawal toward La Grange, where it arrived on the twentieth.29

Forrest congratulated himself upon maintaining his position and forcing the retreat of an immensely superior foe. But Confederate stretcher-bearers told a grisly tale. Almost 1,300 grayclad bodies littered the ground in front of the Yankee earthworks. More than two hundred of Forrest's hard-fighting horsemen had ridden to their final charge, and the Rebel chieftain was himself incapacitated with a painful wound through the right foot. Union losses during the Tupelo expedition: meanwhile, amounted to less than 80 dead and slightly over 600 wounded and missing.30

Although Washburn and Smith proclaimed a resounding victory over Forrest at Harrisburg, General Sherman remained skeptical. Not even the persistent rumors of the
Rebel cavalryman's death relieved the Federal commander's concern for the safety of his ever-lengthening line of supply. Fearing that Smith might be tempted to rest upon his laurels, Sherman quickly wired General Washburn, reminding the ranking officer in west Tennessee that "it was by General Grant's special order that General Smith was required after his fight to pursue and continue to follow Forrest. He must keep after him till recalled by me or General Grant." There could be no rest until the Rebel cavalry was either completely destroyed or at least effectively barred from entering middle Tennessee. Consequently, Sherman directed that Smith move immediately by way of Columbus, Mississippi to Decatur, Alabama, "where he can be supplied, and from which point he can watch Forrest."31

During the first week in August, A. J. Smith hastily re-assembled the Right Wing of the XVI Army Corps at La Grange, Tennessee and Holly Springs, Mississippi. "In addition to his force proper, 10,000 strong," General Washburn reported, "he has 3,000 colored troops from Memphis, three Minnesota regiments sent me from Saint Louis, and 4,000 cavalry." The First and Third Divisions of the XVI Corps, under General Mower and Colonel William T. Shaw, comprised the bulk of the Union infantry, augmented by Colonel Bouton's brigade of U. S. Colored Troops. General Grierson, meanwhile, exercised personal command over the First and Second Divisions of his recently constituted
Cavalry Corps.\textsuperscript{32}

As before, slowness and caution governed the Federal advance into Forrest's domain. Leaving La Grange on August 9, the main body of Smith's command inched forward, repairing the Mississippi Central Railroad as it marched. Although Brigadier General Edward Hatch's mounted division, supported by two infantry brigades of Mower's division, occupied Oxford on the ninth, the aggressive Iowan was ordered back to Abbeville on the thirteenth. It was August 22, before the Yankee advance returned to the streets of Oxford.

Forrest, meanwhile, had concocted a daring ploy to remove the invader from Mississippi soil. Under cover of darkness on August 18, the Rebel commander slipped silently out of Oxford at the head of 2,000 select horsemen and four pieces of artillery. General Chalmers remained behind with instructions to demonstrate continuously on the enemy's front. Moving rapidly north, Forrest audaciously attacked Memphis in the pre-dawn hours of Sunday, August 21, and nearly succeeded in carrying off Generals Washburn, Hurlbut and Ralph P. Buckland.

Although cheated out of his intended captives, the Confederate cavalryman nonetheless savored yet another sweet victory. Informed of the raid upon district headquarters, General Smith abruptly ordered his army to fall back toward Memphis. Before abandoning Oxford, however,
the Yankee soldiers gave full vent to long-pent-up frustrations. According to Captain Charles T. Biser of the Confederate army, the men of Smith's and Grierson's commands applied the torch to "34 stores and business houses, court-house, Masonic Hall, 2 fine large hotels, besides carpenter, blacksmith, and other shops; also 5 fine dwelling-houses, among the latter that of Hon. Jacob Thompson. General Smith in person superintended the burning. He refused to allow the citizens to remove anything of value from their burning buildings." Their task of destruction completed, the Federal troopers retired northward, with Chalmers' Rebel horsemen in close pursuit. Grierson's troopers, almost constantly engaged at the rear of Smith's column, finally returned to La Grange on August 28, bringing the Union expedition to a close.\(^\text{33}\)

Fall, 1864, brought still further annoyance and frustration to the commander of the Cavalry Corps of the Military District of West Tennessee. On the very day that Grierson's troopers returned to La Grange from Oxford, two hundred and fifty miles to the west, General Sterling Price and his staff made final preparations for an invasion of Missouri. To meet this sudden threat in the trans-Mississippi, General Grant immediately ordered the 1,900 troopers of Colonel Edward Winslow's Second Division of Grierson's Corps across the river, followed shortly thereafter by the two infantry divisions of A. J. Smith's command. When, during
mid-September, General Hatch's mounted command was ordered across the Tennessee River to counter Forrest's still unchastened cavalry in middle Tennessee, Grierson was left with less than a colonel's command composed of the least serviceable men and mounts from his two absent divisions.34

To complete Grierson's discomfort, during October, 1864, the cavalry within Sherman's Military Division of the Mississippi underwent total reorganization. On October 24, an energetic twenty-seven-year-old brevet major general, James Harrison Wilson, arrived at Gaylesville, Alabama to assume command of the newly constituted Cavalry Corps of the Military Division of the Mississippi. Under Sherman's instructions, organization of the cavalry would be centralized and subject directly to Wilson's control. In an effort to accomplish this end, the commander of the western armies announced that "the office of chief of cavalry at the headquarters of the different departments in this division is abolished, and the chiefs of cavalry will report to their department commanders for other assignments."35

For Grierson, the implications of Sherman's order were not immediately apparent. While completing an inspection of the Federal cavalry in northern Alabama and middle Tennessee, General Wilson instructed the cavalry commander at Memphis to prepare as many mounted detachments as could be assembled from Missouri and west Tennessee for a future movement through Mississippi, Alabama and
Georgia. During the following week, Wilson issued formal orders designating Grierson commander of the Fourth Division, Cavalry Corps, Military Division of the Mississippi, with instructions to "collect the various detachments of his division now in West Tennessee and Missouri, and with them join the cavalry corps at this place [Nashville], via Louisville, Ky., or such other route as maybe found more convenient."\(^{36}\)

Whether by coincidence or design, General Grierson was attending to military and family matters in Illinois when notification of his new assignment reached Memphis. The unexpectedly difficult task of re-equipment and transporting Grierson's absent division from St. Louis to Nashville, therefore, fell upon the shoulders of Adjutant Woodward. Lack of authority on Woodward's part, the reluctance of department commanders to relinquish their mounted troops, jurisdictional disputes and confusion in orders produced near chaos at St. Louis and at Nashville. By the close of November, only a 400-man detachment from Colonel Winslow's command had been successfully transferred to Memphis.\(^{37}\)

Unfortunately, Wilson was unprepared for the delays and confusion which attended the movement of Grierson's cavalry, and on November 20, the young general fired off a blistering letter to the commander of the Fourth Division. Where, he asked, had Woodward obtained authority to order Winslow's command to Memphis, when in orders from corps headquarters
it had been repeatedly explained that Grierson's division would move immediately to Nashville, via Louisville. Moreover, the angry corps commander thundered, "I am also informed that instead of being at St. Louis attending to the orders sent you through Capt. Woodward, you are now or have been at Chicago, Illinois. There being no record at Army Headquarters of a leave of absence to you, you will report without delay by what authority you are absent from St. Louis or Memphis, your original post." 38

In response to General Wilson's accusation that Captain Woodward had overstepped the bounds of his authority, Grierson assumed full responsibility for any actions performed by his adjutant. However, "that your orders and those of Major Genl. Thomas concerning the Cavalry have not been carried out," the commander of the Fourth Division insisted, "is certainly no fault of mine. Half the command were in Missouri or Arkansas, where they could not be reached and were acting under the order of Officers far above me in authority. The other half were at Memphis and could not be taken away from there, because Major General Washburn would not permit it, neither will he now until Gen'l. Dana arrives."

Wilson's own orders, Grierson pointed out, granted discretion to the officer on hand to forward the cavalry via Louisville, "or another route as may be found more convenient." Upon his arrival at St. Louis, Captain Woodward
had found that except for the small detachment on hand, the main body of Winslow's command was still in Arkansas. According to some sources, Major General Samuel Curtis, commanding the expedition in pursuit of Price, had already sent his mounted force overland to Memphis. It was upon the basis of this information, Grierson informed his superior, that Woodward, with the approval of General Rosecrans in command of the Department of Missouri, had selected Memphis and the "more convenient" point at which to concentrate the cavalry.

As for the cavalry chief's question concerning Grierson's absence from St. Louis or Memphis, the accused officer simply produced "Extract 7, Special Orders No. 183, from Hd.Qrs. District West Tennessee," which authorized his presence in "Missouri and Illinois on military business connected with my command." "While in St. Louis," Grierson explained, "I made application to Washington thro Capt. Coryell of the Cavalry Bureau, for an entire remount for Winslow's command, which I obtained, and had the horses (2000 in number) shod in readiness for them. While in Illinois I arranged for the filling up of the Illinois regiments in my (now Hatch's) command. My leaving here in the first place was for the purpose of getting together all the troops I possibly could in pursuance of instructions from Major Gen'l. Howard and yourself, in order that I might be able to make the expedition first indicated by you
and which was afterward abandoned."39

Grierson's attempt to justify his activities in Illinois and Captain Woodward's actions at St. Louis produced little noticeable effect upon his anxious superior, and on December 13, orders were issued from Headquarters Cavalry Corps, Military Division of the Mississippi, relieving him from command of the Fourth Division.40 At the time, General Wilson assigned no reason for his sudden removal of the cavalry commander at Memphis. Long after the war, however, the former cavalry chief denied that he had singled Grierson out for censure. Wilson, a junior brigadier general of volunteers and a lieutenant colonel in the regular army, exercised command by brevet rank. Upon arriving in the west, he explained:

I . . . found George Stoneman, who had been the first corps commander of the Eastern Cavalry, and first chief of the Cavalry Bureau, holding the place of chief of cavalry to the Army of the Ohio. W. L. Elliott, an old cavalryman of high character, held the same title in the Army of the Cumberland, while General Grierson of the volunteers held a similar place in the Army of the Tennessee. They were all my seniors and, although my brevet rank gave me an indisputable right to command them, I thought it best for all concerned that they should be disposed of . . . and, as Sherman fully concurred, they were . . . relieved in turn from further service with the cavalry.41

Mercifully, an aggrieved Grierson was afforded scant opportunity to bemoan his fate. When Major General Napoleon J. T. Dana, the commander of the recently reconstituted
Department of the Mississippi, reached Memphis on December 8, he found an urgent message from General Halleck waiting upon his desk. The chief of staff of the Union armies was deeply concerned with the situation near Nashville, where General John Bell Hood, the new commander of the Army of Tennessee, was apparently comfortably ensconced and hoping to draw Sherman's army north from Georgia. The Confederate army, Halleck discerned, relied heavily upon the Mobile & Ohio Railroad for logistical support. He therefore instructed Dana to "immediately endeavor to cut the Mobile and Ohio Railroad so that Hood's army cannot be supplied by that route."42

Dana entertained little doubt concerning Grierson's eminent fitness to conduct such an expedition; his most pressing problem was finding troops for the general to command. Scarcely 1,000 badly mounted and poorly equipped troopers lingered in the vicinity of Memphis during the first week in December. The resourceful Dana, however, was undaunted by the seeming impossibility of his task. Orders issued from department headquarters directed Colonel Embury D. Osband to rush his 1,500-man brigade north from Vicksburg. While awaiting Osband's arrival, the department commander drew upon vast reserves of ingenuity to delay the departure of Colonel Winslow's command, refitting at Memphis but under orders to proceed to middle Tennessee. Within two weeks, Dana had assembled three brigades--3,500 men--
for a winter raid upon the Mobile & Ohio. 43

News of Hood's defeat in front of Nashville on December 15 and 16, suddenly cast the projected Federal expedition into Mississippi in an entirely new perspective. Immediate interruption of the Mobile & Ohio might prevent critical supplies and reinforcements from reaching the crippled Rebel army as it retreated southward. With this important objective in mind, Dana and Grierson redoubled their efforts to place the mounted force at Memphis in fighting trim. Finally, on the rain-blanchend morning of December 21, a long line of blueclad horsemen moved out of the river city toward the southeast. For the first time in nearly twenty months, the hero of the "Great Raid" exercised independent command, and he seemed determined to prove that he had not lost the touch.

Travelling as fast as mud-clogged roads would allow, the Yankee troopers entered Ripley near noon on the twenty-fourth. During a brief lunch-hour break, General Grierson organized two strong detachments to move east, striking the railroad at Booneville and near Baldwyn. The main column, meanwhile, continued south in the direction of Ellistown and Harrisburg.

Late in the afternoon on Christmas Day, the Federal commander called a second halt on Old Town Creek, five miles north of Tupelo. Scouts reported a large Rebel training camp and depot located at Verona, and Grierson
dispatched Colonel Karge's experienced brigade to disrupt the enemy installation. Descending from out of a rain-blackened night upon the unsuspecting rebel encampment, the Yankee riders routed between 200 and 300 astonished Confederates and applied the torch to a large quantity of arms, ammunition, quartermaster and commissary stores, and "200 army wagons, marked 'U.S.'" Following the destruction of the rails and telegraph in the vicinity of Verona, Karge's command rejoined Grierson's column at Harrisburg.

On December 26, the Federal cavalry struck the Mobile & Ohio at Shannon and proceeded south along the line of the railroad. At 7 a.m. on the twenty-eighth, Karge's advance drove in the pickets of a Rebel force numbering about 500 men, under the command of Brigadier General Samuel Gholson, on the outskirts of Egypt. Although badly outnumbered, the determined Rebels offered stiff resistance, inflicting nearly 125 casualties upon the Yankee horsemen before finally surrendering at about 11 a.m.

From Egypt, Grierson turned due west in the direction of Houston and Vicksburg. New Year's Day found the hard-riding Union troopers at Winona on the Mississippi Central Railroad, where the Yankee commander divided his force into three detachments. Colonel John W. Noble, with 175 troopers of the 3rd and 4th Iowa regiments, rode north along the line of the railroad toward Grenada, destroying everything of value along the route. Colonel Osband's brigade,
meanwhile, moved south from Winona, tearing up the track as it advanced. General Grierson, with Kargé's brigade and the remainder of Colonel Winslow's command moved out along the road leading from Middleton southwest to Lexington and Franklin.

Destruction of rails and telegraph line along the Mississippi Central proceeded flawlessly and, on January 2 and 3, Noble and Osband rendezvoused with the main column near Benton. His mission completed, Grierson moved from Benton to Mechanicsville on the third and approached the outskirts of Vicksburg on the following day.

For sheer destructiveness, Grierson's second visit to the heart of Mississippi far surpassed the raid of 1863. In fourteen days, the Yankee raiders had covered over 450 miles of the Magnolia State, destroying 20,000 feet of bridges and trestles, 10 miles of track, 20 miles of telegraph line; 14 locomotives and tenders, 95 railroad cars, over 300 wagons, 30 warehouses, cloth and shoe factories, tanneries and machine shops, 12 forges, 7 depot buildings, 5,000 stand of arms, 700 head of hogs, 500 bales of cotton and an indeterminate quantity of grain, leather, wool and other public property. What the Federal troopers could not destroy, they carried off, and General Grierson proudly noted that "about 600 prisoners, 800 head of captured stock, and 1,000 negroes . . . [had] joined the column during the march." Once again, Union horsemen under Grierson's
command had achieved remarkable results at a minimal cost to themselves. A final tally of Yankee casualties listed 27 dead, 93 wounded and 7 missing.44

Fulsome praise and heartfelt congratulations greeted Grierson and his troopers, both at Vicksburg and at Memphis. On January 8, an enthusiastic Napoleon Dana announced the details of General Grierson's great success, while stating his personal belief that "this expedition, in its damaging results to the enemy, is second to none in the war." General Washburn, meanwhile, expressed hearty congratulations to the leader of this second raid through Mississippi. "I see that when you are the ranking officer," the recently appointed commander of the District of Vicksburg observed, "something can be done." After long months of repeated humiliation at the hands of Forrest's rebel horsemen, the Union cavalry in west Tennessee had finally retrieved its honor.45

With the conclusion of his operations against Hood's line of communication, Grierson's service in west Tennessee and Mississippi came to an end. Even as he informed Secretary of War Stanton of the results of the recent cavalry expedition, General Dana announced his immediate intention to send "Grierson's and Winslow's cavalry to Louisville, in obedience to former orders." And accordingly, on January 23, the commander of the Department of Mississippi said a warm farewell to Grierson and his troopers.46
After a leisurely journey up river to Cairo, General Grierson arrived at Paducah, Kentucky on January 27. On the following day, the displaced cavalryman reported by letter to Major General George H. Thomas, commanding the Department of the Cumberland at Eastport, Mississippi. Still smarting under what he considered unjust treatment at the hands of General Wilson, the former commander of the Fourth Division of the Cavalry Corps, Military Division of the Mississippi, requested "to have no further relation with him [Wilson], but to be permitted to go on duty elsewhere." Happily, General Thomas concurred and, on the last day of January, issued orders directing Grierson to "proceed to Annapolis, Md., reporting on arrival to Lieutenant-General Grant, commanding U. S. Armies, for orders."47

Upon his arrival in the East, the western cavalryman quickly learned that the commanding general of the Union armies had already formulated definite plans for the resourceful horse commander, who had so brilliantly displayed his talents during the Vicksburg campaign. On January 19, Grant had instructed Major General E. R. S. Canby, commanding at New Orleans, to move against Mobile, Selma and Montgomery in an effort to destroy railroads and public property in southern and central Alabama. While Canby marched northward at the head of some 18,000 infantry and cavalry, Grant expected General George Stoneman
to move south from east Tennessee with five or six thousand cavalry. Yet a third column, meanwhile, would push eastward from Eastport, Mississippi. "These three . . . pushing for Tuscaloosa, Selma and Montgomery, and Sherman with a large army eating the vitals of South Carolina," the Union commander hoped, "is all that will be wanted to leave nothing for the rebellion to stand upon."\(^{48}\)

Canby, however, lacked a cavalry chief and had applied to Grant for the services of Brigadier General William W. Averell, then directing minor cavalry operations in West Virginia. With little confidence in Averell's abilities, the general-in-chief had been struggling to find a competent and experienced cavalry officer to send to the Gulf Coast. News of Grierson's presence in Philadelphia, therefore, brought a welcome inspiration, and Grant immediately summoned his old acquaintance to Washington. With President Lincoln's approval, the former commander of the Department of the Mississippi, promoted the veteran cavalryman to the brevet rank of major general and assigned him to command of the cavalry in the Military Division of West Mississippi.\(^{49}\)

In a letter remarkable for its forthright expressions of praise and confidence, the generally taciturn and coldly discerning commander of the Union armies explained his choice to General Canby:
I have ordered General Grierson to report to you to take command of your cavalry operating from Mobile Bay. I do not mean to fasten on you commanders against your judgment or wishes, but you applied for Averell, I supposed for that service. I have no faith in him, and cannot point to a single success of his except in his reports. Grierson, on the contrary, has been a most successful cavalry commander. He set the first example in making long raids by going through from Memphis to Baton Rouge. His raid this winter on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad was most important in its result and most successfully executed. I do not think I could have sent you a better man than Grierson to command your cavalry on an expedition to the interior of Alabama. Unless you go yourself I am afraid your other troops will not be so well commanded.  

Reporting at New Orleans on March 1, Brevet Major General Grierson found E. R. S. Canby deeply involved in the final stages transporting some 45,000 infantry across an unusually turbulent Mobile Bay, in an effort to join the Navy in laying siege to the last major Gulf port remaining in Rebel hands. Much to his surprise, General Canby's new cavalry chief learned that the entire Division of West Mississippi presently contained scarcely 2,500 troopers fit for immediate service. Nevertheless, on the eve of his departure for Mobile, the division commander assured Grierson that twelve additional regiments would soon arrive at New Orleans from Vicksburg, Memphis, Little Rock, Baton Rouge and other points on the Mississippi River. Remounted and re-equipped, Canby confidently predicted, these additional mounted commands would eventually boost
General Grierson's total force to fully 12,000 men.\textsuperscript{51}

Trustining General Canby's judgment, Grierson applied for, and received permission to organize the cavalry to be concentrated at New Orleans "into three divisions of two brigades each, the whole to be designated 'Cavalry Corps, Military Division of West Mississippi.'\textsuperscript{52} But still, the commander of the newly designated corps remained skeptical of his ability to outfit and field a significant mounted command at an early date. "The infantry is now being shipped to some point near Mobile and the Cavalry is to follow as soon as transportation can be obtained," he informed his wife. "This will necessarily be a slow process, and if the 1st of April finds us arrived at that point [Mobile], ready for operations, it will be about as much as can be expected, all things considered."\textsuperscript{53}

In point of fact, even General Grierson's most guarded predictions proved overly optimistic. Unseasonably heavy rains lifted the mighty Mississippi over its banks and rendered the river unnavigable for troop transports throughout much of the month of March. At Memphis, General Washburn matched the river's fury and refused to release cavalry under his command to General Canby unless ordered to do so by higher authority. Finally, lack of transportation and irritating delays in the shipment of supplies and mounts still further impeded the organization of cavalry at New Orleans. During the first week in April, an
almost thoroughly exasperated Ben Grierson reported a mere 6,000 men and mounts present for duty in and near the Crescent City. "I have organized it as effectually as possible with the material at hand," he sadly admitted, "but we are very much in need of arms." 54

Impatient that the cavalry move as soon as possible into the interior of Alabama, General Canby on April 6 instructed his cavalry chief to "be pleased to perfect the organization of the six thousand cavalry with the utmost despatch, and let that number suffice for the present." 55 Still hopeful of the arrival of the troops from Memphis, Grierson redoubled his efforts to equip and transport the mounted force at New Orleans, and within the week succeeded in moving all but two of his regiments to Mobile. On the evening of April 11, the general himself boarded a transport and on the following morning disembarked at Fort Gaines, Alabama. 56

After four years of warfare in which success was gauged in inches and minutes, events suddenly crowded close upon each other's heels during the middle weeks of April, 1865: the glorious news of the fall of Richmond reached New Orleans on the eighth; General Lee surrendered the Army of Northern Virginia on the ninth; Mobile fell on the twelfth; and on Good Friday, April 14, a deranged actor, John Wilkes Booth, assassinated the President of the United States. The fighting, however, continued.
With the dazed armies of the Confederacy swaying precariously against the ropes, Sherman, Canby and Wilson drew back to deliver the knockout blows.

In the West, strong columns of Federal infantry and cavalry prepared to converge upon Selma and Montgomery, laying waste to what little remained of the industrial heartland of the South. On March 22, General Wilson broke camp near Eastport, on the Mississippi-Alabama border, and raced toward the southeast with 13,000 Yankee horsemen bent upon destruction. Two weeks later, A. J. Smith and 14,000 bluecoated infantry moved slowly north from Blakely, Alabama, under orders to unite with Wilson near Selma. Yet a third column of Union footsoldiers--12,000 strong under Major General Frederick Steele--meanwhile, patiently groomed itself at Pensacola, Florida for a movement into 57 central Alabama.

On the afternoon of April 17--two years to the day since he had left La Grange, Tennessee on his momentous raid through Mississippi--Ben Grierson broke camp near Blakely and rode northwestward at the head of two brigades of Union cavalry, numbering perhaps 4,000 men. An almost frivolous mood characterized the former musician's last field command of the war. As outlined by General Canby, the cavalry's instructions were to destroy government property and to disrupt the railroads from Columbus and West Point, Georgia west to Montgomery, Alabama, while at
the same time affording support to the infantry columns under Smith and Steele. The mission was a familiar one, but the sense of tension and excitement usually attending the outset of a mounted expedition seemed curiously absent. Reports of Lee's surrender to Grant had been confirmed, and as yet unsubstantiated rumors of Joe Johnston's surrender to General Sherman in North Carolina circulated freely at Mobile. That "the war must soon be over" appeared obvious, and the Federal cavalry expected to encounter little opposition along its line of march.  

General Grierson's optimism thankfully proved justified, and the Yankee troopers moved effortlessly through the southern counties of Alabama. Near Troy, on April 26, the Union soldiers rejoiced at the welcome announcement of an armistice concluded between Generals Sherman and Johnston, which virtually terminated hostilities east of the Chattahoochie River, on Alabama's eastern border. Recognizing that his presence in Georgia was no longer required, Grierson advanced only to Eufala, Alabama and Georgetown, Georgia on the Chattahoochie, where he rested his command for the march west to join A. J. Smith at Montgomery.  

News of General Dick Taylor's surrender of the last Confederate army east of the Mississippi River at Citronelle, Alabama on May 4, greeted the cavalry's arrival at the fallen first capital of the Confederacy. With the rebellion
at an end in Mississippi and Alabama, all that remained for the Federal army was to collect Rebel property and to garrison important points along the broken railroads. For this purpose, on May 10, General Smith instructed General Grierson to proceed to Mississippi where he would establish posts at Macon and Columbus.  

Grierson found Columbus, Mississippi to be "quite a pretty town," but the one-time scourge of the Magnolia State was afforded scant opportunity to enjoy his new surroundings. Although the war was over in the east, the Stars and Bars still floated defiantly over Edmund Kirby-Smith's sprawling satrapy on the west bank of the Mississippi. To deal with the continued threat of Kirby-Smith's unbroken Rebel army, Grant was sending his chief of cavalry, Major General Phil Sheridan, to assume command in the west. Meanwhile, General Canby was directed to place all the troops that could be spared from the Military Division of West Mississippi in readiness for an expedition into Texas. Consequently, on May 25, Canby summoned Ben Grierson back to New Orleans, where his presence was required for "the reorganization of the cavalry in this quarter."  

With Sheridan's arrival in the Crescent City during the first week in June, Grierson was assigned to command of the cavalry forces within the Department of the Gulf, as General Canby's new district was styled. Although Kirby-Smith
had surrendered the Army of the Trans-Mississippi on May 26, Sheridan learned that substantial bodies of Confederate troops had disregarded the terms of the capitulation and had withdrawn with their arms and equipment into the interior of Texas. In an effort to punish these recalcitrant rebel bands, while at the same time providing a show of force to the unstable Mexican government of the Archduke Maximilian, the new Federal commander in the west decided to dispatch two columns of cavalry under orders to traverse the Lone Star state from the Red River to San Antonio and Houston. Major Generals Wesley Merritt and George Armstrong Custer—young favorites of the division commander—would command the mounted expeditions, but it was left to Ben Grierson to assemble 4,500 troopers for service under the flamboyant pair of "boy generals." 62

Grierson retained command of the steadily dwindling mounted force in the Department of the Gulf—later reconstituted as the Department of Louisiana and Texas—until relieved by General Sheridan on August 9, 1865 and ordered home to Jacksonville, Illinois, where he would report by letter to the Adjutant General's Office for further orders. Unbeknown to Sheridan at the time he granted the temporarily unemployed cavalryman long-awaited permission to visit his family, General Grant had already issued instructions directing Grierson to report for duty to Major General Charles R. Wood, commanding the Department of Alabama.
Informed of his reassignment by a notice in the morning paper on August 10, the homesick cavalry officer hurriedly arranged passage on the steamer Magenta and departed New Orleans before his leave of absence could be revoked.63

Upon finally reporting to General Wood's headquarters at Mobile on September 16, Ben Grierson was directed to relieve Brevet Brigadier General Wladimir ("Kriz") Krzyzanowski in command of the District of Huntsville.64

Much to his relief, the former field commander encountered few difficulties in his new assignment. "The people of the northern portion of Ala.," he observed, "are more loyal as a general rule than those of the Central & Southern portion of the State." Moreover, much to the general's satisfaction, the northern counties of Alabama produced relatively little cotton. Consequently, the Federal commander in that region found himself "not so much bored with cotton speculators & thieves as I would be if I had either of the other districts."65

At the end of an uneventful fall and early winter in northern Alabama, General Grierson received a copy of General Orders No. 168 from the War Department, honorably discharging him from the service of the United States effective January 15, 1866.66 One month following his discharge, however, the former military commander of the District of Huntsville was unexpectedly summoned to Washington to testify before a sub-committee of the Joint
Committee on Reconstruction. In response to questions concerning social and political conditions in Alabama, Grierson pronounced the recently freed Negroes loyal, industrious and eager to assume the responsibilities of full and productive citizens of the United States. But in regard to southern whites, he warned, "after all I have been able to learn of the southern people during the war and since the surrender, that that spirit of resistance still exists there as strong as ever." In the general's personal opinion, stern measures instituted against former Rebels at the close of the war would have effectively stifled disloyalty and disaffection within the former Confederate states. The time for such measures had perhaps now passed, but to remove the military and the Freedman's Bureau, as southern leaders urged, "would result in great injustice and injury to the colored people, and also to the poorer classes of whites, and all loyal white men at the south."§7

During his stay in the nation's capital, General Grierson availed himself of the opportunity to lobby in his own behalf on two pressing matters—one bearing upon his past record and the other concerning his future career. Having exercised command for almost a full year by virtual rank, the former cavalry officer was most immediately concerned with obtaining a discharge at the full rank of major general of volunteers. But beyond the upgrading of his service record, Ben Grierson was also keenly interested
in the possibility of obtaining a commission in the regular army. According to the provisions of the military bill under consideration by both houses of Congress, the reconstituted army line would be filled in part by regular officers and in part by volunteer officers granted regular commissions. The former Illinois music teacher fervently hoped that his war record, together with personal contacts in Congress and at the War Department, would carry enough weight to secure one of the coveted appointments in the peacetime army. 68

Much to Grierson's satisfaction, his efforts in Washington were not wasted. General Grant, as well as Secretary of War Stanton, eagerly endorsed the ex-cavalryman's claim to full promotion, and on March 13, the appointment was sent to the Senate, where Senators Lyman Trumbull and William Sprague had promised to rush it through the first executive session. Confirmation was swift, and on March 21, Ben Grierson received his commission as major general of volunteers to rank from May 27, 1865. During the following week, the order mustering Grierson out of the service was revoked, and on April 19, a second order was issued discharging him at his new rank, effective April 30, 1866. 69

With passage of the new military bill on July 28, 1866, Benjamin H. Grierson reentered the service as colonel of the 10th United States Cavalry, one of the army's two newly created black mounted regiments. 70 During almost a
quarter of a century of service on the southwestern frontier, Colonel Grierson built an enviable record, both for himself and for the legendary "Buffalo Soldiers" under his command. Although personally leading his black troopers in the masterful campaign against the Apache chief Victorio in 1880, the ex-musician's true postwar achievements lay in more pacific fields, including the construction of Fort Sill, Oklahoma, the opening of hundreds of miles of roads and telegraph lines and, most especially, in firm but fair treatment of the Indians of the southwest. Having commanded at various times the districts of the Indian Territory (Oklahoma), the Pecos, and New Mexico, Colonel Grierson on November 28, 1888 was assigned to replace General Nelson A. Miles as commander of the Department of Arizona, with headquarters at Los Angeles. On July 8, 1890--the same year in which the United States Census Office proclaimed the closing of the American frontier--Grierson retired from the army with the rank of brigadier general.

Although four of the seven Grierson children survived--in fact, the eldest, Colonel Charles H. Grierson, a graduate of West Point, had served in his father's regiment--retirement seemed lonely without the companionship of the general's beloved Alice, who had died on August 16, 1888. On July 28, 1897, General Grierson married Mrs. Lillian King, the widow of Colonel John W. King of Alton, Illinois. With Lillian, the former soldier lived out his remaining
years in undisturbed tranquility. At the time of his death at his summer retreat at Omena, Michigan on September 1, 1911, Benjamin H. Grierson was one of only five surviving major generals of the Civil War.71
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An admiring military author, writing at the close of the Civil War, described Major General Benjamin H. Grierson as "one of the many striking examples of . . . 'the possibilities of American character.'"72 Certainly, few people--including Grierson himself--could have predicted in the spring of 1861 that in two short years a penniless musician from the rural midwest would achieve national fame as a bold and resourceful cavalryman. But, to a buoyant postwar generation, nurtured upon the "rags-to-riches" tales of Horatio Alger and imbued with a "minuteman" tradition firmly rooted in the dimly remembered colonial past, the explanation for the unlikely transformation of an unknown civilian into a successful military commander appeared almost axiomatic. As expressed by Illinois' most famous politician-turned-soldier, John A. Logan, the new American military creed rested upon two incontrovertible propositions:

that the past and present life of the American Republic is the gift of its citizen-soldiery, while its future lies in the same hands; and that when the true military afflatus exists as a native endowment, it will find expansion, regardless of preliminary teaching and
in defiance of every restraint. The impulse belongs to the inherent, or, more broadly stated, to the physical constitution of the individual.\textsuperscript{73}

Much as cream rises to the surface of milk, during times of crisis in a democratic society, the untrained civilian endowed with character and innate military talent would invariably arise to lead his fellow citizens in defense of the nation.

Quite clearly, there was nothing inevitable or foreordained in Ben Grierson's rise to military prominence. Rather, in a society in which "politics and civilian demands, had shaped every... war,"\textsuperscript{74} the musically gifted political enthusiast from Jacksonville, Illinois, at the very outset of the Civil War, possessed important assets which, under the proper circumstances, might smooth the road to advancement within the volunteer service. Fate unquestionably played a large initial role in determining the direction of Grierson's fortunes. Once embarked upon a military career, however, the Union cavalryman deliberately and skillfully devoted his political and intellectual talents to his own advancement and to the advancement of the cause for which he fought.

Politics formed the bedrock of the American militia system.\textsuperscript{75} For decades, governors and other state politicians had routinely dispensed military commissions as rewards to the party faithful. When, in April 1861, President Lincoln issued his call for 100,000 volunteers, he
instantly expanded the patronage available in every northern state. Few chief executives seized the opportunity with greater alacrity than the recently elected governor of the President's home state of Illinois, Richard Yates.\textsuperscript{76}

As Yates' friend and neighbor, as well as a conspicuous workhorse in Republican campaigns since 1856, Ben Grierson naturally held certain claims upon the governor's favor. Summoned to Springfield in May, 1861, the otherwise unoccupied musician somewhat reluctantly accepted an unofficial position on the staff of yet another Republican party stalwart, Benjamin M. Prentiss. Six months later, Yates rewarded Grierson with a major's commission in the 6th Illinois Cavalry.

Described as "genial, social, good-tempered, full of life and fun, frank and generous,"\textsuperscript{77} Ben Grierson also displayed a fine talent for the delicate art of political maneuver within the military system. Finding the 6th Illinois regiment unorganized and racked with dissension, the junior major assiduously devoted himself to military duty, quietly ingratiated himself with his fellow officers and carefully avoided taking any public position which might compromise his chances for advancement within the regiment. When the colonel of the 6th Illinois Cavalry resigned, Grierson accepted regimental command from his friend Governor Yates in payment for his labors.

Although Grierson's generous and frank good-nature
remained a valuable asset throughout the war, promotions beyond the rank of colonel were the gifts of the President and subject to the approval of Congress. Particularly after the first confused years of war, appointments to the ranks of general officers depended more upon demonstrated merit than upon political connections. Much to the surprise of many, the former music teacher spectacularly demonstrated that a brigadier's, and even a major general's stars were not beyond his reach.

Certainly, Ben Grierson was among the most unlikely of men to attain martial glory. And yet, it would be a mistake to assume that he represented General Logan's idealized stereotype of the American citizen-soldier, possessed of innate military genius, which would inevitably find expression, "regardless of preliminary teaching and in defiance of every restraint." 78

At the time he was catapulted to national attention in the spring of 1863, Grierson had already received two full years of practical instruction in the art of war. The general's prewar correspondence, together with his wide range of untutored musical skills, suggest that although equipped with no more than a secondary school education, Grierson possessed a keen, if undisciplined, intelligence. As an aide to General Prentiss, the future cavalryman learned first-hand the intricacies of drill and studied the rudiments of tactics. Excursions into Kentucky during the
summer of 1861 and campaigns in eastern and northern Missouri during fall and winter, moreover, provided the young staff officer with valuable experience in the field. Thus, when Grierson arrived at Shawneetown in December, 1861, to assume his new duties as major in the 6th Illinois Cavalry, he was already a knowledgeable soldier.

As colonel of the 6th Illinois, the neophyte cavalryman benefitted immensely from the painstaking experience of organizing, equipping and training a mounted command. The colonel learned along with his men, and when the sixth finally took the field in the vicinity of Memphis in the summer of 1862, it was truly Grierson's regiment.

More than organizational ability, however, is required of a first-rate cavalry commander. Sooner or later, the cavalryman must prove himself in the field. Grierson's test came in the wake of the astonishing Confederate raid upon Holly Springs in December, 1862. During the pursuit of Van Dorn, the commander of the 6th Illinois Cavalry demonstrated to the Union's two great military leaders, Grant and Sherman, not only skill and sound judgment, but also speed and dogged determination. Less obvious at the moment were the lessons on the conduct of a cavalry raid, which Grierson had absorbed from his Rebel prey.

Grierson's great raid through Mississippi, therefore, came as less of a surprise to his superiors in the West than to the nation as a whole. For two long and often tedious
years of war, the Jacksonville musician had been training, studying, observing and practicing the skills necessary to lead a mounted expedition deep inside the enemy's territory. Van Dorn had set the example and had demonstrated the importance of speed in carrying out a mission behind enemy lines. Grierson took the Rebel example to heart and, behind Vicksburg in the spring of 1863, embellished it with a combination of brilliant deceptions and hydra-like tactics which left his pursuers utterly baffled.

If the 1863 raid showed Benjamin H. Grierson at his best, his subsequent conduct during the siege of Port Hudson and in operations against Forrest in northern Mississippi suggested his limitations. As his two expeditions against Rebel property and communications in Mississippi amply attest, Grierson had few peers in the conduct of a brigade, or even a division, strength raid under his own command. But, when placed under commanders such as Banks, Sturgis, or Sooy Smith, the Yankee horseman almost invariably failed to impress upon his superiors the importance of the proper use of the mounted arm.

It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the source of much of Grierson's success, as well as failure, as a soldier may be traced back to a lesson learned in Missouri in the fall of 1861 and never forgotten. At Cape Girardeau, the novice aide watched helplessly as Generals Grant and Prentiss, two talented men whom he admired and
respected, engaged in an acrimonious squabble over military protocol which virtually cost Prentiss his career. With that painful example constantly before his eyes, and by nature eager to earn the goodwill of his superiors, Grierson instinctively avoided conflict with those in higher authority and perhaps too frequently "submitted as gracefully as possible under the circumstances, kept on in the even tenor of my way, obeying with promptitude the orders of those placed over me, although I felt that an injustice was being done me and the best interests of the service disregarded." Remarkably, the one-time political hack quickly absorbed the injunction that "the first duty of a soldier was to obey orders." Close adherence to that rule enabled Ben Grierson to avoid the common pitfalls which so often claimed the careers of many of his pride- and honor-bound fellow officers. But at the same time, unquestioning obedience rarely produces a great leader.

General Grant undoubtedly offered the best assessment of General Grierson's Civil War career, when he sent the Illinois cavalryman to join General Canby at New Orleans during the winter of 1864/65. "I send you Grierson, an experienced cavalry commander, to take your cavalry," the general-in-chief of the Union armies wrote. "With Grierson, I am satisfied you would either find him at the appointed place in time or you would find him holding an enemy." No innate military genius, Benjamin H. Grierson earned a
major general's coveted stars with luck, a certain amount of political maneuvering and large doses of hard work well done. In the final analysis, few other Union cavalrmen at the end of the war could boast that they held the respect and confidence of Ulysses S. Grant.
NOTES - CHAPTER VI

1 Special Orders No. 228, XVI Army Corps, September 21, 1863, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 404-406.


3 Springfield (Ill.) State Journal, October 13, 1863.


5 Sherman, Memoirs, I, 415-22; U. S. Grant to H. W. Halleck, January 15, 1864, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXII, pt. 2, pp. 100-101; W. T. Sherman to J. A. Rawlins, March 7, 1864, Ibid., pt. 1, pp. 174-75; Richard M. McMurry, "Sherman's Meridian Campaign," Civil War Times Illustrated, XIV (May 1975), 26. Wyeth, That Devil Forrest, 267-69, rather ineffectually argues that "it was the joint intention of Grant and himself [Sherman] not only to reach Meridian, but to go farther if possible, destroy the foundaries and, still farther, to secure the seaport of Mobile." When the expedition "failed in its ultimate purpose," Forrest's biographer further contends, "General Sherman, in his official reports, published then, and his Memoirs, written several years after the war, endeavored to convey to the mind of the reader that the object of his enterprise was fully attained in the destruction of the railroads at and near Meridian." Although Grant and Sherman briefly discussed the possibility of continuing on to Selma or Mobile after the capture of Meridian, there is no solid evidence to suggest that these represented anything more than fleeting thoughts. Certainly, neither suggestion was ever proposed as the ultimate objective of Sherman's expedition. See, U. S. Grant to H. W. Halleck, January 15, 1864, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXII, pt. 2, pp. 101-102; W. T. Sherman to U. S. Grant, January 6, 1864, Ibid., 36.


8. Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 432-33, 440. Pierce, *History of the Second Iowa Cavalry*, 81, remarks that "Brig.-Gen. B. H. Grierson, who was, without doubt, the most capable officer who accompanied the expedition was given no regular command, but to use his own expression, 'was taken along as a sort of supernumary.'"


Colonel Waring describes General Smith as "a young and handsome, but slightly nervous individual," and adds that "he was vacillating in his orders, and a little anxious in his demeanor." Waring, *Whip and Spur*, 108-109. Sergeant Lyman B. Pierce of the 2nd Iowa Cavalry also notes that "'tis but just . . . to Gen. Smith to add, that he was very
unwell during the trip, and wholly unable to be in command of such an expedition." Pierce, History of the Second Iowa Cavalry, 89. Apparently, by the evening of February 20, the Union commander was in a state of near complete physical and emotional collapse. According to Grierson, "the night of the 20th of February was one of disquiet for Gen. Smith. I was aware that he had been greatly annoyed on account of the delay occasioned by the slow movements of Waring's Brigade, but it was not until after our arrival at West Point that the General seemed to fully realize [sic] he had gotten so much behind time, or that he became depressed by the weight of responsibility devolving upon him in not being able to comply with his instructions to join Gen. Sherman as directed. Up to that time he had probably presumed that Gen. Sherman might also be considerably delayed in his movements, but on the night of the 20th it was rumored that he had entered Meridian and was probably on his way back to Vicksburg. Gen. Smith had also received exaggerated reports in regard to the strength of the enemy in our front, and of Gen. [Stephen D.] Lee's approach to join Forrest [sic] with cavalry, infantry and artillery. All this with the excitement, worry and fatigue undergone in his march southward to West Point, had worked upon his nervous system to such an extent as to render him absolutely sick and unable to properly command [sic] in such an emergency." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 447-48.

In 1879, Grierson's adjutant informed former Confederate Lieutenant General S. D. Lee that "he (General Smith) was very sick during the night [of Feb. 20], his mind at times bordering on delirium, and he sent for General Grierson, and told him he was very sick, and that he (Grierson) would have to take command. He then asked General Grierson what he would do in the morning. The reply was that he would proceed towards Meridian. General Smith then said 'No! that will never do. General Stephen D. Lee is in front of us with his whole force, including infantry and artillery.' He (Smith) immediately reassumed the direction of affairs, gave orders for a retrograde movement at dawn, and directed General Grierson to hold the rear with this brigade heretofore mentioned. There is no doubt that General Smith learned from the deserters, whom he interviewed, that you had reinforced Forrest, and that his orders for the retreat were on that account. The engagement of the first day was but a sharp skirmish in which only a part of one brigade was engaged; the opposing force was easily repulsed, and there was no reason whatever why we should have retreated before the force which was then in front of us. General Grierson's recollection of the affair coincides with mine, and I have from his own lips the report of the conversation herein

12 Itinerary of the Cavalry Division, Sixteenth Army Corps, for February and March [1864], Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXII, pt. 1, p. 2\(\text{cit}\); W. T. Sherman to J. A. Rawlins, March 7, 1864, Ibid., 175-76. Sherman never forgave Smith for his failure to carry out his orders during the Meridian campaign. "Of course I did not and could not approve of his conduct," Sherman stated in his Memoirs, "and I know that he yet chafes under the censure. I had set so much store on his part of the project that I was disappointed and so reported officially to General Grant. General Smith never regained my confidence as a soldier, though I still regard him as a most accomplished gentleman and a skillful engineer. Since the close of the war he has applied to me to relieve him of that censure, but I could not do it, because it would falsify history." Sherman, Memoirs, I, 422-23.

After Sherman's death, Smith wrote, but apparently never published, a defense of his conduct, in which he attempted to place the blame for the long delay in the cavalry's departure from Collierville upon the former department commander. "I asked Sherman," the by now seventy-seven-year-old ex-officer recalled, "if I was to start without him [Waring]. He replied emphatically, 'Certainly not. You must wait for Waring. If you do not you will be too weak and Forrest will lick you.'" Moreover, Smith argued that Sherman at the same time had failed to stress the importance of the cavalry's presence at Meridian. "I asked him how long he expected to remain at Meridian, and he answered, 'But a few days; not later than the 22d. Meet me if you can; but if you can not, nothing serious will result. I want you to be strong enough to go where you please, and you can take care of yourself. Don't do anything rash.'" Smith typescript in Forbes Collection.

13 Wyeth, That Devil Forrest, 299-341; Robert Selph Henry, "First With the Most" Forrest (Jackson, Tenn.: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1969), 235-68; Chalmers, "Forrest and his Campaigns," 470. Approximately 295 white troops and some 260 colored soldiers defended Fort Pillow. Forrest's victorious rebels were later accused of massacring the Union garrison after the fort had been surrendered. The question of what exactly transpired on the day of Fort Pillow's capitulation has been hotly debated for well over a century and remains unsettled to this day. For the official report of the U. S. Congress, charging the Confederacy with
a deliberate act of mass murder see, House Reports, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 65. In Forrest's defense see Wyeth, That Devil Forrest, 309-341 and Henry, "First With the Most" Forrest, 248-68.

14 Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 459-72, which contains an editorial from the [Springfield] Illinois State Journal, April 23, 1864, defending Grierson against an attack by the Cairo correspondent of the St. Louis Democrat, sharply criticizing the cavalry commander in west Tennessee for his inability to deal with Forrest. On April 18, 1864 General Hurlbut reported that the Cavalry Division under Grierson's command numbered "2,000 present for duty, equipped, by last returns; comprised in part of the fragments of regiments at home on furlough, but poorly mounted, and chiefly useful for scouting and picket duty." S. A. Hurlbut to L. S. Willard, April 18, 1864, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXII, pt. 3, p. 404.

15 W. T. Sherman to J. B. McPherson, April 18, 1864, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXII, pt. 3, p. 400; Special Orders No. 150, Adjutant General's Office, April 17, 1864, Ibid., 397; Warner, Generals in Blue, 486-87; Wyeth, That Devil Forrest, 343. On the evening of April 16, 1864, Marsena R. Patrick, Grant's provost marshal, noted in his diary that "the fall of Fort Pillow (Tennessee) is confirmed--Gen. Grant seems inclined to relieve [Col. Benjamin H.] Grierson for letting [Nathan Bedford] Forrest through." Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Inside Lincoln's Army: the Diary of Marsena Rudolph Patrick, Provost Marshal General, Army of the Potomac, David S. Sparks, ed. (New York and London: Thomas Yoseloff, 1964), 359. Sherman went out of his way to assure Grierson that Sturgis' assignment to Memphis was meant to cast no personal reflection upon the character of conduct of the commander of the cavalry division in the District of West Tennessee. "I know that you have been embarrassed by the number of your men furloughed," the department commander explained, "but I did expect you would catch in flank some one of the detachments in[to] which Forest [sic] has divided his command. . . . I will send some infantry to operate about the head of Hatchie, and now send down Genl. Sturgis, who is an old and experienced officer to command. I mean no reflection on you. You know how kindly I feel to you, but it is necessary to punish Forest [sic] at all cost, and you will find Sturgis a clever and excellent cavalry leader. He will explain to you how necessary it is to punish Forest [sic]." W. T. Sherman to B. H. Grierson, April 17, 1864, Grierson Papers, Roll 4.

16 Sherman, Memoirs, II, 5-6.
17 Ibid., 30-31.


19 In fact, under orders from Major General S. D. Lee, commanding the Department of Alabama, Mississippi and East Louisiana, General Forrest left Tupelo, Mississippi on Mary 31 and started toward middle Tennessee "for the purpose of destroying the railroad from Nashville and breaking up the lines of communication connecting that point with Sherman's army in northern Georgia." Sturgis' subsequent movement upon Tupelo compelled Lee to recall Forrest on June 3. N. B. Forrest to P. Ellis, July 1, 1864, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXIX, pt. 1, pp. 221-22; Stephen D. Lee, "Battle of Brice's Cross Roads, or Tishomingo Creek, June 2nd to 12th, 1864," Publications of the Mississippi State Historical Society, VI (1902), 29; Leftwich, "Battle of Brice's Cross Roads," 5-6; William W. Luckett, "Bedford Forrest in the Battle of Brice's Cross Roads," Tennessee Historical Quarterly, XV (June 1956), 99-100; Wyeth, That Devil Forrest, 346-47; Herman Hattaway, General Stephen D. Lee (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1976), 114.

20 Grierson, although defending Sturgis against charges that the general was drunk on the field of battle, nevertheless recorded that "upon his [Sturgis'] arrival at Memphis, he put up at the Gayoso House, where, being dissipated in habits, he had a protracted drunken spree for nearly two weeks, during which he smashed looking glasses, crockery and furniture to his heart's content, kicking up 'high jinks' generally, until his condition became notorious." Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 553; B. H. Grierson to S. D. Sturgis, June 24, 1864, Grierson Papers, Roll 4. General Sturgis is also remembered for his forthright declaration prior to the battle of Second Manassas that "I don't care for John Pope a pinch of owl dung!" Herman Haupt, Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt (Milwaukee: Wright & Joys Co., 1901), 83.


25 "Major-General Benjamin H. Grierson," United States Service Magazine, V (1866), 428-29; Grierson, "Lights and Shadows," 568-84; S. D. Sturgis to C. C. Washburn, June 9, 1864, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XXXIX, pt. 1, pp. 87-102; W. L. McMillen to W. C. Rawolle, June 22, 1864, Ibid., 128-30; G. E. Waring, Jr. to S. L. Woodward, June 14, 1864, Ibid., 130-33; E. F. Winslow to S. L. Woodward, June 15, 1864, Ibid., 136-40; "Proceedings of a Board of Investigation which Commenced at Memphis, Tenn., on the 27th Day of June, 1864," Ibid., 147-231; Moore, ed., Rebellion Record, XI, 162-75; Waring, Whip and Spur, 127-37; William Forse Scott, The Story of a Cavalry Regiment: the Career of the Fourth Iowa Veteran Volunteers from Kansas to Georgia 1861-1865 (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893), 236-81; Young, Seventh Tennessee Cavalry, 89-96; Lee, "Battle of Brice's Cross Roads," 31-37; Hancock's Diary, 381-99; Luckett, "Bedford Forrest in the Battle of Brice's Cross Roads," 101-110; Leftwich, "Battle of Brice's Cross Roads," 8-19; Chalmers, "Forrest and his Campaigns," 472-74; E. Hunn Hanson, "Forrest's Defeat of Sturgis at Brice's Cross-Roads (June 10th, 1864)", Battles and Leaders, IV, 419-21; Abrial R. Abbott, "The Negro in the War of the Rebellion," Military Essays and Recollections: Papers Read Before the Commandery of the State of Illinois, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, 3 vols. (Chicago: Dial Press, 1891-99), III, 375-81; Wyeth, That Devil Forrest, 351-71; Henry, "First With the Most" Forrest, 286-304; Hattaway, General Stephen D. Lee, II4-15. Colonel George E. Waring, Jr. who commanded the First Brigade of Grierson's Cavalry Division recorded that "during our last night's march, my brigade having the advance, and I being at its rear, Grierson ordered me to prevent the pushing ahead of the stragglers of the other brigades, who were to be recognized, he reminded me, by their wearing hats (mine wore caps). The order was peremptory, and was to be enforced even at the cost of cutting the offenders down. Grierson's adjutant was at my side; we were all sleeping more or less of the time, but constantly some hatted straggler was detected pushing toward the
front, and ordered back—the adjutant being especially sharp-eyed in detecting the mutilated sugar-loaves through the gloom. Finally, close to my right and pushing slowly to the front, in a long-strided walk, came a gray horse with a hatted rider,—an india-rubber poncho covering his uniform. I ordered him back; the adjutant, eager for enforcement of the order, remonstrated at the man's disobedience; I ordered him again, but without result; the adjutant ejaculated, 'Damn him, cut him down!' I drew my sabre and laid its flat in one long stinging welt across that black poncho: ________! who are you hitting? Then we both remembered that Grierson too wore a hat; and I tender him here my public acknowledgment of a good-nature so great that an evening reunion in Memphis over a dozen of wine won his generous silence." Waring, _Whip and Spur_, 135-37. The debacle at Brice's Cross Roads effectively ended Sturgis' Civil War service. Warner, _Generals in Blue_, 487.


44-45; Starr, *Jennison's Jayhawkers*, 312-15; Scott, *Story of a Cavalry Regiment*, 292-301; Hancock's Diary, 441-60; George, *History of the 3d, 7th, 8th and 12th Kentucky, 112-18; Wyeth, *That Devil Forrest*, 407-421; Henry, "First With the Most" Forrest, 328-48; Chalmers, "Forrest and his Campaigns," 477-78. Dimick, "Motives for the Burning of Oxford, Mississippi," 120, concludes that "the burning of Oxford resulted from cumulative hatred and frustration caused by the alleged Fort Pillow massacre and the failure of the Federal expeditions to eliminate the abhorrent Forrest as a military factor in Mississippi and Tennessee. It is probable, moreover, that hatred of Jacob Thompson acted as an additional motive. The people of Oxford and vicinity had from an early period of the war exhibited deep hatred of Yankees. That fact may also have supplied motivation for the burning of Oxford." Simeon N. Fox, adjutant of the 7th Kansas Cavalry, which formed part of Grierson's command, supplied yet another motive for the burning of Oxford. "The day this was done," Fox recalled, "Southern newspapers fell into our hands glorying over the burning of Chambersburg, Pa. This was the first news that we had received of this act of incendiaryism, and Oxford was burned in retaliation." Fox, "Story of the Seventh Kansas," 44. It should also be noted that in his instructions to Smith, General Sherman had reiterated his position that the people of Mississippi must be made to feel the heavy price of harboring Forrest and his men: "Let General Smith impress upon the people the fact that as long as Forrest lives their country is doomed to be harassed, and let him take freely of all food and forage and remount his men always." W. T. Sherman to C. C. Washburn, August 7, 1864, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XXXIX, pt. 2, p. 233.


37 Special Orders No. 183, District of West Tennessee, October 31, 1864, Grierson Papers, Roll 4; J. H. Wilson to B. H. Grierson, November 6, 1864, Ibid.; S. L. Woodward to B. H. Grierson, November 8, 15, 16, 19, 1864, Ibid.

38 J. H. Wilson to B. H. Grierson, November 20, 1864, Ibid.

39 B. H. Grierson to J. H. Wilson, December 1, 1864, Ibid.; Special Orders No. 183, District of West Tennessee, October 31, 1864, Ibid.


41 Wilson, Under the Old Flag, II, 20.


43 N. J. T. Dana to H. W. Halleck, December 8, 1864, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLI, pt. 4, p. 799; E. F. Winslow to H. E. Noyes, December 15, 1864, Ibid., Vol. XLV, pt. 2, p. 204; Bearss, "Grierson's Winter Raid," 20-21. Apparently, in an effort to placate Winslow, Dana at one point offered the command of the expedition to the colonel of the 4th Iowa Cavalry. According to the historian of Winslow's regiment, the colonel "was unwilling to take the command unless it were first offered to Grierson, but offered to go in command of a brigade. In conference between the three, it was so arranged." Scott, Story of a Cavalry Regiment, 359. The brigade on hand at Memphis at the time of Dana's arrival consisted of four mounted regiments under the command of Colonel Joseph Karge.

44 "Reports of Expedition from Memphis, Tenn., to destroy the Mobile and Ohio Railroad," Official Records, Series I, Vol. LXV, pt. 1, pp. 844-75; F. S. Whiting,

"Major-General Benjamin H. Grierson," United States Service Magazine, V (1866), 429-30; Bearss, "Grierson's Winter Raid," 22-37. Grierson and Karge reported that General Gholson had been either killed or mortally wounded during the fight at Egypt. Gholson did in fact receive a wound so severe as to necessitate the removal of his right arm, but the Confederate brigadier nonetheless survived the war and died at his home in Aberdeen, Mississippi on October 16, 1883. Clement A. Evans, Ed., Confederate Military History: A Library of Confederate States History, 12 vols. (Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Co., 1899), VII, 256.

In one of the war's more curious episodes, Grierson's officers discovered that over 100 of the prisoners captured at Egypt were former Union soldiers who had enlisted in the Confederate army in order to obtain their release from southern prison camps. Grierson shipped these "galvanized rebels" to the Federal prisoner of war camp at Alton, Illinois and, expressing a belief that most had been induced to enlist in the Confederate service "from a desire to escape loathsome confinement," commended them to the leniency of the government. B. H. Grierson to T. H. Harris, January 14, 1865, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLV, pt. 1, p. 847; R. Stone to H. W. Wessells, January 25, 1865, Ibid., Series II, Vol. VIII, 124-26. The judge advocate general's office, however, argued that "the Government cannot consistently recognize the propriety of prisoners escaping from the enemy by such means, and cannot place confidence in men who, even for the purpose of escaping the horrors of Southern prisons, are willing to enter the rebel army." It was therefore recommended that the former Union soldiers captured at Egypt, Mississippi "should no longer be regarded as prisoners of war, but should be held and tried as deserters." A. A. Hosmer to Secretary of War, May 13, 1865, Ibid., 554. With the war at an end, and the horrors of Andersonville fresh in the public mind, the government eventually sided with General Grierson and enlisted these men, along with ordinary Confederate prisoners, in Companies C and D of the 5th U. S. Volunteers. During 1865 and 1866, the Galvanized-Confederates-turned-Galvanized Yankees saw


50 U. S. Grant to E. R. S. Canby, February 9, 1865, *Official Records*, Series I, Vol. XLVIII, pt. 1, p. 786. In response to Grant's letter, Canby explained that "I have no personal knowledge of General Averell. My application for him was based on the reputation he had with the officers of his regiment (Third Cavalry), as an active and
enterprising officer. I am, however, greatly pleased with the change you have made in sending General Grierson."
E. R. S. Canby to U. S. Grant, March 5, 1865, Ibid., 1092.


53 B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, March 5, 1865, Grierson Papers, Roll 5.


55 C. T. Christensen to B. H. Grierson, April 6, 1865, Grierson Papers, Roll 5.

56 Undated notation in Ibid.; B. H. Grierson to Alice K. Grierson, April 12, 1865, Ibid.


59 General Orders No. 4, Cavalry Forces, Military Division of West Mississippi, April 26, 1865, Official Records, Series I, Vol. XLIX, pt. 2, p. 483; B. H. Grierson


64 Special Orders No. 53, Department of Alabama, September 16, 1865, Grierson Papers, Roll 5.

66 J. C. Kelton to [E. D. Townsend], March 27, 1866, RG 94, Grierson ACP File, National Archives; Manuscript Service Record, Grierson Papers, Roll 15; "Major-General Benjamin H. Grierson," *United States Service Magazine*, V (1956), 431.


76 For Yates, the Illinois militia and patronage see, Nortrup, "Richard Yates," 212-34.


78 Logan, Volunteer Soldier, 573.


80 Ibid., 432.

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