



AN EPIC OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR BY JOHN NIST

DULCE ET DEORUM

BOOK ONE THE PENINSULA CAMPAIGN

Note

For the first time in its history, the *Journal* here presents a double issue. It is devoted entirely to the first book of a projected five-book Civil War epic by John Nist to be entitled *DULCE ET DECORUM*. The work, still in progress, takes the form of a detailed battle biography of Stonewall Jackson and some of the men under his command. Though the section we offer deals only with one aspect of the Peninsula Campaign, we feel that it is capable of standing as an entity unto itself. In all fairness to the author, however, we ask that it also be considered as part of a larger work.

The Editors

DULCE ET DECORUM

INVOCATION

This is the story of a general and his men,
The story of a corps of rockribbed ragamuffins,
Besieged by dysentery, infested with lice,
Feverish in swampland and shivering in snow;
A corps of scarecrow heroes, in homespun gray
And butternut sash, choking on August dust,
Drowning in September rain, leathered in sun
And wind, gallburned with sweat; a corps
Of singing sinners and swearing saints,
Footsore and saddlesore from following the stars
Stitched to the collar of their bearded prophet
Of attack—Professor Tom Fool, a tactical genius
Without tact, sanity with a madman's penchant
For calloused knees and secrecy, night rides
And morning prayers, cold packs on the stomach
Of dyspepsia and a lemon at the lips of command.
This is the story of a general and his men,
A story that no pagan goddess of poetry

Or heathen muse of history can inspire,
For the ordered world of classical restraint
Is alien to Gothic grotesque and the perfect
Proportion of Grecian beauty unreconciled
With hypochondria and sanctity, merciless
Fury and charity, blood and the God of peace.
And so I ask The Spirit Who moves in tongues
Of flame to bless my song with The Word of truth
That is never any denial of love
And to whisper me plain how the risen Christ,
Who walks the waters of each broken heart,
Once led this iron-gaunt general and his men
Through fire-torn fields in a famous war
Between brother and brother to within four hours
Of shattering the American dream of liberty
And equality on a warm spring day when dogwood
Bloomed along every road into Chancellorsville—
And then abandoned the Southern Cromwell to a night
Of self-betrayal and the wounds of crucifixion
That the human soul might come to understand
How the Will of God is not the will of man
And how the Lord may answer every plea,
Though many times say no in accent unmistakable.
Such was the answer to a nation in error
When a clock stopped at three-fifteen
On a Sunday afternoon in a little frame house
At Guiney's Station and Stonewall Jackson died.

PROLOGUE

1. Victory In The Valley

"If this Valley is lost, Virginia is lost."
 So spoke the general who defied belief, the grim
 Warring deacon with his nervous stomach, cold feet,
 And curious meals: raspberries, milk and bread.
 But he saved the Shenandoah for a time,
 And Virginia for a time, and the South for a time,
 Having been taught by religion to feel
 As safe in the field as he did in bed:
 "God has fixed the time for my death.
 I do not concern myself about that."
 Yet through the spring of 1862 he did
 Concern himself with Fremont, Banks, Shields,
 And McDowell in battles as brilliant as those
 Of Napoleon: Front Royal, Winchester, Cross Keys,
 Port Republic—to say nothing of the slaughter
 Of 2,000 novice Yank cavalymen, who died
 Strapped to their saddles, their horses kicking
 In harness while the snakes of their guts
 Writhed red and blue in the dying sun—
 A sight to make Kyd Douglas vomit and set
 A mask of tight-lipped triumph on Jackson's face.
 Yes, by any standard apart from love,
 The Valley Campaign was something miraculous.
 Consider the facts: 48 days of marching
 To cover 676 miles; five pitched engagements,
 With never more than 17,000 to face an enemy
 In aggregate four times that number.
 And the results: the saving of Richmond;
 The tying down of 175,000 Federals from
 McClellan's encirclement of the Confederate
 Capital; the counting of 3,500 enemy prisoners,
 3,500 enemy dead; the capturing of 10,000 muskets
 And rifles, nine precious cannon, and mountains
 Of supplies. Against these figures, the losses
 Seem slight: 2,500 dead and wounded, 600 prisoners,

Three guns. But what seems slight on a sheet of Statistics may be infinite in the hearts of widows And orphans, and the casualties had only begun.

2. The General

Who fashioned the victory in the Valley?
 What was he like? His passport description
 For a widower's tour of Europe in 1856 reads
 As follows: "Stature 5 feet 9 and three-quarter
 Inches; English; forehead full, eyes gray, nose
 Aquiline, mouth small; chin oval; hair dark brown;
 Face oval, complexion dark." And biographers
 Assert that he then weighed about 175 pounds.
 But the picture is static, frozen; the man,
 Dynamic, fluid—or, as A. P. Hill was soon
 To learn: volatile, volcanic. With more decision
 For discipline than Lee could ever muster
 In his aristocratic blood. Stonewall Jackson,
 The Confederate Hannibal, who marched his troops
 To a lather at night that they should not bleed
 In the morning. Stonewall Jackson, a relentless
 Taskmaster, who, thirty-five pounds underweight
 In the field and drawn like a bow about ready
 To snap, could ignore the needs of his starveling
 Beggars for the sake of munitions and the boom
 Of offensive. Yet they say in retreat he would
 Fight for a wheelbarrow. A curious mixture of
 Satan and saint, with a mind as ruthless as
 A granite epitaph and a heart burning incense of
 Pity and prayer. A remark to end gallantry shown
 To courageous foes leading wild charges: "Shoot
 Them all. I do not wish them to be brave."
 The poetry of grief at his first wife's death:
 "Pure and lovely companion of my happier days—
 We loved each other on earth; shall that love
 Be diminished in eternity?" In many ways
 This multiplication table in sacky single-breasted
 Coat of a major from the Mexican war and forage cap
 With visor down to the nose was a military
 Reincarnation of the fiery Bishop of Hippo:

Passionate and puritanical, daring beyond
 The wildest dreams of imagination, yet soberly
 Cautious enough in the face of disaster to teach
 The bullheaded Longstreet a thing or two about
 Economy and power. Seeing him so, seeing him
 As a Rebel Augustine helps one to understand
 The tremendous self-denial, the asceticism
 And withholding of tears; the Spanish terms of
 Endearment, the craving for liquor; the memories
 Of dapper flirtations in a land of sunshine
 And laughter. Lover of art, affectionate friend
 Of cavalier Stuart, with an eye for beauty
 And an ear for song, Old Jack couldn't carry a tune
 In a hamper, ate his bread without butter, stripped
 Gold braid from his rank, and sat little Sorrel
 Like a tinkertoy ready to come part in the wind.
 Sparing of speech, quick to punish all oaths,
 Still he could smile at the profanity of Taylor
 And grieve at the loss of pungent Dick Ewell,
 Executive officer and master of four-letter
 Anglo-Saxon.

And what did others think of Tom Fool?
 Ewell thought him mad and said so:
 "Damn this Valley to hell. Every day I keep
 Looking for an order to storm the North Pole!"
 But the baldheaded lispng jaybird came to worship
 His boss and would have stormed a much warmer
 region
 Had Jackson so ordered. Quartermaster Harman
 Once roared: "I won't be talked to like that!
 I will give you my resignation this instant."
 General Whiting flamed out: "Jackson treated me
 Like a dog. It's an outrage. Oh, hang him!
 I believe he hasn't more sense than my horse!"
 But Harman learned that no one dared to imply
 Cowardice among members of the famous foot
 cavalry,
 And Whiting had knocked in vain at the sanctuary
 Of secrecy, where Jackson served the God of triumph
 Alone: "If my coat knew my plans, as Frederick
 The Great once said, I would take it off and burn
 It. And if I can deceive my friends, I can make

Certain of deceiving my enemies." Though the New York *Mercury* declared facetiously that Stonewall Had descended from Jack, the giant killer, And could live a fortnight on two crackers And a barrel of whisky, the general drowsed through Many a Sunday sermon and liked to raise vegetables. His wife, Mary Anna, thought him handsome, but knew

That he waited for no one. Having lived with his Punctilious schedule, his catechism recitals And problems in training the memory, she understood The uncompromising mind behind the maxims of his Youth: *Disregard Public Opinion When It Interferes With Your Duty. Sacrifice Your Life Rather Than Your Word. Lose Not Time. Be Always Employed In Something Useful: Cut Off Unnecessary Actions. Be Not Disturbed At Trifles, Nor At Accidents.* And though she could admire his cold refusal To read press reports of himself and his corps, She could also warm her soul at the hidden fire Of his overwhelming ambition. Ambition he had: Enough to kill a hundred lesser men who lacked The strength to control it. And now in June of 1862 Stonewall's ambition calls for 60,000 grays With shoes for an invasion of the North. The price Of success has risen 50,000 in the year since First Manassas—a lesson in the cost of delay, a lesson For history to study. But Jefferson Davis is An inept pupil and is willing for Lee to trade five For four in the fever-ridden swamplands around Richmond—a bloodletting which the South can ill Afford for something far less than what Jackson Envisions. Thus the dictates of a timid old maid Are worse than those of a ruthless warrior, And tragedy haunts battles fought on the wrong Ground at the wrong time.

3. The Men

And who were the men of laughter and complaint,
The men of love for the master of five-minute naps

Who drove them like a Fury out of hell?
 Not the slow-eyed dandies of mint juleps and Plato,
 The privileged gentlemen of Greek-pillared mansions,
 Immaculate riding stables, and an endless round
 Of midnight masquerades and lazy afternoon hunts,
 For these plantation patricians were a stereotyped
 Invention of the North, a myth of class hatred
 As ridiculous as the merciless lash of Simon Legree.
 No, the men under Jackson were only a yeasting
 Of cavalier—the primary dough for the sacrificial
 Bread he served the god of war was an elastic
 Mixture of farmer and merchant, laborer and cowboy,
 Teacher and dockhand, with a salty pinch of convict
 And professional gambler and a sweetening of
 Beardless student to be blessed and broken to
 The prayers of minister and priest. Forty percent
 Of the saviors of the Valley signed their names
 With an X and looked upon the French-speaking
 Creoles of New Orleans as “furriners.” Armed with
 Shotguns and fowling pieces, smooth-bore muskets
 And converted flintlocks, squirrel rifles and Yankee
 Breechloaders, these Johnny Rebs fought on hardtack
 And tobacco juice, fat moldy bacon and pasty blue
 Beef; fought on dried peas and branch water,
 Unshucked field corn, and an occasional jar of
 Preserves from home; fought on a rank and miserable
 Diet of never enough till their rotting innards
 Diarrhea’d and scurvied them down to an early grave
 Dug to the dictates of measles, malaria, erysipelas.
 Pneumonia, smallpox. If ever this war should be
 Lost in sentimental mist so that admiring youngsters
 Look upon the combatants as bronzed giants
 And marble-limbed gods waging honorable death in
 A western replica of star-spangled Iliion, waging
 Honorable death to the baptismal tears of virtuous
 Nymphs in diaphanous silk while angelic bands
 Played hymnodic marches for the twilight of glory,
 Let it be remembered that five out of every six
 Confederate casualties fell to disease rather than
 To enemy lead and steel. Remembering death so
 Reduces war, like bright tin soldiers over the fire
 Of a child’s remolding ladles, to a proper
 Perspective—where victory and defeat whisper dry

Gibberish through the sunless sockets of a grinning
 Skull. Yet such reduction is needed for tragedy,
 For no man dies in abstraction, and the removal
 Of romance is the discovery of truth—truth
 Which remembers death so and endears the weakness
 Of flesh to the living, lest the present should
 Love mere statues of the past and worship a history
 Of lies thicker than the December fog at
 Fredericksburg that had to lift before Burnside
 Could shatter wave after wave of unique identities
 At a blazing stone wall of Southern thunder.

Lean and getting leaner, the foot cavalry of Jackson
 Were a far cry from the close-shaven, scented,
 Elegant-mannered and picturesque heroes of
 A saccharine movie or from the tenderfoot amateurs
 Of 1861, who Virginia-Reeled off to war with packing
 Cases, trunks, body servants, hampers full of ham
 And fried chicken, and the memory of eau de cologne
 Still fresh in their hearts—as though the grim
 Task of killing Yankees were a Sunday picnic
 Or a weekend outing for an academy of giggling
 Sun-bonneted belles. He travels the fastest who
 Travels the lightest: this was the unwritten maxim
 Of these veteran legions, who slept in pairs with
 Oilcloth above and below and two blankets between.
 Wearing short gray jackets ragged at hips, they
 Conquered nonchalantly with No—no overcoats, no
 Bayonets (so dear to their general), no canteens
 (Tin cups at the belt were quicker), no boxes for
 Cartridges (pockets served better instead), no
 Revolvers (they gambled away what was useless),
 No soap for a bath that couldn't be taken anyway,
 Since Jackson moved them too fast for hot water.
 No soldiers ever marched with less to clutter
 And hinder or were more hungry, thin, lice-eaten,
 Pestered by itch. They wore white cotton underwear
 Months without change, till the rot and the stench
 Were too much and they donned a new nation of
 Crawlies. Sublimely indifferent to sanitation,
 They dug the latrines for encampment and evacuated
 Elsewhere and brought flies swarm-buzzing the ears
 And tickle-footing the mouth that exhaustion might

Have its own touching lullaby to companionable sleep.
 Thus the standard joke of the truth about rest:
 "I can't catch a wink without some nibbling of flesh."
 Yes, they were a scratch lot of beggars, sentimental
 Over women, children, and pets; lovers of "Lorena,"
 "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and "Home Sweet
 Home,"

Which they sang down every wheel-rutted road
 That Jackson pursued in search of a dream unnamed;
 Sang with only a few berries, persimmons, or apples
 In season tucked away in their thin blanket rolls;
 Sang because the right hand of God was a thunderbolt
 In the heart of their idol, and with such fierce
 Lightning to lead them they could not help but win.
 In his smoldering Old Testament eyes, they rose
 Forever meridian to burn the dry brush of night
 And death and choke the cold North with the smoke
 Of their courage and splash forest and field
 With the liquid wildfire of unspeakable sacrifice.

And now in mid-June of 1862, while Colonel Boteler
 Rides to Richmond to beg reinforcements
 For Jackson's intended invasion of the North,
 While he rides with the high taut voice of triumph
 Still tinning in his ears ("If they will only give
 Me 60,000 men, I will go right on to Pennsylvania.
 I will not go down the Valley; I don't want
 The people there to be harrassed. I will go
 With 40,000 if the President will give them to me.
 My route will be along the east of the Blue Ridge—"
 And the statesman soldier grins at remembrance:
 "I ought not to have told you even that.
 But in two weeks I could be at Harrisburg."),
 While he rides with the most daring hope ever
 Entrusted to his eloquent influence—the unknowing
 Foot cavalry begin a five-day rest in the meadows
 Of Limestone Valley, pleased with congratulations
 From their general—congratulations as bright
 And sweet as the ripened cherries they pick and eat
 In moments of skylarking idleness.

BOOK ONE: THE PENINSULA CAMPAIGN

1. The Ride To Richmond

Upon the collapse of Boteler's mission, Jackson
 Was ordered with his corps to Richmond to help Lee
 Lift the siege of 105,000 Federals, led by
 The little Napoleon, who, with the spires of
 The Confederate Capital in sight, decided to entrench
 Across the Chickahominy and gather his force
 For the final kill. Knowing the timidity of
 McClellan in the presence of victory, knowing his
 Monomania of caution which sought assurances
 beyond

All reasonable certainty, knowing his hysterical
 Habit of overestimating enemy strength like a
 peasant

Clown in a comic opera, knowing his melodramatic
 Letters to Lincoln asking for reinforcements not
 In existence to be had, knowing of his braggadocio
 And swagger, his meticulous staff work, his idol:
 Popularity—history must doubt that the hand
 Which shook to a draw at Antietam, after holding
 A five-to-two advantage on a shallow field between
 Two streams, could ever have plucked from the breast
 Of Virginia that brightest jewel for an emperor's
 Crown. Handsome George looked the part of his hero
 But lacked the inner stuff of the Corsican corporal.
 And because of that lack history must believe
 That Jackson was wise—and more than wise—
 In wanting troops for a drive up the Blue Ridge
 To stick a sword in the heart of the North and make
 The Railsplitter drop his ax, which even now was
 Sharp at the roots of the black-blossomed tree
 Of sacred States Rights. But the gaunt major general
 Was overruled by his commander-in-chief, the West
 Point graduate wounded at Buena Vista, the
 Secretary

Of War under Franklin Pierce, the adolescent
 estimator

Of his own military genius, who resigned a frontier
 Commission in 1835 because of ill health.
 The smoking breath of Yankee cannon is hot
 In the forking blue veins of swamp and jungle
 So close to the pump of arterial gray, and Davis
 Calls for an operation to relieve the pressure
 And let the bad blood out. Lee, the paper-pushing
 Engineer newly appointed to the office of amputee
 Johnston, Lee, the aristocratic son of Washington's
 Cavalry captain (who halo'd his chief in immortal
 Words: "First in war, first in peace, and first
 In the hearts of his countrymen."), Lee, the failure
 At independent command in 1861, yields to
 presidential

Authority and drafts his plan to include the victor
 Of the Valley—the thirty-eight-year-old ex-professor
 With a reputation greater than his own. And thus,
 No matter what history believes, the changeless
 Present of every act is forever free to foster its
 Error and to freeze each succeeding generation
 In the same unlearning art of mistake,
 For the ignoble maxim of safety first is the father
 Of expedience and quick results and denies
 Any kinship with that godlike spirit of man
 Which sows the bright seeds of legitimate honor
 In the dark bastard flesh of danger and disgrace.

After the decision of the government against their
 Commander, on June 17 Stonewall's corps began
 To march eastward, with Rev. Dabney leading
 At the head of Ewell's division. By June 21
 The vanguard was at Gordonsville, and Jackson had
 Chewed on General Winder's dignity with a refusal
 Of leave, while the men in the snaking columns
 Wondered with tight-lipped humor where this latest
 Maneuver would end: "Old Jack passed orders that we
 Didn't know a durned thing till after the next fight,
 And we're keeping our mouths shut." And keep them
 Shut they did—to the utter exasperation of fussy
 And self-important field officers, who found it next
 To impossible to locate commands, states, or local
 Identities: "I don't know" was the watchword of
 An army of nondescripts moving to Anybody's Guess

By way of Nowhere. After a brief rest at
 Gordonsville,
 Jackson took a Saturday night train with Rev.
 Dabney

To Frederickshall, where he stayed in the home of
 Nathaniel Harris with Generals Hood and Whiting.
 Sunday brought a sermon from Dabney, a talk with
 A guide to Richmond, cautious farewells to
 Subordinates, a late impressment order for relays
 Of fresh horses on the route to Richmond, and a firm
 Command that quartermaster Harman was to address
 Stonewall simply as colonel on the journey.
 Mrs. Harris prepared breakfast at "the usual hour"
 Monday morning, only to find that the commander
 Had been gone since one. Secrecy, always secrecy.

Fifty-two miles in fourteen hours—that was the pace
 Of the ride. But what was the passion, the inner
 Pulse? Fourteen months, thought the general called
 Colonel, fourteen months of defensive maneuvering,
 Governmental bungling, victory-killing delay—
 Fourteen months of watching the enemy add to his
 Overwhelming resources of men and equipment.
 Battles won, but the triumphs never driven home.
 And now the neck of Richmond in a Yankee noose
 And the President demanding a sword to cut the rope
 Rather than forcing Lincoln to untie it
 By an offensive removed from the scene where
 mistake

Can be fatal. Let me set fire to my enemy's house
 Before I have to sacrifice friends to put out the one
 In my own. If I can shoot the foaming-mouthed dog
 Far out in the fields, he cannot get into my sheep,
 And my children shall not run mad with the rabies.
 But how to convince the timid parlor-chair
 Strategists who prefer to wrestle with the thief
 On their very front porch rather than decoy him
 Into an ambush?

Cold, cold was the mind of Stonewall Jackson
 While he rode as in a dream to the thud thud of hoofs
 In the June dust of Virginia. An early morning
 Breeze whispered in the leafy tent overhead,

And the moon swam out of a cloud bank, casting
weird

Light and pale shadow on the dark prophecy spoken
To Harman: "Sir, history shows clearly that in civil
Strife the weaker side cannot hope to win by waging
A defensive war." Then silence a mask on the tight
Mouth, and no reply from the quartermaster too
numb

For words and fearing to risk speech lest
The confessional mood be broken and the general
clam

Up as always when the pearl of his wisdom was
seeking

Exposure. Thud thud of the hoofs, leafy fingers
At the lips of whispering night, and the moon
Bearing witness to ideas too sharp to contain:
"In war, sir, always mystify. Mislead and surprise
The enemy. When you strike and overcome him,
Never let up in pursuit so long as your men have
Strength to follow, for an army routed, if hotly
Pursued, becomes panic-stricken, and can then be
Destroyed by half their number."

More words in succession than Jackson had spoken
To Harman since their altercation in the Valley,
More words in succession than the grim deacon was
Accustomed to speak to anyone except his *esposita*.
But his stern sense of duty was grappling with
The knowledge that the coming campaign was
something

Less than the best, and military genius demanded
Language as partial payment for the painful task
Of obeying at any price. Once again the tight mouth
Opened: "Another rule—never fight against heavy
Odds, if by any possible maneuvering you can hurl
Your own forces on only a part, and that the weakest
Part, of your enemy and crush it. Such tactics
Will win every time, and a small army may thus
Destroy a large one in detail, and repeated victory
Will make it invincible." "Let us hope,"
Said Harman, "that General Lee will know what to
do."

"Under the circumstances I dare say he will,"

Replied Jackson, aware of his own subordination.
 "But let it be remembered that it is always better
 For a lion to lead an army of rabbits than for
 A rabbit to lead an army of lions!" And the dawn
 Broke quietly.

2. Conference At Dabbs' Farmhouse

Confident that his every move had been properly
 Screened, Stonewall arrived at the Dabbs' Farmhouse
 Near Nine Mile Bridge at drowsy, hot, soft-footed
 Three o'clock in the afternoon of June 23. His
 Confidence was at fault: a Confederate deserter from
 Gordonsville fell into Union cavalry at Hanover
 Courthouse the following day, and McClellan learned
 That fifteen conquering brigades were prepared
 To attack his flank. Once out of the Valley,
 Jackson found military security a ball of quicksilver.
 But his fatigue was right and sorely begged
 attention:

With Lee at work inside, the dusty scarecrow general
 Slumped in the yard, head down, against the white
 Picket fence and dreamed of cool sweet-petaled rain
 On his cotton tongue and the warm buds of love
 On his leaden eyes. And dreaming so, he was
 awakened

By a familiar voice, the sharp-toothed voice of
 Near-sighted D. H. Hill, brother-in-law by the second
 Marriage, fellow student and professor of
 mathematics,

And proud defender of the younger man's fame:
 "By God," said Hill, "if you aren't the last person
 In Virginia I expected to see here! Why, only
 Yesterday you were far down the Shenandoah,
 waltzing

Your cannon against Banks and Shields!" Jackson
 Curled his wry grin, rose in aching sections, shook
 Hands and said: "Reports vary. Trust only what you
 Scout yourself—and then make allowance for
 glasses."

Hill laughed. "All the same, Tom, I'm glad you're

Here. Now maybe we'll take the initiative."

"Yes," hawked the eagle flapping at his feathers
With stiff wings. "But how *are* things here, Dan?"

"Bad," moaned the owl behind the thick lenses.

"My men have been falling back steadily for weeks;
The enemy is all but numberless, and we have little
Food. For three days now the only issue is corn

In the shuck." Jackson relaxed his frown for
A moment: "Praise God that empty bellies and full
Hearts have forced McClellan to a halt. Spoils will
Soon ease the hunger." "Perhaps," said Hill.

Then he slammed a booted foot on the ground: "Full
Hearts are rare enough in this swampland!

Thousands

Have run to Richmond to play sick, and the bastardly
Cannon explodes in our faces!" Jackson arched

An eyebrow at the news. "Cowards!" screamed Hill.

"Cowards to the rear and asses in ordnance, who mold
Metal too brittle for a standard charge!" Then

Hill was off in a blistering tirade, while Jackson
Closed his ears to hot language and opened his mind
To cold facts and the heavy shot of frustration.

Before the asperic D. H. could scrape the paint
From the farmhouse with the file of his tongue,
An aide appeared to announce the readiness of Lee
To meet with his generals. The owl and the eagle

Entered headquarters. Gravely courteous,

The commander rose from his table-desk, shook hands
With the two, and lingered for a moment of deference

With the greenest laurels of the South. "I expect
You must be very tired, General Jackson." "A little."

"May I get you some refreshment?" "A glass of milk
Will do, I think." "And you, General Hill?"

"Whatever Tom has is good enough for me," said
The notorious champion of temperance. "Yes, it does

Seem to yield us victory," said Lee, with a slight
Touch of humor in his mellow voice. Stonewall

Downed his drink in a few quick gulps; Hill sipped

And savored the sweetness. Lee turned to business.

At fifty-five, he had held command for just three

Weeks and had fought no battle beyond the closing

Hours of inconclusive Seven Pines. Handsome he was,

Charming he was. An erect and fine-limbed warrior
 With the clean-cut features of a Grecian god,
 The gentle ways of a Christian knight pulling on
 The gauntlet of sainthood. But the hand was firm
 Under the steel, though the eyes were used to tears.
 Intimately influential with President Davis,
 Robert E. Lee would have little trouble with exacting
 Obedience, and something deeper than soldierly yes,
 From subordinates. This Jackson could see as he
 Watched the gray-haired commander with cold mind
 And inscrutable mask of indifference. True, some
 Envious heads still wagged in whispered criticism
 Of the ascent of the staff officer, the paper-shuffler,
 The engineer. But once hearts were stolen, the heads
 Would be still. And though Stonewall had never
 Entered the windy lists against Lee, he knew
 There was no substitute for triumph, stolen hearts
 Notwithstanding. Respect and admiration he felt
 For this soldier, but final surrender of will
 Depended on action in the field. And so the victor
 Of the Valley listened and weighed with a cold mind.

“Gentlemen,” said Lee, his eyes on Jackson’s
 Impassive face, “I wish that General Johnston’s
 Mantle had fallen on an abler man, or that I were
 Able to drive our enemies back to their home. I
 Have no ambition and no desire but the attainment
 Of this object, and therefore wish for its
 Accomplishment by him that can do it most
 speedily—

And thoroughly. To that end, I have drawn up plans
 For our combined assault on McClellan. The reasons
 For a flank attack on Federal positions are many
 And, I think, militarily sound. Richmond cannot
 Long survive a siege. To prevent such a siege, we
 Must assume the offensive.” Lee pointed to the map.
 Hill and Jackson read the blue dispositions quickly.
 “Because of inexperience among our troops,”
 The commander continued, “we dare not risk direct
 Assault on strong trench works heavily backed by
 Superior artillery. If this be granted, then our
 Only course is to engage the enemy in a turning
 Movement. Notice that McClellan’s forces are astride

The Chickahominy." Jackson nodded; his grim mouth
 Opened: "Like ripe wheat in a field, the Yankee
 Right flank invites the scythe." "Exactly so,"
 Said Lee, who saw fierce fires raging in the eagle's
 Eyes. "Success north of the stream will soon
 Threaten McClellan's line of communications.
 As you see, his base is at White House, and the York
 River Railroad crosses the Chickahominy at Dispatch
 Station—only twelve miles to the rear of his exposed
 Right flank." Hill handed his empty glass to an aide
 And said, "It looks as though we will force
 The little Napoleon to relocate his army north of
 The Chickahominy to defend his base." "Or better
 Yet," said Lee to the myopic owl, "force him
 To withdraw south—to seek a new base on the James
 River." "Then we must concentrate overwhelmingly
 To the north," said Hill. "And so we shall," Lee
 Answered. "But General," objected Jackson, swift
 As a hound on the scent of danger, "what is to prevent
 McClellan from storming Richmond on the south
 While we move heavily on the north?" Lee smiled
 In humble recognition of this major weakness in his
 Plan: "President Davis has called my attention
 To this very risk. And as I told him, I depend on
 A certain timidity in the Federal commander, speed
 In concentrating on our part, confusion of the enemy
 Once our assault has begun, good fortune,
 And the never-failing mercy of Divine Providence."
 "Amen," said Jackson, who then fell silent,
 While Lee pointed out two other sources of possible
 Difficulty. The fact that President Jefferson Davis
 Had raised the same objections went far in answering
 The eagle's sense of momentary insecurity.
 Ever since the controversy over the Romney expedi-
 tion,
 Stonewall had entertained but small respect for
 The President as a military mind. Refusal of his
 Plan to invade the North had only served to confirm
 His intense antipathy to Davis. And now the victor
 Of the Valley wished that he hadn't spoken out
 Against Lee's strategy. "Yes," the mellow voice
 Was saying, "if the flank anchors on Beaver Dam
 Creek,

It will be hard to attack directly." Hill and Jackson followed Lee's finger to the sore spot on the map. "They hold good ground," the commander observed, "And may dispute hotly our crossing of the Meadow Bridges and the Mechanicsville Bridges." Again the finger touched the boils on the face of Southern Assault. "Three of our divisions must pass over These bridges."

Before the aristocratic Virginian could completely unfold his plan, Generals Longstreet and A. P. Hill entered headquarters and gathered at the conference table. Lee made the introductions, though there was little need beyond his strict sense of formal courtesy. Stonewall was less attentive to the other subordinates than he should have been. He had known Dutch Longstreet in Mexico, and now he saw the senior major general high in the favor of Lee. And what he saw of the man, he didn't like: a mere captain and Union paymaster when Secession came; squat, domineering, stubborn debater for defense; partially deaf at forty-one, with a voice loud and heavy with gruff, clumsy German humor; lacking requisite imagination for bold attack and woefully inadequate in the proper uses for artillery—Dutch Longstreet was sharp thorn in the brow of brilliance. Able and courageous in many ways, he still would rather argue than obey, prove himself right rather than win. Arrogance without accompaniment of genius. So the eagle saw the bull, and hooded his distaste for horns of laughter flashing stupidly in confident intimacy with feathers ruffled from painful flights in the darkening skies of thunderbolted war. Lee could not help but sense the rivalry; he made a mental note to beware of fanning flames of envy and contention. As for A. P. Hill, Jackson had known him well at West Point. At thirty-seven, one year Stonewall's junior, the hot-tempered red head was a study in nervous, slashing impatience. Brilliant, yes. But given to abrupt moves and careless oversights. A man to be disciplined severely at times in order that the dark stallion of his hurricane desires might not topple the Confederate

Chariot down a rugged precipice of prematurity in
act.

So the eagle saw the tiger. And seeing so, prophesied
Behind the mask of secrecy he wore, terrible enmity
Between the bellow and the roar. Noise of deadly
Hate that Lee would have to silence before bells
Of peace could ring in Richmond.

But all was easy armistice within the room:
The bull and eagle, owl and tiger listened to
The mellow voice of the circus master as he previewed
In detail the entertainment now in store, with all
Appropriate fireworks, for the Yankees. "General
Jackson will flank Beaver Dam Creek; General
Branch

Is to protect the right and clear the Meadow Bridges;
General A. P. Hill will secure the Mechanicsville
Bridges so that Generals D. N. Hill and Longstreet
May advance. Once these movements have been
Accomplished, the entire force will attack in echelon,
From left to right as follows: Stuart, Jackson,
D. H. Hill, A. P. Hill, Longstreet. And, gentlemen,"
Here Lee paused for a momentary smile, "if all goes
Well, we shall storm New Bridge, re-establish
Contact with our troops south of the Chickahominy,
And press on to intersect the York River Railroad."
Intelligent eyes had marked every eloquent gesture
Of finger on the map. A second or two of breathing
Silence, and then a bellow from the bull: "It's
Clear, General, that McClellan's head is in the noose!"
"Pray God it be so," said Lee. "But I prefer
His neck instead." A grim smile cracked the mask
Of Jackson, for he didn't like the image used by
Longstreet—John Brown once had his head within
A noose, but somehow a fatal life had managed
To escape the execution and a martyr's spirit now
Walked with windy violence through gardens of
The South. A spirit that Lee was now trying
Desperately to slam a groaning iron gate upon
And keep him wandering the wailing hymns of free-
dom

Outside the high stone walls of a prison called
The Confederacy. Thus Jackson saw the maneuver—

The slamming of an iron gate in the face of Lincoln
 And the spirit, and he prayed that the gate should
 Not come unhinged or shatter in the center from
 Sheer momentum of such ponderous weight. The thin
 Lips moved above the dusty beard: "What shall be
 Done south of the Chickahominy to cover the main
 Offensive, General?" "I knew you would be satisfied
 On that account," said Lee, "for, as you have so ably
 Demonstrated, that is the point of greatest danger.
 And we shall meet it so: on the day of battle,
 The two divisions of Magruder and Huger will feint
 And raise a fuss—more bark than bite—to shake
 McClellan's poise. Should something serious develop
 On their front, the four brigades of Generals Holmes
 And Wise, on either side the James, will move
 Quickly in support. But should the enemy withdraw,
 Magruder and Huger will pursue most vigorously."
 And thus Lee's plans were laid before them in tones
 Of gentle authority bordering on humility.
 The Presbyterian marveled at the unguarded frank-
 ness

Of the Anglican, an openness that ran counter to
 His very grain of hush to all lieutenants seeking
 More than minimum necessity dictated them to know
 For strict performance of duty. And though he saw
 A thousand ways in which the gate could fail to slam,
 He spoke no more against the plan: all strategy
 Depends on tactics for success. As for himself,
 He'd do his best—let others raise objections
 As they would. But when Lee called for such
 Objections, there were none. "Then, gentlemen,
 I'll let you settle the details among yourselves."
 And with that, the commander left the conference for
 A time. Longstreet, senior present, led discussion.

Eagle, eagle, staring fiercely at a map
 Of swamp and fever land you do not know,
 You are tired beyond revival of a nap
 And yet you have the longest flight to go.

The bull, the bull, mechanical and slow,
 Snorts assignment to the roughest road
 And lays on wings tautgaunt as any bow
 An iron cross—the campaign's heaviest load.

How can you fly tomorrow to attack?
 Fatigue has split your tongue to say
 The wrong time. The hazy word call back.
 Accept the bull's advice: another day.

Your men, your men, poor urchins in the mud,
 Are bogged, exhausted, out of smiles;
 Though ready for your sake to shed their blood,
 They string out toward the Valley twenty miles.

Eagle, eagle, lean as any stick,
 Soon to nod from saddle, on your return
 You'll find the Reverend Dabney sick
 From the same strange fires that in you burn.

Wagons, wagons, they are everywhere,
 Maddening your officers with mule delay;
 The scent of heavy rain is in the air—
 Accept the bull's advice: another day.

3. Army On The Move

Next day, June 24, the eagle slept a little while
 (He had dozed less than ten hours in the past
 Ninety-six), as torrential rain made rivers of
 The local creeks and enemy pickets contested every
 Boot-sucking step of glue-earth advance on roads
 So poorly mapped that Lincoln Syndor, native of
 The region, led General Ewell and Jackson's vanguard
 All astray: new paths hacked by Yankees through
 The jungle caused him to lose familiar landmarks.
 Cursing Dick, baldheaded jaybird with the lisp of
 Rage, hopped up and down in threats of hanging
 For the guide: the heavy guns were nearly buried
 In mud and thickets of inertia, where mosquitoes
 Whined like minie balls and tropic heat sapped
 The last ounce of patience from the will. Only
 The moldly knight of resurrection from brief fitful
 Dreams, astride little Sorrel like the Spanish
 Gentleman of windmill war on Rozinante, could calm
 The major general. "The blame lies higher up,"
 Said Jackson. And so it did. So high, in fact,
 It came to rest like a funeral wreath at the door

Of the Richmond White House. Fourteen months of
 Military action, and still Confederate commanders
 Knew no more of the topography within a day's
 march

Of their own capital than they did of that of central
 Africa. General Taylor said so. And the owl moaned
 About the vague red line running parallel east
 With the Chickahominy—the only guide on the route
 To his position. His brother-in-law, with farther
 Ranging vision, could foresee the final meaning of
 That line: red symbol of the lavish spending of young
 Southern blood. Blood earned on thousands of
 Half-illiterate pages in the private histories
 Of love time-locked and guarded by the human heart.
 And because that heart will rise and play,
 When every drum of madness has been stilled,
 Its symphony of joy from windy mountain heights,
 New-necklaced with transfigured jewels of heaven—
 It is fitting now that we should read, with reverence
 For the pain that was its life, a few excerpts from
 The glory that was once the spirit of this corps.

Winslow Adams

Professional gambler, flush from the Mississippi
 Riverboats, Winslow Adams enlisted for adventure
 From the buried ace that forced him into duels
 From New Orleans to St. Louis, to say nothing of
 The blackeyed charmer with the thick honey of
 Memphis

In her throat who dreamt of a golden ring on her
 Third finger left and the patter of little feet
 In the halls of lazy Sunday afternoons. Freedom,
 In a word, made him join the ranks of gray denial
 To all personal liberty. But as he marched,
 With heavy petals of June rain a fragrance in his
 Merry heart, his berry lips whistled *Dixie*
 To the gathering mud. What the hell, war wasn't
 Bad—not so long as he could cross the suttlers'
 Palms with Yankee gold for extra rations
 And the betting boys failed to see how he warmed
 The plate his favorite louse leapt off first to win
 The company stakes. For him, all living was

A matter of odds. And if his crotch burned from
 The rub of coarse cotton on sweat, his heart glowed
 With the protective weight of an unmarked deck
 (Better defense against a bullet than the Bible)—
 And in his right pants pocket the ivory cubes rattled
 A pleasant song of invitation to a cast before
 The fire.

Though the cornpone is gritty with cob
 And bread on a ramrod is hard,
 I can always dice with a slob
 And turn me a friendly card.

Though the bacon they give me is fat
 And the beef is a mucous blue,
 I can always find an ace in my hat
 And win the vittles I have to.

And I'd rather be wet in the rain
 Than dry in the arms of a belle,
 For legal love in bed is a pain
 And paying bills—a hell.

So I'll march with Stonewall's men,
 Who weaken on soup and gruel,
 March till the odds diminish again
 And I know myself a fool

Staring at death from a cannon mouth
 Under the keen of that Rebel cry
 That plants triumphant flags of the South
 In the heart of a Yankee sky.

And I'd rather be wet in the rain
 Than dry in the arms of a belle,
 For legal love in bed is a pain
 And paying bills—a hell.

And if I march to a Southern rout
 And the time when I have to die,
 I'll merely say that my luck ran out
 And blow a kiss to the sky.

Father Charles Martel

Namesake of the victor at Tours, blocky squat

And heavy-shouldered, with an angry tongue as rough

As a sailor's, Father Charles Martel rode a Yankee Nag captured at Harper's Ferry—compliments of The Old Man, who blinked his Protestant eyes at The Catholic priest and said, "I am deeply grateful," When informed that his predestined soul was mentioned

For God's benefit at every Mass. And so the little Hammer of the Church received easy passage to his Communicants and was blessed with a tent to shield His wooden altar and the sacrificial Host against The elements, that Nature might not boast of turning Would-be saints away from the worship of the One, True, Universal, Holy, and Apostolic Faith.

Approaching middle age (some snow already in his Hair), tired of pious admissions in confessional Of failure to say grace before meals by ladies of The Altar Guild, and sick of too much perfume from Creole whores in the incense of Sunday Benediction, He gave up his hopes for a monsignor's hat and left A lucrative parish in New Orleans for the war. At first the bishop stood opposed, but with his Customary force, the little hammer banged away To freedom in the missionary field of soldiers much In need of the anointment of salvation: "Your Excellency, the Lord has laid His holy hands upon Me for this work. Why, I know not—unworthy as I am.

But the purposes of God are strange, and many times He chooses an ugly block of obstinant stupidity Like me. The call is clear: I must go, and by eternal Fire—I shall!" And so he did, with arrogance Enough at first to convert all Christianity to Heathendom. But war had shown him something more

Than what he taught in catechism; the Valley Campaign

Chipped layers of granite from his soul, and now he Rode half naked with humility in the rain—fiercely Loyal to Stonewall and his men. Men who, in spite Of oaths and jibes and petty thefts, were tabernacles Of the living flame; men who, in spite of onion

Breaths and stale armpits and whiskey heads, were
 Sweeter than the prayers of great St. Joan of Arc;
 Men who, in spite of poker and dice and trips with
 Giggling girls into the woods, could sing more
 Joyfully than angels on the wings of Christmas night.
 Men ragged and dirty, empty-stomached and out of
 Shoes, who died with dignity of prayer upon their
 Lips and starlight in their eyes. And though he
 Hated slavery with a passion, Father Charles Martel
 Loved these men with greater passion, knowing
 Christ

Would walk with them—nay, die for them—forgiving
 Ignorance of darkness in their childish hearts.
 And as he rode the muddy roads toward Hundley's
 Corner and the furious killing, he offered up
 His Penitential Office all for them. The men to die.

Master of the darkened skies:
 When Thy thunders roar,
 For their sake, make me wise,
 That I may serve Thee more.

Clear my blear-all eyes
 To see what they do not:
 The hate which crucifies
 That love be not forgot

By Thee Who art all love.

Dr. Butler Wade

Born among Charleston's finest, reared with easy
 Grace, top student in his graduating class
 At the University of South Carolina, later number
 One in medicine, and promising young intern
 At Richmond, Dr. Butler Wade turned his back
 On exciting research in Baltimore and genteel prac-
 tice

At home to follow the dictates of his patriotic blood.
 And in his choice he forfeited the chance to marry
 Well above his own high station with a distant cousin,
 Heiress to shipping millions, in New York. "Should
 You decide to cast your golden future into an iron
 Ladle for leaden fools to play tin soldier with, I

Shall remove your diamond from my hand." Execute
 The threat she did, and so he wore the ring upon
 A silver chain about his neck that he might not
 Forget how death can come to every man before
 The digging of his grave. Now he sits his ambulance
 Beside a freckled, redbearded, tobacco-mumpsy
 Sergeant from Tennessee, who spits dark amber at
 The winking puddles and swears blue flame at two
 Gray mules stubborn in traces rotting with rain.
 At every jolt and lurch, cold diamond sears
 His heart with memories of divorcement in the soul—
 Until the mountaineer opines: "Yes, sir, Captain,
 This here fit'll make Manassas look like a church
 Bazaar." Then wet reality returns, and Dr. Butler
 Wade recalls the need for bandages and morphine,
 So precious now for wounded men—who otherwise
 will
 Die.

A butcher, not a surgeon,
 That's how I feel at times
 When mutilations burgeon:
 Red roses of the crimes

That men commit on men,
 Who else were living whole.
 Amputations once again
 That cut me to the soul.

Yet scalpel flesh I must,
 Though inwardly I bleed,
 To save some tortured dust
 For simple love and mere need.

Ronald Sandford

Second classman at the Point when Beauregard took
 Sumter; bored with mathematics, history, astronomy;
 Seeing little use for fortifications for an army
 On the move, and sentimental as a drunken whore
 About the tiny crossroads town he called his own
 In Alabama, Ronald Sandford resigned to march
 As a second lieutenant with Stonewall Jackson
 Through the Valley. He was proud of Mama, Papa,

Three lovely sisters, and a baby brother; proud
 Of the life they had led together in coon-and-possum
 Hunting winter and catfish-trolling summer. Glad
 For all the chicken fries, firecracker-popping
 Fourth-of-July picnics, guitar-strumming and banjo-
 Plunking sermons at revival meetings (afterwards:
 The ice cream and the lemonade); glad for husking
 Bees at Hallowe'en, wild-turkey shoots at Thanksgiv-
 ing,

And saltwater taffy kisses of Christmas day.
 At twenty-one and in need of a shave three times
 A week, he didn't see the war as one of slavery
 Or of States Rights or of that sanctimonious word
 That was colored pious dim as evening light filtering
 Through stained-glass windows of a Montgomery
 church—

The Cause. No, such focused vision is given only
 To those too old or eloquent or high in public office
 Ever to have to shed their blood for what they see.
 And since nimble knees and Indian-whooping spirits
 Were his youth, Ronald Sandford saw only
 That the little things which formed the substance
 Of his life stood in peril of the bragging guns
 Of strangers dressed in blue—monkeys whom the
 shaggy

Hound of Southern Valor had forced to chase their
 Tails, chattering in terror at his bark, and tumbling
 Through woods of ignominy from the fury of his bite.
 Ah, the Old Man! He'd seen the Old Man twice—
 Closeup. And each time a lump of unpressed cider
 In his chest had made it hard to breathe. Stonewall
 Jackson and the deep pools of liquid fire that were
 His eyes are all the reason Ronald Sandford needs
 Now to get his men across a swollen creek on backs
 Of new-felled logs. And if, though tired, wet,
 And hungry enough to eat a steer, this second
 Lieutenant can still think war the only occupation
 For a man and dream of silver bars where gold ones
 Glisten in the rain, remember that heroes seldom
 Master prudence and that the sacrifices of green
 Age are sweeter to the soul of twenty-one than
 Petaled roses on bud-lidded eyes of sleeping girls.

Mud on my boots, sun in my breast,
 Enemy entrenchments before us,
 But we'll whistle a summer storm from the west
 And drown the Yanks in a Dixie chorus.

For they cannot swim with a lightning rod
 Flashing bright peace for the ladies,
 And when Stonewall's thunder hits them—by God,
 They will all be blown to Hades!

Roger Tecknor

Son of a prosperous Raleigh tobacco merchant
 And sole heir to the family estate, pinch-penny
 Owner at thirty of a hardware store, livery stable,
 And three-storey hotel — Roger Tecknor slogged
 wearily

On toward Jackson's martial rendezvous with fame
 As the butt of every company joke. He winced when
 Men played grab-ass in the ranks, and he was always
 Being goosed by some crude mountain boy who loved
 To hear the giddy squealing of this plump maid
 In Rebel gray, whose roughest language when in
 anger

Was, "Oh, piss!" Dirty laughter of tormenters
 Stained his soul beyond all bleaching; impotent
 With childish rage, he could do nothing more than
 Wish them all in hell, for which they tossed him
 In a blanket once and later shaved a path of shame
 In the dense mat of hair upon his blubber chest.
 And because he had played dead in The Battle of
 Cross Keys to save himself from death indeed, he
 Now was subject of an ungallant hillbilly serenade:

*When Yankee bullets whine our way,
 Roger the Dodger runs away.
 When Yankee cannon booms to kill,
 Roger jumps behind a hill.
 Now ain't the Dodger wise, I say?
 He lives to die another day.*

But with the echo of that song a dagger in his side,
 He died with every step he took. Coward, yes.

He knew it all too well, for he had been a coward
 All his life. Something there was about his pink
 Opossum face and brown calf eyes that bleated
 lambkin

Invitation to his sacrifice: "Come step on me:
 My heart is like a shattered pumpkin—yellow mush."
 And Gertrude White, the hometown lady of easy
 virtue,

Did step on it; then Roger fell in love with
 The pock-faced Amazon, who quickly understood his
 Inability to court and win a woman of respect.
 Something there was about his squeak-mouse lust
 That no cooing dove of magnolia-blossom marriage
 Could ever flush from hiding. So one fine day
 Before the war, she said: "In love, a bird
 In the bush is worth two in the hand." That night
 Poor Roger (with gold enough for Gertrude's need)
 Sheltered the hamlet of his hunger in the cherry-
 Peaked mountains of her snowy breast. Although she
 Failed to make a man of him, she cried him into
 Service with a promise of devotion that had made
 Him call her Queen of Ithaca—and if his literary
 Pose was wasted on her ignorance, her madam mind
 Knew well enough to bless him for the independent
 Means he willed her should he fall before the gates
 Of Troy. And now he marches thankful for the mud
 And rain that keep the men from riding him (they
 Scarcely have the strength to curse themselves);
 Thankful for the misspelled letters in his hamper-
 sack,

Nestled dry beside the sweetmeats, bacon,
 And preserves recently arrived from home. And since
 The gods are kindly (so he thinks), perhaps
 The skitters that have lanked his jowls will cease
 To trot, and maybe he will find the time before
 A smoky fire to read some lines of Plato
 While he dreams again of cherry peaks.

Proud Odysseus was a man,
 And fierce Achilles too:
 Not a warrior of their clan,
 I jump at every boo!

Ghosts of heroes frighten me
 Out of my slack skin:
 Gertrude, please come tighten me
 Your loving arms within.

Symposium tonight I'll read,
Iliad I cannot bear:
 In it ghosts of heroes bleed
 And tears set fire to air.

A general with Joshua eyes
 Advances wet gray like a tide:
 Under vast unminding skies
 I pray that I may hide.

Hide from noise and flame in field
 Torn like tender scars
 Where only mute white crosses yield
 Glory to the Stars and Bars.

Symposium tonight I'll read,
Iliad I cannot bear:
 In it ghosts of heroes bleed
 And tears set fire to air.

And ghosts of heroes frighten me
 Out of my slack skin:
 Gertrude, please come tighten me
 Your loving arms within.

Sam Stover

Blacksmith from Atlanta, thirty-five and getting
 Gray, rugged as an oak, with arms as thick as Parrott
 Guns, Sam Stover crouched on stones he'd placed
 To floor the mud and shoved a knotty-muscled
 shoulder
 Under the sagging bed of an ammunition wagon
 mired
 In spite of all the strain of four strong mules.
 "All right, fellers," he said, "set to!—and don't
 Stop to count the rain. Now heave!" Suck-gasping
 Up, out came the wheels until they rested on
 The stones. "Hot damn, Sergeant! We did it, we
 Did it!" yelled a beardless officer of supply, fresh

From theoretical logistics learned at V.M.I. Sam sniffed. "Good thing, too, Lieutenant. If we Don't get this celebration powder to the front, Old Jack'll make us quail on toast for breakfast." Then he pulled a red bandanna from his Rebel blouse And trumpeted his satisfaction with the deed. But after private thunder, a cloud of anger darkened On his leather face: "Corporal, if you don't keep That brush-strewing party well ahead of this here Train, I'll skin you right out of your Yankee Underwear!" Sam, the corporal, and all others In the company had benefited greatly from the spoils Of war. Once again in the driver's seat, Sam cracked A wetling whip and boomed out, "Huddup!" to the mules.

The wagon train moved forward, while the corporal Kept men felling brush against another bogging In the mire. The giant veteran of six campaigns Stuck a hamlike hand into a pocket of his soggy Blues, compliments of Fremont and the Union Commissary, and pulled out a small brown bottle Full of medicine for summer colds. "Here, Lieutenant, Have a swig—no sense in taking chill." The junior Officer demurred: "A violation of regulations To drink on duty." "Maybe so," said Sam, "But shootfire, Lieutenant, the way I reckon it, This here thing is more than duty—why, it's a simple Case of safety and precaution in the face of Overwhelming odds." "But the colonel might object." "Let him," said Sam. "His bird ain't going to dry Them creeks that lie ahead, and Old Jack'll keep Us eating mud till midnight." Scruples yielded to Superior wisdom, and soon two fragrant mouths were Humming "The Girl I Left Behind Me" to the broad-Rumped mules. Then only one, for Sam remembered With a sudden blur that wasn't rain his precious Margaret and the boy: lovely woman with shoebottom Eyes and all the Christmas organs of Atlanta in her Voice; frail and tender, capable of loving all The lost stray orphan souls in a renegade world, And yet unable to bear more than this one child— His Mark, fourteen now, straight as an arrow, Supple as a cat, but with a touch of elmy broadness

That was Sam's. "Shoeing horses will fill him out,"
 The father thought, "but who's to take him hunting
 In the fall?" Then he prayed the war would end
 Before the boy enlisted for a grimmer kind of hunt.
 "Yes, sir, old Yankee Breeches," the lieutenant said
 With warm familiarity, "I don't know what I'd do
 Without you." Sam dug a knuckle in the corner of
 An eye and muttered to the straining mules, "Forget
 The sentiment before you drown." Two fragrant
 Mouths hummed no more.

Shoe the horse and shoe the mare:
 We ain't going anywhere—
 Only up and down the mud,
 Where young lieutenants shed my blood
 By reminding me of one
 Whose smile is brighter than the sun
 And his mother in whose eyes
 Moonlight sings of clearing skies.

Shoe the mules and shoe the colts:
 Every time this wagon jolts
 My heart feels like a funeral bell
 To toll the Yankees all to hell,
 And I wish that I could lay my head
 A softer place than in a wagon bed,
 Where ammunition rides to war.
 Christ, what is all this bangdeath for?

Willis Hyatt

Recently a teacher of eight grades in a little
 One-room country school in southern Virginia, Willis
 Hyatt followed the destinies of Stonewall Jackson
 To please his girl—Mathilda Brooke, gray-eyed
 Tomboy daughter of a local sharecropper. Old man
 Brooke was mean as sin, especially when he had bent
 His elbow too much on the applejack jug, but Matti
 (So everyone called her, including Willis) was
 Honeyfire in the veins of spring—lithe and sweet
 As a spear of hay, with a kisspout mouth as ripely
 Red as the heart of a melon, though her angry tongue
 Could sting like a bumblebee. And if she could plow

A furrow straighter than any man and ride a great
 Black stallion bareback (legs astraddle, skirts
 Billowing, lean tawny knees flashing fierce light)
 Down a whistling wind as she clutched the electricity
 Of God in his shaggy mane, she could also sit
 Quietly as grief and listen to the whisper of her
 Soul as it spoke with everything newcome to green
 Above the surface of the soil. This capacity for
 Silence in her was religion, and this it was
 Which drew her irresistibly to him who was the voice
 Of eloquence within the village—shy, slender, gentle
 Poet, Willis Hyatt. And so they fell in love,
 And for a year he lived in daily ecstasy and poured
 His heart out to her on hundreds of pages of neatly
 Copied verse which made the cheep-cheep rhymes of
 Imitative songsters in New England look like canary
 Feathers beside the dazzling bonnet of a warring
 Chief. For warring chief he was at twenty-six—
 Waging mortal enmity with death: "If my sharp
 flame

Of words can light the candle of all truth within
 Your soul, then I'm content to die when God shall
 Will, for love which sings must be forever sung."
 And though she could not understand all that he
 meant,

She felt the magic of his voice within her blood
 And treasured every line he gave her with the vow
 That if her father ever dared to lay his violent
 Hands on Willis' poems, she'd kill him where he stood.
 And like the humble wife of William Blake, she
 turned

From darkness toward the light and every day found
 More rapport with him who was the secret symbol of
 All poems. When the noise of Sumter shook the South,
 He said, "I suppose I ought to go." "Yes," she
 Answered. "The gold and frankincense are in your
 Lines—they need the bitterness of myrrh to give
 Them the sharpness you would not taste before."
 "A touch of hopeless Keats," he said. And then,
 As though the first light of creation had rounded
 Suns before his eyes, he saw she knew him better
 Than he knew himself. "But I'll not play the forlorn
 Role of Fanny Brawne—oh, Willis! Willis! marry me

Before you go!" "No," he said, after infinite ages
 Of slow silent pain. "I will not leave you big
 With child to wait for the ending of the world—
 For you must know as well as I we cannot hope to win
 This war, and what may happen in the months that
 lie

Ahead, it's better we forget till I return."
 But now this lyric Homer of the Jackson corps
 Remembers what it is he would forget, and with
 A shadow of regret upon his face, he wets a stubby
 Pencil with his lips and huddles closer to a smoking
 Fire that serves to dry his thicket-tattered uniform
 Before he eases wearily between the oilcloths
 And the blankets next his snoring pal. And now he
 Writes most carefully within a thick ledgerbook
 He carries with him everywhere—the safe for all
 The poetry he sends to Matti when he finds the time
 For letters home.

If somewhere up ahead
 A Union bullet bears my name,
 Do not make sentimental tags of love
 To stick upon the coffin of my heart.
 I marked each motion of your beauty once:
 Let that be epitaph enough.

Bradley Carleton

Midnight, and the windy patter of rain from stirring
 Leaves; midnight, and the neighing of horses tied
 Somewhere out in the darkness; midnight,
 And the croaking of frogs from the swollen swamps,
 The clicking of crickets in the wet hedges of
 Oppressive heat, the minor keying of mosquitoes
 About sleeping heads, and the whirring of gnats
 On uncovered faces; midnight, and Major Bradley
 Carleton of the Virginia artillery cannot find
 A dry bed on which to unlock the safe of his dreams.
 He is tired, tireder than he knows; the stubble
 Encircling his neat mustache is pesty with itch,
 And his lean muscular legs under damp officer's gray
 Complain of the recent work of chiggers. He
 scratches,

Yawns, nibbles some hardtack, then speaks his mind
 To a blanketmate captain, exhaustedly sipping a cup
 Of the milk they had begged from a farmwife at noon.
 "Right now I feel like the shortest verse in
 The Bible: 'Jesus wept.' My God, what a day this
 Has been! Eighteen hours up and the vanguard made
 No more than six miles in the mud. And if we don't
 Move faster tomorrow, Old Jack'll tax us all some
 Hair." "That's for sure," the captain says.
 "And from what they tell me, I guess our Stonewall
 Hasn't slept in twenty years and just can't
 Understand why human nature puts in so many de-
 mands

For rest." The major smiles and drinks a cup of
 The milk. Then it's time for dreams. Soon
 The captain, twenty-seven, golden handsome and
 father

Of two little girls, is sleeping in the gathering
 Fog. "Perhaps," the wakeful major thinks, "because
 What matters most in life has been fulfilled for him."
 And aching from the blunted stabs of memory,
 Bradley

Carleton wishes something in himself were not
 So incomplete. Sensitive son of a plantation owner,
 With a flair for painting and an eye for the beautiful,
 He had no sense for the business of earning a living.
 To him, cotton and tobacco were either subjects for
 Landscapes or the daily sources of sweat for animals
 Dressed in bright rags who happened to bear human
 Names. He hated the sweat, but he loved the animals.
 Ever since he was a boy, he had responded to
 The slaves with passionate joy, a fierce protective
 Feeling for humility in chains and innocence
 That sang the very heart out of his breast. (God,
 God, a white man has never lived until he's heard
 The Darkies crowning hyacinth Jesus with their ivory
 Hymning in the fields of twilight.) And if his
 Gentle mother understood that heart, she has been
 Dead these fifteen years—deposited in earth for
 Safer keeping from the puny rage of men who had
 Invested wealth and war for no return of interest
 From the Lord of poverty and peace. So when the
 time

For adult decision came and Brad had none to make,
 His father, who was convinced the second son (Prince
 George) was fitter heir to master all his lands,
 Sent the misfit packing off to V. M. I. "Military
 Life may make a man of our fair lady!" And Bradley
 Learned, as best he could, the dull complexities
 Of iron strife and woke a time or two
 To the mysterious genius of Professor Jackson
 And the maxims of his higher mathematics—
 although

What he remembered best of all was some silly lines
 The Old Man once had read in class:

*I had a little pig
 And I fed him on clover.
 And when he died,
 He died all over.*

Then graduating into a world not yet at war,
 He refused commissioning and borrowed money
 From a kindly aunt to spend upon three years
 Of law at the University of Virginia. When he
 Had won several cases in court and seemed well
 Established in a Richmond practice, his father
 Relented and invited him home to broach the matter
 Of marriage: "Irene Radcliffe—just think how
 Your fortune will grow!" Brad took one look at
 The milk-and-water damsel and smelled the curds
 Of cottage cheese. From bachelor quarters he wrote:

Though I'm the son of a what of a which
 And may play the dog at a flea-bitten hole,
 I will not marry a respectable bitch
 For her goddam mangy soul.

The family rupture was now complete. Still unwed
 At twenty-nine, and not asleep (though it's one
 O'clock), he wrestles in the dark Gethsemane
 Of his love with the bright image of ripe-olive-colored
 Agape, quadroon girl his mother reared to be her
 Personal maid. Agape, his half first cousin by
 Lecherous Grandpa Bradley on Mulatto Martha, Mrs.
 Major Domo in his father's house. Agape (most

Blessed word in all St. Paul), three parts free
 And one part slave, who runs the Carleton clan
 Better than aging Martha can now that her eyes
 Are cataracts. Agape, of his very age, strange
 Cream-coffee portrait of his young mother, with
 hands

As delicately boned as a maple leaf and dancing feet
 That whisper of heaven to the waiting moon; Agape
 Of the bell-rich prayer savored in the scent of roses;
 Agape of the long black hair brushing the collar
 Of his most white need as he taught her to read
 And write; Agape, his only dream that moves
 And breathes and does not die when dawn breaks cold
 And ashen gray; Agape, who said, after he had
 pressed

Her lips for the only time in the parting that now
 Was this his agony: "I love you more than the starry
 Sky." Agape—the major jerks bolt upright out of
 The blankets; it is early morning, and the captain
 Is brewing some tea. "Nightmare, Major?" "I don't
 Know." "Well, you were muttering about how
 somebody
 Shouldn't cry."

If love between us two be sin,
 Then let us pray somewhere within
 The vast confines of hell
 May dwell
 A few worthy pioneers
 Banqueting on others' fears.
 If love between us two be sin.

If love between us two be wrong,
 Then let us pray an April song
 Of truth will rinse and wring
 Each bird of spring
 That prejudicial eyes may see
 Such beauty knows not slave and free.
 If love between us two be wrong.

If love between us two be right,
 Then let us thank the God of night,
 Who shelters us within His arm,
 Safe from harm.

For though I've sought joy everywhere
 The least white thread of my most soul
 Is only whole
 When twining in your long black hair.
 And I shall bless you, precious one,
 And wear your heart in me,
 Until a very sober sun
 Burns blisters on a drunken sea.

4. The Tiger Roars Too Soon

While his troops were slopping through the heavy
 Rain of Tuesday, June 24, Stonewall stopped for
 A time at the Henry Carter House, where he received
 A message from General Lee, which read in part
 As follows: "Maj. Gen. Jackson to be in position
 On Wednesday night on Hanover Court House Road,
 Or near that road, about half way between Half Sink
 Bridge, and Hanover Court House . . . Gen. Jackson
 Will commence his movement, precisely at 3 o'clock
 Thursday morning, and the moment he moves, send
 Messengers to Gen. Branch, who will immediately
 move
 Himself . . ." Such was the plan of the commander,
 But, like most plans of mice and men, it went
 astray—

As the Scotch-Irish lover of Bobbie Burns could have
 Predicted, now that he saw his corps far out
 In a strange jungle, falling steadily behind
 The schedule, and with no help at all from leaden
 Skies. And to make the assignment more difficult,
 That night General Lee gave him a longer route;
 Then the column-driving brigadier, Richard Taylor
 (Son of President Zachary), came down with swamp
 Fever, with such severe pains in head and loins
 That he found it impossible to mount and could
 Scarcely comprehend messages. As Jim, the negro
 Slave, applied cold packs to the stomach of his
 Master next morning, he said in a tone of uncommon
 Concern, "You feels powerful warm, General
 Jackson,

Sir." "Too much zeal to get at the enemy," Stonewall Replied, but his eyes held a darkness that had little To do with the drizzle outside. "I command you To say nothing of this to anyone." Jim obeyed, But he knew: The Boss had a touch of that devil fever.

In fact, the whole corps seemed touched with fever: Sleepy and slow, the brigades were not marching In order till an hour after sunrise, but the dawn Was so damply dark that perhaps they didn't know When it came—though the moralist Dabney was certain

Enough of the cause of delay: the officers had spent Too much of the night in julep-drinking. Yet once Underway, the men found that the roads were better, In spite of the steady drizzle and the stifling Heat, and Stonewall, wet, weary, half-sick, drove Them twenty miles with all the pent-up fury of Frustration. By nightfall, late, behind schedule, With seven crucial miles still to go before he crossed The Virginia Central, the general finally surrendered To discretion and let his exhausted gray hordes Encamp at Ashland. "I dare not push them any further,"

He said to an aide, "lest they fall out of ranks By full regiments." Thus flesh and blood are A curbing bit in the mouth of the wild stallion Of genius. And the eagle of war may fly No higher than the burden he carries permits.

Sunset and the Valley troops are cheering As they pass their bearded idol, stiffly seated On grass-cropping Sorrel, his cadet cap low, all But hiding his face. He is talking with a knight In elegant gray, with black ostrich plume jauntily Stuck in the band of his soft cocked hat, pinned Up on one side for chicness and an added touch To the panache; finely grained leather boots stretch With scarcely a wrinkle up to the thighs. It is Beauty Stuart, merry of mouth, lovely of limb, Dashing of dream; twenty-nine-year-old chief Of the cavalry, proud as a peacock of his recent Ride round the whole Union army. Beside such svelte

Splendor, the eagle looks like a rag-picker, but he
 Loves the peacock like a brother, though he knows
 How to pluck a few gaudy feathers now and then
 From the train of the smarter, younger bird.
 Sunset and the Valley troops are cheering
 Their homely idol—among them, Lieutenant Ronald
 Sandford, who accounts himself blest at the sight
 Of these contrasts together; an impression, he thinks,
 To live in his memory long after the battles are
 Forgotten. And if he brings his company to present-
 Arms before the captain can give the command
 And then hurrahs more loudly than the rest, perhaps
 Sober-eyed historians will forgive him his boyish
 Enthusiasm for a man and a cause that failed.
 This moment of tribute is one of the happiest
 In his oh, so young life, and he has too few
 Heartbeats of joy left in his body. Sunset
 And the Valley troops are cheering, but their idol
 Now motions an aide to his side with a flick of
 The wrist: "Sir, there shall be no more
 demonstrations

Among the men. I don't want every Yankee scout
 In the neighborhood to know where we are—pass
 The word for silence in the ranks!" Then he resumes
 His conversation in mid-sentence with Stuart,
 But there is a quaver in the high-pitched voice,
 And his eyes glow brighter than usual for a time.
 Then darkness gathers as Stuart says, "The Union
 Cavalry have already driven in my pickets,
 And the telegraph lines out of Ashland have been
 cut."

"And I, sir, am still far short of my objective,"
 Says Jackson. Then he slams a fist into an open
 Palm: "We must sweat early tomorrow or bleed later
 On." Night but the Valley troops are not cheering.

Nor were the brigadiers when they came to report
 And found their commander in a testy mood—Major
 Dabney, with his usual primness, thought Old Jack
 "Scarcely courteous," but the reverend, still
 Feverish, had been ordered to move the starting
 Time to 2:30 next morning in place of Lee's
 Scheduled three—enough to make any sickly
 preacher

Overcritical. As for Stonewall, all he said
 To those beneath him was, "Gentlemen, you must
 have
 Your men cook and be ready to start at dawn."
 But when General Winder answered with the only
 Unforgivable word in Jackson's vocabulary—
 "Impossible!"—even though he hastened to qualify
 Himself with factual excuse ("My baggage train is
 Far back")—the eagle froze him with an icy stare
 More eloquent than torrents of steaming abuse
 Of which his executive little jaybird was a master.
 After the cold blade of contemptuous silence had
 Hollowed out the underling's insides, Stonewall
 Hissed unmistakable command: "Sir, it must be
 done!"

Though the categorical imperative does exist
 (Compliments of the dense literary style of
 Philosopher I. Kant—surely the strangest name
 Imaginable for the genius of I Must) and did exist
 For the one invincible soldier of the South, yet men
 Not eager to play the role of gods will do their
 Worst to ease away from its most stern demands.
 And on Thursday, June 26, the army of the Valley
 Proved true to this observation, for Stonewall
 Jackson, after cold packs on his hot aching flesh,
 Prayed on sharply protesting knees for victory
 Through speed—only to find, with swollen streams,
 Burnt bridges, and blue serpentine lines of
 Countless Yankees before him, that his force was
 Playing slugabed in the early rising heat. Long
 After sunrise, ragged files of men still stood
 In line about the wells of Ashland. In spite of
 Recent rains, water was scarce, and the blazing
 Sun promised to turn the vapor-spiraling countryside
 Into a Turkish bath. But with their commander up
 And out, lean breakfasted, feeling somewhat better
 For a longer sleep than usual, and driving rapid
 Orders home, by eight o'clock the hungry columns
 Were marching over baking mud on Ashcake Road.
 At 9:30, some six hours late, the vanguard crossed
 The Virginia Central, and Stonewall, obeying Lee,
 Sent a note to General Branch, far down the right,

Advising him of the juncture. Enemy scouts pecked
Noisily away at the advancing front—a sign
Of stiff resistance farther on.

With every drybrush crackle of thin rifle fire,
The timid rabbit that was Roger Tecknor's heart
Jumped and kicked thump-thump against his ribs.
Sweat poured in channels from his armpits and his
Groin, and he seemed to walk on water, ever fearful
Of the loss of that last ounce of faith that kept
Him yet from drowning in a sea of dark hysteria.
Though he drank continually from his cypress-wood
Canteen (one more detail to set him apart from
His fellow Johnnies), his hand shook so much
That his shirt front was wetter than the back,
And his lips were parched, his tongue a cottoned
Glue. Half a dozen times he broke from ranks
To replenish his supply at roadside springs and
wander

Deeper into thickets for the nervous dribble of
Small urination. Each time his hope to straggle
Free of death proved vain, for always barked
The watchdog voice of the sergeant or the captain:
"Close it up, men, close it up! Hey, you there
In the brush, get the hell out here on the double!"
No, if red-handed Murder waited up ahead,
His Argus-eyed henchmen would make sure that he,
Roger Tecknor, microcosm of all misery, was not
Forgotten. God, how he despised the brutal jokes
On how the sun would dry his diapers if he didn't
Make it! Ignoramuses who had no feeling for
The finer things of life, who had to throw their
Meager breath away on dunghill humor—beasts
Who frothed at mouth because, too stupid to read
Or write themselves, they had to show superiority
Over him—him who loved French poetry and could
Quote Plato by the page in the original Greek!
Ah, how crueller than cruel they were to laugh at
him—

Especially now that his legs were so rotten with
Some rare disease of the swamps (the closer he got
To the enemy, the more convinced he became of his
Strange and sudden illness) that he could scarcely

Muster strength enough to lay one feeble foot
 In front of the other. But he would show them,
 Show them all some day—why, if this unique identity
 That was his economic genius were ever lost
 To the South by some heroic sacrifice upon the field
 Of honor, then the very structure of the Confederate
 Victory would collapse from lack of him to help
 Reconstruct prosperity in peace! But as the rat
 Of his untruth clawed and bit inside, some cold
 Scrap of mind reflecting on his mind said simply,
 “You’re afraid, so much afraid you’d better keep
 Your buttocks tight.” And as he swallowed unshed
 Tears of bitter impotence, he said most humbly
 To himself, “I know it, and I will.”

I cannot roll a stone in my mouth
 And conserve on the water supply,
 For I’m the biggest fool in the South
 Who was ever afraid to die.

Soon, too soon, the cannon will cough,
 And maggots of noise will squirm in my head,
 And my guts will come to a big drop-off—
 God, would I not be better dead?

No, No, he told himself: better to walk a living
 Death than lie a bloody broken sack of rags and bones,
 With flies crawling into his shattered mouth—
 An image too often repeated for the benefit
 Of his nausea in the Valley. And so the fear of fear
 Forced him into something like calm attention
 As he passed the Henry Clay House. Then since he
 Had not heard the crack of rifles for a while,
 He found the courage to expatiate upon the glories
 Of this statesman of the Old South—and all
 For the sake of the illiterates. For his eulogy
 He got: “Listen to Roger the Dodger, boys—by Jesus,
 You’d think he was runnin’ for the next session
 Of the Yankee Congress.” “Oh, he’s good at runnin’
 All right—ain’t you, Roger?” “Save your breath,
 Fatty, you’ll need it to blow out Union fires.”
 The captain finally restored silence in the ranks,
 But not before a grabbing hand had sent peals of
 Whooping laughter ringing down the road. Poor

Tecknor waddled on with girlish curses eating at
 The broad lean backs of glad obedience. On trudged
 The Rebel columns—past the home of Dr. Shelton,
 Where their patriarch of thunder held brief
 Conference with the cavalier on what resistance
 Lay ahead. By three o'clock the vanguard reached
 Totopotomoy Creek and drove off the blue cavalry.
 Plumes of bright terror rose in Roger Tecknor's
 Bugging eyes: a bridge was burning and a Federal
 Battery was hurling whistling death at him. He
 Welcomed with a lover's joy the command to break
 For cover. Tangled deep in vines, he flattened out
 On soggy earth, raised his rifle against advancing
 Trees and waited for the ending of the world.
 It didn't come. Instead, the wild commander
 Who cared so little for the value of a human life
 (Of this Tecknor was certain) galloped up the road
 To find the cause of all this noise. Stonewall
 Jackson did not want the Union guns to launch
 The gray divisions on his flank into a premature
 Attack. To Colonel Johnson of the Marylanders,
 Who had doused the flames with water from the
 creek,

He said, "What's that firing?" "The enemy,"
 The colonel answered, "with guns and skirmishers
 In the thicket." "Why don't you stop them?"
 "We can't do it without charging or shelling."
 The general eyed the colonel in such a way
 As to indicate that if he heard another *can't* today
 He'd place the entire army under arrest. Then he
 Said, "Sir, you must stop that firing. Make them
 Keep quiet." Johnson ordered up the Baltimore
 Artillery: a few well-directed salvos,
 And the bottleneck was broken. Once more the
 Johnny

Tide advanced, and when Roger Tecknor flushed
 Himself from cover, he found, to his amazement,
 That he still could breathe.

Though Stonewall did his best to keep the divisions
 On his right from swinging the handle of the scythe
 Before the blade was in position, his best failed.
 The forward units of his executive officer's

Brigades nearly fired on General Branch's well-Dressed Yankee-looking North Carolinians. That they did not fire was little to their credit, For in the juncture which followed neither Ewell Nor Branch informed either Jackson or Lee Of the contact. And so the massive iron gate, Which the eagle had envisioned being slammed to keep

The enemy outside the high walls of the Confederacy,

Was in danger of fulfilling both his fears—coming Unhinged and breaking down the middle. Military Authorities can debate from now until the last taps Of time on all the if's, and there are many to satisfy Their passionate curiosity for details: if Lee's Strategy had not been so unwieldy on the tactical Level, if the Valley troops had not been given So much ground to cover in so short a while, if there Had only been more accurate maps and less ignorance Of terrain, if Stonewall himself had not been Groggy from a touch of fever and an abundant lack Of sleep—still all the if's must coalesce in one Sad point of undeniable fact: Major General A. P. Hill simply jumped the gun. Impatient over the delay, At three o'clock, while the Baltimore Artillery was Silencing the Federal guns at Totopotomoy, The irrepressible red head ordered his men to cross The Chickahominy and storm their way into Mechanicsville, in direct violation of Lee's plan, For Hill was not to move until Jackson signaled With heavy cannonade that he was in position. The Tiger's only excuse for unsynchronizing The complete attack was that he opened his own Offensive "rather than hazard the failure of The whole plan by longer deferring it." Thus he Forced his commander to cast for the fish that were McClellan and his army with a net only half open And partly out of water. And for a week that net Was never to fully open and close on the great Haul it might have captured otherwise. Picture now five spokes of a giant wheel—all Centering in the hub of the tiny town Mechanicsville. Longstreet and D. H. Hill anchor on the southwest

Spoke; A. P. Hill drives down the northwest spoke,
 On through the hub, and out to the eastern rim;
 Branch and Gregg, who follow, squeeze themselves
 Inside the other three spokes, just east of the hub.
 Later, far out on the circumference of the wheel,
 Along Beaver Dam Creek, from north to south stretch
 The thin lines of A. P. Hill's brigades (Anderson,
 Archer, Field, Fender, and Ripley) to face General
 Porter's Union corps. Far to the north and in no
 Position to yield support, the Valley army moves
 In ignorance of the violent catastrophe of
 This evening. At dusk, the frantic Hill tries
 A flank attack, and sends the brigades of Ripley
 And Pender charging into solid walls of flame.
 His losses are so heavy that the laconic statement
 Of the owl seems more than mere litotes: "A bloody
 And disastrous repulse." On the exposed slope of
 The Rebel charge, two thousand men fall "like flies
 In a bowl of sugar"; nearly every officer in
 The storming lines is blown to Valhalla; one Georgia
 Regiment ceases to exist. By nine o'clock the futile
 Dying has ended, and the winking lanterns of
 The stretcher bearers make a mimic heaven on
 The groaning field of night. And if Roger Tecknor
 Can thank the actual stars for his having seen
 No more than minor skirmishing this day,
 His commander, when informed of the folly of A. P.
 Hill, has only a bitter thought to chew upon:
 "The tiger roared too soon." Nor does he suck
 The least comfort from such bitterness, as lesser
 Men will do, by knowing that his fears proved
 Prophets. Meanwhile in another tent of war,
 His brother-in-law moans, "The hooded falcon cannot
 Strike the quarry." Let history ponder that a while.

5. The Death Of Ronald Sandford

During the night Federal troops on Jackson's front
 Pulled back from Beaver Dam Creek; the morning of
 Friday, June 27, found Stonewall in hot pursuit.
 Jeb Stuart routed the Pennsylvania Lancers and
 drove

Off annoying pickets. But after a conference with Lee near a little church east of the creek, Stonewall Let his secrecy misdirect him. Finding a guide Native to the region, the general said, with typical Reserve: "This army wants to march to Old Cold Harbor." The guide, a master of Euclid, ignored The *Old* and led the Valley columns four miles Straight south into the swampland: after all, The shortest distance between two points was The greatest service he could render to the cause Of victory. But when Old Jack came within earshot Of the guns, he started: the sound was wrongly Placed. "Where is that firing?" he demanded. "About Gaines' Mill," said the guide, punctuating His certainty with a spit of tobacco. "Does this Road lead by there?" "Why, yes, General," the guide Said chewingly. "By there to Cold Harbor—that's Where you want—" "But I do *not* want to go to *Gaines' Mill*; I want to go to Cold Harbor, coming In so that the Mill is on the *right*." "Well, I'll Be hanged, General!" (The guide was unaware of The fact that if the general had not been more At fault than he, he might well have become the
sorry

Subject of his own favorite expression.) "Well, I'll be hanged! Why in tarnation didn't you say so At first? We should've taken that east fork way Back yonder!" *Way back yonder* meant the delay of An hour or more—a delay that could bring disaster To the rest of Lee's waiting army, so a fussy aide, Who saw a chance to needle his superior, was quick To point out. "No," said Stonewall, "let us trust That the providence of God will so overrule that no Mischief will result." What mischief worse than The casualties which occurred that day it is hard To imagine.

While the commander was busy erasing his error, His exec led the brigades of Taylor, Trimble, And Arnold into the woods of confusion. With no Idea of direction, men wandered like Little Red Riding Hood straight toward the flank of A. P. Hill And the Union wolves, who lay in ambush, not in

Grandma's House, but along a formidable ridge
 In the wilderness, between the desperate roars of
 The tiger at bay and the swirling waters of
 The Chickahominy. Any kind of Rebel charge
 At the Yankees was certain death. At least that's
 How the discreet Maryland troops interpreted
 The situation, for they gathered near a clearing
 To collect their mail. But the lispng jaybird had
 Another notion of valor and sent his lines crashing
 Over a field of stubble, where men fell in the dying
 Sun like red leaves of autumn cut by a ghostly
 Legion of hail . . .

Ronald Sandford keened his lungs to the bright lance
 Of shrill thunder and rallied his men in a cloud
 Of dust on the third assault at the Federal position.
 This was life in an instant so sharp with ecstasy
 That it cut him free from the past and the future
 To achieve sublime identity of forever Now. This
 Was glory so really big that all ambition of home-
 Staying youth shrank to dwarfish ugliness
 In the vision of tall-skying war. This was his
 Destiny with God and Country, swelling his heart
 Out over the clod-kicking earth and the smoke-
 puffing
 Cannon until it encompassed a universe of gray
 In the bloody flags of terror-loosing courage.
 This was himself challenging more fiercely than
 Locomotives, running more massively than
 mountains,
 Hating more hellishly than Satan—oh, how he'd
 shatter
 The goddam Yankee formations and drive them all
 like
 Swine into the drowning gulfs of falling night!

All day I've marched in the woods of lost,
 Clawed by cockleburs, stung by flies,
 And now the Yankees will pay the cost
 Of pain under the crimsoning skies.

Let their cannon belch and their rifles crack,
 My heart is the song of a liberty bell:

Before my ringing steel they'll all turn back
And stampede home to their Northern hell.

(A sudden noise exploded in his head,
And light a billion powers brighter than the sun;
Then awful silence whispered he was dead,
And he found that playing soldier wasn't fun.)

While Ronald Sandford lay in the stubbled field
And couldn't cry for the mercy of the stretcher
Bearers, because the pulped plum that was once
His handsome face had landed fifty yards from where
His body fell, his idol Stonewall Jackson sucked
A lemon and watched the dulce-et-decorum dying
In the twilight as his military mind shaped a grim
Plan for putting the enemy to final rout.
As darkness walked across the east, scattering
A first few pale stars, Dick Ewell led one last
Charge against the Federal ridge and forced
The desperate men in blue into retreat. His boss
Turned to meet with General Lee upon a road.
"Ah, I am very glad to see you," said the older
Warrior. Then with gentle sarcasm for the Valley
Hero's tardiness: "I had hoped to be with you before
Now." Stonewall understood the silken reprimand
And mumbled inaudible self-disgust. "That fire
Is very heavy," Lee said, his courtly soul sorrowing
For all the legal murder going on about him. "Do
You think your men can stand it?" Jackson bristled
And his eyes flashed: "They can stand almost
anything.

They can stand that." "Those people's right flank
Looks ripe for the picking," said Lee. "Right flank
It is!" And Jackson galloped off through pine groves
And swamp thickets to hurl the thunderbolt he had
Already fashioned for his plan. His order to
The brigadiers was simple and direct: "This affair
Has hung in the balance long enough; sweep the field
With the bayonet." Sweep it they did, but for no
Small outlay of capital in blood: where Hood broke
The back of Union resistance, 600 of the First
Texas' 800 fell, and the Fourth Texas lost so many
Officers that it ended up in the command of a captain.

But so much Confederate death and mutilation was
 Of little comfort to the mob of panic-stricken
 Yankees surging over the Chickahominy, too terrified
 To stop in the safety of darkness and purchase cool
 Lemonade for hot thirst from the negro boys seeking
 Profit from defeat—and so those buckets were
 Destined for the less-in-a-hurry members of
 The Federal hospital corps. Oh, fabulous lemonade
 Of the Peninsula Campaign, why has no poet chanted
 A song of praise for you? You make more sense
 Than all the Memorial Day speeches.

While Ronald Sandford lay untended by the stretcher
 Bearers, because they knew no medic in the Southern
 Army could do anything for a headless man, his idol
 Stonewall Jackson frightened twenty Yankee soldiers
 Into surrendering to him. Then he ordered Beauty
 Stuart to advance at dawn and take the White House;
 And the little Napoleon too, should he be so foolish
 As to remain in his untenable headquarters.
 At the last, in conference with Lee at Selwyn, home
 Of the Hogans, he counted up the casualties: 3,700
 Of his own division. Among the dead were Colonels
 Seymour, Fulkerson, and Allen. General Elzey still
 Bled from the head. But General Lee, who was
 Responsible for everything in aggregate, counted
 To 8,000: ten colonels dead, many others wounded.
 And yet in all the dark statistics it is not recorded
 Anywhere that your bright young name was
 mentioned,

Ronald Sandford. And as you wait for burial,
 McClellan pens a letter to Secretary Stanton
 That history will remember long after your sheer
 Heroism is forgotten dust: "I know now the full
 History of the day. Our men did all that men could
 Do, but they were overwhelmed by vastly superior
 Numbers. I again repeat that I am not responsible
 For this, and I say it with the earnestness of
 A general who feels in his heart the loss of every
 Brave man who has been needlessly sacrificed today.
 If I save this army now, I tell you plainly that I
 Owe no thanks to you or any other persons in
 Washington. You have done your best to sacrifice

This army." Thus the melodrama of mediocrity
always

Shifts the blame to others that the self may not
Have to face facts and admit that the failure does
Not spring from betrayed genius. And it is well
You cannot speak out from the grave, Ronald
Sandford,

For you would surely ask the commander of the Union
Army how a bombproof in Washington could sacrifice
Anything. No, let the letter stand as hysterical
Witness to the truth: man would rather die than
Think. At least you found it so, Ronald Sandford.

6. Aftermath Of The Battle At Gaines' Mill

Winslow Adams, survivor of death,
Had fought two hours for every breath
That kept his lucky gamble going
Unbroken in fields where men were mowing
Each other down with fantastic skill.
Though he didn't relish the taste of kill,
He stabbed a beardless Yank through the throat
(The blood pumped thickly wet on his coat)
And clubbed another one over the head
With his rifle butt till the man lay dead.
(A fractured smile and a gurgling cry,
And crimson eyes blind to the evening sky.)
Something about his devil-may-care
Had held him safe from the murdering air
That blew so fierce with flame and noise
To silence the hearts of screaming boys,
Caught by the truant officer War
That they might play their hooky no more,
Far from mother, father, and wife.
(What stern arrests on such merry life!)
And Winslow Adams now feels in his soul
("If I had a soul, I've lost that soul.")
That the only reason why he's whole
Is because when a man doesn't pray to live,
His flesh has nothing of value to give
To the ridiculous gods of glory.

"And that, as I see it, is my true story,"
 He yawns to the scrap of moon in the night:
 "'A rich man's war and a poor man's fight'—
 That's what they say, but as for me,
 Adventure's the one big opportunity
 I have before I cash my dwindling chips."
 Then he puts a cup of water to his lips
 And munches a solid biscuit or two.
 "But this I know—that I won't be through
 Until I beg the swift sun in flight
 To stop and shed some extra light."

Alone, alone, all alone on earth,
 Without any family ties,
 And the only breath I've brought to birth
 Is in the cast of the dice.

The love-forsaken joy of the win
 Is all I have ever known,
 And a pricetag kiss from the lips of sin
 That turns the blood to stone.

Hunger I've felt and burning thirst,
 And the shivering spasm of lust;
 But the game of hearts never saw me first
 To trump angelic dust.

So why should a drifting fellow like me,
 Exiled from heaven and hell,
 Worry that stars may rise from the sea
 And sing his funeral knell?

Then Winslow Adams yawns once more
 And tries to forget the ghosts of war.
 Snug in the blankets, he hides his face
 And turns to dream of the buried ace,
 While mosquitoes whine in the night.
 But his sleep is whittled to splinters of light,
 Filtering down through the soggy wool
 From a lantern held by Tommy Roule,
 The nineteen-year-old pimple-faced kid,
 Who saw everything that Adams did
 But couldn't quite bring himself to commit:
 "Corporal, sir, can you help me a bit?"

The voice is urgent and nervously high.
 Winslow rouses and blinks at the sky,
 Washed with the milk of pre-dawn overhead.
 "What's the matter?" "My brother, sir. He's dead,
 I think. As we hit the Yankee right,
 For a while I was able to keep him in sight—
 Then the fighting got bad and I fell flat,
 And a shell exploded, and after that
 I couldn't see him any more. And I've been
 To the hospital stations, and they all let me in,
 And Walter just ain't anywhere to be found."
 "Then take your lantern and cover the ground
 Where you saw him last—and let me sleep!"
 Then suddenly the kid begins to weep:
 His salt tears spatter on Adams' face,
 And the gambler forgets his buried ace.
 (Dear Christ, he isn't a soldier of stone.)
 "I'm afraid, sir, afraid to find him alone."
 "Well, I'm not your *sir*, and don't you fret:
 He's a healthy prisoner of war, I'll bet,
 Or if he's wounded—we'll save him yet."
 But the cardshark loses his gallant bet,
 For among the windrows of the Rebel slain,
 They find the place where Walter has lain,
 Minus both legs, through the slow-footed night.
 A gouge of earth he had squeezed in his right
 Hand, as though to ease the enormous pain
 Before he died. And Tommy's whole world falls apart
 In the sobbing fragments of his shattered heart,
 As he buries his grief on the blood-stained coat
 Of the gambler, who feels in his too-tight throat
 A bird beating wings of a curse at the gods above,
 Who have torn his luck with the agony of love.

That morning, instead of swift pursuit on the Federal
 Force, General Lee let his army stand in line
 For the slow details of burying the dead
 And attending the wounded: scalpel and spade
 Completed the work of Yankee cannon and rifle shot.

Willis Hyatt had shoveled dirt
 Till every bone in his body hurt
 From the skeleton rattle of death.

As he straightened to catch his breath
 And rub the kinking out of his back,
 He thought of Matti astride the black
 Stallion, playing tag with the wind.
 Then a chinless private grinned
 Up at him from the gaping hole
 That was once his face, and the soul
 Of the dead man seemed to say:
 "All this labor and what's the pay?
 Though the earth opens wide for me today,
 Tomorrow the same mouth yawns for you."
 The poet saw it was true was true,
 And the cup he drank was bitter rue.
 Then a ghostly strain of the past blew in,
 And a terrible cry began to din
 In his head: "Why didn't we sin?
 Why didn't we eat of the stolen fruit
 Of love, that passionate brute
 Who ignores convention with blinded eyes
 To gambol the hills of Paradise?
 Why didn't we give the more than much
 That is the ecstasy of touch?
 Why didn't we fuse in the crime
 Of our flesh? Know you not that time
 Makes lovers walk the same path
 As the army of running wrath?—
 Two varying gaits to the one end."
 Then private death whispered, "My friend,
 Why trouble yourself? She knew, she knew,
 But the question is: did you? did you?
 You who saw your honor so?"
 And Willis Hyatt answered, "No."
 "Then learn from me you bury today,
 For I have something more to say:
 Though all must come to this dark place,
 Here love shall wear a brighter face
 Than war. Though her evil may be great,
 The sins of love are less than those of hate:
 The greatest crime of violent bliss
 Is innocence compared with this
 Which drops me down an early grave—
 Know yourself, my friend, and save
 Some thread of joy from the waiting knife."

"But I could have had her for my wife.

Why, oh why, did I delay?"

"Your silly conscience ran astray
To hear the bugled lies of iron strife
Drowning out the purposes of life."

Then the captain shouted, "Dig away!

Dammit, men, don't take all day!"

And Willis Hyatt shoveled dirt

Till every dream of duty hurt.

Sam Stover had gone to his captain at dawn,
And the captain had gone to the colonel: it seemed
A shame to bury the shoes—especially since thou-
sands

Walked on ill-shod feet. The colonel agreed,
Praised the captain for his fine idea, and hugged
The glory to himself when he reported the saving
Of leather to Stonewall. The captain gave Sam
A box of cigars, and the sergeant clucked at his
Mules and took a detail to fill the wagons.

But Old Jack was not to be fooled by a bird
On a collar: he sifted the report and made a note
Of the man. On his return from a ride to littered
Remains of the spot where Hood had struck ("The
men

Who carried this position were soldiers indeed!")—

He astonished the blacksmith from Atlanta

With a personal interview: "Sergeant, you are to be
Commended. This army needs more resourceful people
Like you." "Thank you, General Jackson, sir."

Sam's face went red as his wet bandanna; he twisted
His forage cap in the vice of his hands. Something
Had made him want to uncover. "I have sent General
Ewell's division to Bottom's Bridge, where I hear
The Yankee stores are rich to be had. Do you think
You could salvage some fresh supplies for my fam-
ished

Troops?" Sam Stover swelled his massive chest

In a salient of pride. "You bet I can, sir!"

"Good man—Major Douglas, write up the order. Take
Whatever wagons and men you will need and be back
With the spoils by sundown." "Yes, sir!" Stonewall
Turned to ride. "Oh, General Jackson, sir." "Yes?"

“Thank you very much.” “What for, Sergeant?”
 The eagle’s eyes were mild. “For being the greatest
 Commander in this here army.” The general smiled.
 “I shall always cherish the name of Stover.”
 Then he was gone in a thunder of hoofs. Sam sat
 In a trance till the big-eyed lieutenant nudged him:
 “You heard the order.” “I sure did,” said Sam,
 “But I still can’t believe it.” “Then read it.”
 Sam stared at the paper the major had given him.
 “Huddup, you beautiful hayburners!”

Sundown and the wagons groan
 With their heavy freight
 For three hundred yards behind;
 Sundown and the owls moan
 I’m going to be late,
 But I don’t take it so unkind.
 I own a happy memory:
 Stonewall Jackson smiled at me.

There are tons of dried beans and peas,
 Figs and apricots too;
 Jars of jam and pickled pigs’ feet,
 And sacks of coffee, if you please;
 Fresh onions for the company stew,
 And rashers of smoked meat—
 Food enough and plenty for all,
 But the very best thing is to recall
 I own a happy memory:
 Stonewall Jackson smiled at me.

While Sam Stover was singing his way through
 The twilight, with a touch of Yankee medicine on
 His breath, Dr. Butler Wade reeled out of
 The operating tent and staggered past a hill of arms
 And legs—many had been the cause of screams more
 Wild than a woman’s in delivery, especially after
 The anesthetics had run out: a slug of whiskey
 And a bite on a bullet were poor defense against
 The red marauders of marrow-sucking excruciation.
 A whippoorwill cried to his mate, and the young
 Surgeon stood listening in a clump of pines: call
 Of life to life under the rising stars, call of love
 To love as the ambulances creaked on the roads

To Richmond, call of the sane to the sane while
 Madness roamed the muggy swamps seeking to main
 That which was sound. The tangy scent of the trees
 Was welcome relief from the stench of death, waiting
 For the least miscue in the hideous drama of lop
 And stitch. And the lyric of the bird helped ease
 The suffering of a soul seared with the shrieks
 And whimpers of hell. "Here, Captain." An orderly
 Broke the doctor's reverie and handed him a cup
 Of steaming coffee—the tenth since midnight.
 "Well, I guess it's over now." Wade looked at
 The man with dull metallic eyes. "No," he sighed.
 "It has only begun." And he thought: Only God
 Almighty knows when it will end. "Tell the major
 I'll be with him in a minute." Then as he savored
 The coffee, too tired to think of food, a dusty
 Rider with a torn sleeve on his cavalry coat drew
 Rein by the clump of pines. "Dr. Wade?" "Yes.
 What can I do for you?" "Nothing, sir. It's what
 I can do for you—compliments of cousin Hampton."
 The lieutenant handed him a sack of hard-boiled eggs,
 Fresh bread, bacon, desiccated vegetables,
 And a canteen of buttermilk. "Thank my illustrious
 Relative and tell him these good things may help
 Save the lives of a few amputees. He'll know."

Cut and sew, cut and sew,
 That is all I do.
 Cut and sew, cut and sew,
 To save a pitiful few.

And for what? I ask myself
 By the sunken sun—
 To tag and stow upon a shelf
 Marked: Dolls Who Cannot Run?

Or: Dolls Who Cannot Hold
 Love Within Their Arms?
 God, God, the night is cold
 With murder's fire alarms.

And so it was, for during the exhausting journey
 From darkness to darkness that was Dr. Wade's day
 In surgery, dust clouds had hung over the lowlands:

McClellan's army was on the move. "Where?" General Lee asked himself. Was the little Napoleon driving His troops down the peninsula toward Yorktown? Or was he pulling back toward the James River To change his line of assault on the Confederate Capital? The Commander of the Army of Northern Virginia had decided that the latter strategy was More likely. Reports of scouts confirmed his guess, And he immediately set about laying plans to trap The invasion force in or near White Oak Swamp.

7. The Southern Pursuit Of McClellan

While Federal troops plunged ammunition-loaded Locomotives over a broken bridge into The Chickahominy—exploding boilers and geysering Tornadoheads of thunder over the sluggish river— Father Charles Martel said Sunday Mass in a quiet Tent of early morning for an exhausted congregation Of twelve. The soldier-priest was near collapse Himself—all night he had heard confessions of Dying men, administered Extreme Unction, and prayed

For the souls of mutilated sheep not of his pasture. With every touch of the Viaticum on swollen tongues, He had felt the iron scream of nails within his Palms and the prickly lights of nauseating thorn Behind his eyes. While dawn elevated a chalice Of blood above the purple altar of the east, he had Knelt before a bearded youth, with auburn hair And face of yellow white ivory, who whispered Through pale blue lips, "I thirst." "Miserere me, Deus," the priest had said to the cry of crucifixion In his soul. And when he placed his canteen to The smiling mouth, the Rebel Christ who had spoken The need of amputated flesh was dead. Now as he Extends the Sacred Host armslength above his head And hears the tinkle of a silver bell, swung by The hairy hand of a leaden-eyed Creole, Father Charles Martel says once again, "Miserere me, Deus." His God was dying over and over in the brutal

Sacrifice of war, and he was finding that his mother
 Had told him true: "Once you become a priest, my
 son,
 The pain of Calvary will be your daily bread."
 So it was, but for the glory of that agonizing feast,
 He beats his breast and says, "Domine, non sum
 dignus."

Mother, Mother, once you said
 When I became a priest
 I'd have to leave life's wedding feast
 And banquet with the dead—

The Saviour Lord we little men
 Murder with our selfish will,
 The gentle God of Love we hate and kill
 And resurrect to kill again.

Now I see that you were right:
 Life to me is death in Him,
 Who bleeds and bleeds that every sin
 May darken toward the Light.

Later that morning Stuart's cavalry troopers enjoyed
 A field day with Union loot: they made lemonade
 By the barrel and citrused their horses, ate kegs
 Of Easter eggs roasted in the scuttling fires of
 The enemy, reeled about drunk on fine wines
 And liquors—till Fitzhugh Lee spread the rumor:
 POISONED. But worst of all for the cause of
 The South and a mark of the narrow vision of cavalier
 Jeb, they fired cannon all day into the boilers of
 The remaining locomotives. An act of wanton
 Destruction which, for want of a stronger word,
 Can only be called *stupid*. Confederate armies were
 Never to have enough of the materiel necessary
 To wage offensive war to final victory: foodstuffs
 Rotted in depot after depot from lack of
 Transportation, while Rebel bellies growled empty
 At the front. Already the slow strangulation has
 Begun: little steel for replacement of rails, too few
 Trains to supply the hungry engine of battle—
 And now Yankee gifts are refused for the sake of
 Noise and boasting celebration. No wonder the eagle

Feels the peacock needs some tail feathers plucked:
He is too dandy a spectrum against the stern back-
drop

Of gray. Meanwhile Stonewall rode to Trent House,
McClellan's abandoned headquarters, but as his men
Failed to repair and cross Grapevine Bridge in time
To help General Magruder, the Confederate action
At Savage's Station was a piecemeal affair. Jackson
Excused his tardiness by saying, "I have other
Important duty to perform." So had Longstreet
And A. P. Hill, for they held their divisions
In reserve all day and waited for events to happen.
But for those who wait, delay is all that happens.
Thus General Lee's plan to trap the retreating
Yankees fell asleep in the bored yawns of a lazy
Sabbath, and the Northern arrow of escape flew
Straight for the target of the James without
A Southern shield of valor being raised to stop it.
Dawn and Stonewall Jackson stands before a campfire
Drying his clothes—he has been up since midnight:
A cloudburst over the peninsula was poor aid to his
Sleep in the open. Dawn and Stonewall Jackson
Remembers his 3:30 promise to Magruder: his col-
umns

Will be moving at daylight. Dawn and Stonewall
Jackson rides toward White Oak Swamp Bridge,
anxious

Over the costly delay in pursuit: the net may not
Close on the floundering fish of the North. Sunup
And Colonel Munford comes to report. "Colonel,"
Says Stonewall Jackson, "my orders to you were to be
Here at sunrise." The sweating cavalryman is fifteen
Minutes late. "I am sorry, General, but my men are
Out of provisions, and the storm last night conspired
Against my promptness." "Yes, sir. But, Colonel,
I ordered you to be here at sunrise. Move on with
Your regiment. If you meet the enemy, drive in
His pickets, and if you want artillery, Colonel
Crutchfield will furnish you." Sunup and Munford
Leads on with a handful of troopers; the bird of
His excuse has had its wings clipped by the sharp
Blades of the eagle's stars. Sunup and two couriers
Ride from the general to tell Colonel Munford,

"Your men are straggling badly." Sunup
 And the cavalry leader rides back to the boss
 To impress him once more with the difficulties.
 "Yes, sir. But I ordered you to be here at sunrise,
 And I have been waiting a quarter of an hour."
 Sunup and Munford is determined to make the best
 Of his trouble: he sends an adjutant back to halt
 And regroup the sleepy wet stragglers; then he
 Gathers his force and charges the Yankee pickets
 And drives them every step of the way into their
 Camp. Sunup and Stonewall Jackson smiles
 And launches his infantry.

Morning and General Lee intends to engage the
 enemy

Near Glendale: at Riddle's Shop or Frayser's Farm.
 Jackson's corps, alone in the Federal rear, is
 To lance southward and sweep the blue fragments
 Into the grinding stones of Longstreet and A. P.
 Hill. Speed is essential, for McClellan is close
 To the James, where heavy cannon of the gunboats
 Will give him an umbrella of fire against
 The Confederate rain. Morning and the eagle
 Demonstrates tactics to the master of strategy:
 Jerky and impetuous, Stonewall draws with the toe
 Of his right boot on the ground where Lee stands
 Two sides of a triangle; then, slowly and imprecisely,
 The third. With a stamp of his foot, he says,
 "We've got him" "I hope so," says Lee. Morning
 And Jackson vaults into the saddle and rides with
 The wind. Morning and with the Old Man personally
 Driving their march, the veterans of the Valley
 Gather in near Savage's Station prisoners of war—
 Well and wounded. An officer remarks that the Yanks
 Are too many and too willing to surrender,
 But Stonewall Jackson replies: "Sir, it's cheaper
 To feed them than to fight them." Morning and Roger
 Tecknor exults in his herding skulking weaklings
 Of the enemy to the rear: held in reserve at Gaines'
 Mill, he had not felt the fiery breath of cannon
 On his face, and if he swaggers unmercifully over
 A fallen foe, he excuses himself with a footnote
 To the general's statement: "It's braver to capture

Them than to kill them." Especially, his terror
 Thinks, since they might kill me instead. Morning
 And Sam Stover delights in the fabulous spoils:
 Mountains of grain and rice, foothills of smoldering
 Beef, moats of knee-deep molasses, bastions of burnt
 Coffee, scorched just right for extra flavor;
 Forests of axes, picks, and shovels.

War's a fishhook: mind the barb.
 But when you can steal the bait
 And run with it early or late,
 Then a soldier's life is: Wow!
 The riches of gear and chow!
 Ah, it's a daisy, it's a darb.

War's a bearhug: mind the fang.
 But when you can skin the hide
 And wear it narrow or wide,
 Then a soldier's life is: Whee!
 The joy of the drunken spree!
 Ah, it's a pistol, it's a bang.

Noon and Stonewall Jackson encharges D. H. Hill
 To sweep up the prisoners and to collect the loot.
 Noon and the eagle perches by a sandy swamp road
 And scratches his feathered love call to Anna:
 Fifty dollars must go to the church that God may
 Bless the South with independence. Religion and duty
 Are his real romance. Then the general observes
 A bridgehead of danger: "This going home has in-
 jured
 The army immensely." Furloughs of the flesh force
 The spirit to accept a false armistice
 With the enemy flesh has fought, and many an ideal
 Has been abandoned for a warm bed, clean sheets,
 And the honeyed arms of embrace. Thus the deacon
 Of self-denial understands the cancer of time
 Without victory and fears defeat from corruption
 Within. He seals the letter and mutters his verse
 For the day: "I came to bring not peace, but a sword."
 Noon and Stonewall Jackson examines the borders
 Of White Oak Swamp: the bog seems untraversable.
 An ugly crescent of dark waters sprawls ten miles
 Through thick hardwood jungle before spilling into

The Chickahominy. Bamboo, briars, and vines may
 Yield passage, he thinks, but what of the pools
 And marshes and their metal-sucking burial of guns?
 Noon and the eagle and the owl consider the ground
 With field glasses, while wisps of pale smoke
 Among distant trees mark the firing of Yankee
 Sharpshooters, who fell individual offerings to war
 In the Rebel column gathering before the broken
 Bridge. Death so casual, death so nonchalant cannot
 Hurry the general in his estimate of the situation:
 Precarious. Fords to left and to right of the bridge
 May be crossed, but they are not mentioned in orders
 From Lee. Noon and Stonewall Jackson weighs
 His chances without artillery support—fords are
 Improper crossings for the guns: and without them,
 The balance dips disastrously against the army
 Of the Valley. With a battery of Yankee artillery
 Contesting Southern advance so well that a regiment
 Of bluecoats sleeps secure in an abandoned field,
 The eagle decides to drive off all impediments
 To repairing the bridge: "Colonel Crutchfield, sir,
 Bring up the guns!" But the colonel finds his detail
 A difficult one: the low bluff of the Rebel position,
 Overlooking the broken bridge, is exposed to enemy
 Fire. For an hour or better Confederate engineers
 And infantry sweat, swear, and slash a road through
 A ravine, while gray cavalymen parade as a screen
 For the lumbering cannon. At last twenty-eight
 Iron mouths belch murder in a row, spit in unison
 Upon Federal troops in the wooded swamp, vomit
 flame
 And thunder with deadly accuracy. Still the Yankees
 Do not panic, but hold their ground, and die
 Where they remain.

O you historians yet to come; you who will note
 With scholarly decorum the deeds of this war; you
 Who will measure the genius of Jackson
 With the sliderule of daring and odds overcome
 By such skill as cannot be learned from a military
 Textbook; you who will harp with the strings
 Of primary sources upon the timidity of McClellan
 And the lack of ruthless abandon in Lee,

Upon the sublime patience of the baked clay
 In Lincoln and the brittle china of the temperamental
 Davis; you who will wag sad heads over rewards
 For incompetent Bragg and the wasted honors heaped
 Upon Grant: remember to set you down this: once
 Upon a hot summer day a few unknowns reddened
 The swamps near Richmond with their courage and
 kept

The invincible warrior of the South and the gray
 Tide of his victory dammed up at a creek, while fish
 Of the North swam freely downstream and escaped
 The net that was cast for their capture. O you
 Historians yet to come, here is a lesson too easily
 Forgotten; remember it well: defeat is a matter
 Of mind, a state of the will, and to die is never
 The same as to lose, for the color of honor deeper
 Than all citations is that of sacrificial human
 Blood. Always Calvary and triumph.

“O damn the jungle, damn the sun,
 And damn each heavy sinking gun,”
 Thought Bradley Carleton as he pushed
 Till even the braid on his rank was bushed
 With weariness deeper than ravines of advance.
 “And what if we can’t make the Yankees dance
 To the music we hurl at their hate?
 Well, war is nothing but hurry up and wait:
 Hurry up! hurry up! we may be late.
 Too soon, too soon, now sit and wait.”
 And under the bluster of his official breath,
 The major cursed silently the ways of death:
 A private dropped by the half-cut planks,
 A brigade blown wholemeal out of the ranks,
 The corporal drowned with his kicking mount,
 The sergeant missed at the evening count,
 The captain turned wax by a surgeon’s knife,
 The colonel sniped smilingly beyond life.
 And God, oh God, the pitiful young
 Squashed like a pie of summer dung
 That a clumsy cow has plopped a hoof in:
 A Texas kid with that tomato grin
 For the brittle cannon burst in two
 And the ramrod iron that ran him through;

A Florida boy with his guts in his hand
 And no right leg on which to stand
 In the welling night that was his eyes;
 An Arkansas stripling and the curdling cries
 Of a sexless ghost crucified in hell
 By a scrotum lopped with a blade of shell:
 "Mama, oh Mama, please make me dead!"
 A Louisiana cub and the hole in his head
 Wide enough to swallow a loaf of bread
 In place of the brains that draped a tree
 As a flag for Jackson and victory—
 That strange kind of Spanish moss
 Which war hangs from its doublecross.

"And all for what?" the major wonders,
 While his ten-gun battery thunders
 Explosive hell at swamp and pine
 And the hidden Yanks who hold their line.
 "So that I may drive the truth away
 And never look through the eye of day
 On the love I bear for Agape?"
 Then the major shouts commands to his men:
 "Fire away steady! Volley again!"
 While the lawyer inside whispers of fate
 Crueler than war's hurry up and wait:
 "When a man can't weather a personal storm,
 He disguises his fury in a uniform;
 When a man can't have his private will
 By love or law, he marches out to kill—
 And the reason for which he hurts and wrecks
 Is to help to save the collective necks
 Of those who obey neither love nor law.
 Thus selfish fear is patriotic awe
 For false ideals stitched to a rag
 Become sacrosanct as a national flag,
 And the motive of murder is sacrifice
 Of moth-winged flesh to the flame of lice
 Eating at humanity's gossamer soul
 That what is torn may be called whole
 By fools who will not question why
 When nothing's to live for one must die
 To prove that he can't possibly be wrong—
 No more than shortness of life is long.

And so chaos is mankind's song
 In answer to God's creation hymn:
 Else why blow my brother limb from limb?"

Then his artist's vision answers him:
 "Know you not by heaven above
 That law is a poor substitute for love?
 That law is only a compromise
 Because man's heart is not love's size?
 That nothing of beauty has any being
 Apart from the eyes of proper seeing?
 That every color depends upon lighting
 And peace is not mere absence of fighting?"
 While the cannon puff their clouds of snow
 At the June sun, the major says, "I know."
 "Why then," answers the artist, "are you afraid
 Of marriage with flesh of a different shade
 When her soul is pure as the God who made?"
 The silence within finds growing room
 Safe from the battery's uprooting boom
 Till Bradley Carleton listens alone
 To the sound of hammer and chisel on stone—
 The epitaph to be laid at his head
 For a world and a cause long dead, long dead.
 Then his lance of prayer pierces clouds of snow:
 "Agape, Agape, I love you so."

Two o'clock and Stonewall Jackson leads his brother-
 In-law and Colonel Munford with two squads of
 cavalry
 Across the timbered creek: attack on the Yankee
 guns
 Will either clear the way or prove the necessity
 For waiting. Two o'clock and enemy rifle fire drives
 Off the general and his staff; suddenly tired,
 The eagle perches under a tree and stares with heavy
 Eyes at the cause of his delay. Mid-afternoon
 And General Wright reports from Huger: "I have
 scouted
 Along New Road, General, and have found no sign
 Of Federals. What are your orders?" "None," says
 Stonewall. "None?" "Federals are in that swamp
 In such strength, sir, that I advise you to retrace

The safe route back to General Huger. Give him My compliments—and let me sleep!" Mid-afternoon And Stonewall Jackson does sleep, worn with fever And the fear of possible ambush. Mid-afternoon And D. H. Hill tries to get the bridge rebuilt, But Yankee snipers kill so many Rebel workers That the men refuse to expose themselves any longer, Even though a brigade has crossed to screen them. Four o'clock and Stonewall Jackson wakes with one Dream still fresh behind his leaden eyes: do not Spend blood to take today what will be given to you Tomorrow—that is the true economy of war. Four o'clock and Captain Fairfax arrives from Longstreet: "The general has been alerted by your Cannon fire and desires to know the exact state Of affairs." For a moment the eagle wishes to let The bull bellow for news in vain; then he decides In favor of the simple truth: "Tell the general That a heavy force of the enemy has halted me At the bridge." Late afternoon and Colonel Munford Returns with captured newspapers: "I have located A trail leading to the south side of the swamp And have tested it. I await your orders, sir." "I have no orders, Colonel." Late afternoon And fiery Wade Hampton, cavalry leader from South Carolina, rides up to the taciturn commander: "General Jackson, I have ridden far into the swamp With a couple of my officers." Stonewall eyes The aging falcon with a flicker of interest. "In the pines, sir, just to the left of the roadway, Is a crossing of the stream—narrow but firm." "How narrow?" "Ten to fifteen feet wide, sir." "Go on." "Well, just beyond this hidden crossing Some Federal troops are resting in a ravine— Apparently unaware of our immediate presence." Late afternoon and Stonewall Jackson realizes That *apparently* is not safe enough evidence. "Can This hidden crossing be bridged?" he asks Hampton. "Yes, sir." "Then please superintend such Construction as you deem suitable." Early evening And the irrepressible brigadier is back with his Report: "The bridge is ready for your guns, sir— And further, the enemy seems not to suspect

The vicinity of our assault." Early evening
 And Stonewall Jackson is convinced: too many
 Trails have been scouted with impunity, and now
 A bridge has been built right under the Yankee noses.
 Too easy deception not to indicate a well-planned
 Ambush. Early evening and the eagle flies from
 The falcon: not a single word of gratitude,
 Commendation, or approval. Wade Hampton is left
 To meditate upon madness in the victor of the Valley:
 NO ORDERS sticks in his craw like a knife,
 Shedding bad blood of bitter frustration.

Early evening and heavy firing south of the swamp:
 The Battle of Frayser's Farm under flashing horns
 Of the bull, but Stonewall Jackson is not to be
 Pressured into the folly of the premature:
 His artillery has failed to force a crossing
 And finally quits firing, as a concluding punctuation
 To his official report eight months later: "A heavy
 Cannonading in front announced the engagement of
 General Longstreet at Frazier's Farm, and made me
 Eager to press forward; but the marshy character
 Of the soil, the destruction of the bridge over
 The marsh and creek, and the strong position of
 The enemy for defending the passage, prevented
 My advancing until the following morning."

Darkness and Stonewall Jackson sits with his staff
 At a campfire. He falls asleep with a biscuit
 Between his teeth, only to rouse boltingly and blink
 About: "Gentlemen, let us get to bed, and rise early,
 And see if tomorrow we can't do something." It has
 Been the longest day of waiting in his military life.
 Night and silence in camp, while out in the watery
 Wilderness the frogs croak in chorus and the insects
 Click their disappointment: no young carrion to blow
 Into abhorring. Night and snickers rise like mist
 About Roger Tecknor—he had nearly drowned
 In crossing with the protective brigade: every shot
 Had made him flop facedown in the creek. Night
 And the fat man sobs under his soggy blanket of
 shame:

Now ain't the Dodger wise, I say?
He lives to die another day.

8. Malvern Hill: The Bull's Blunder

Tuesday, July 1, 1862, brought miniature Gettysburg

To the peninsula, one year before that major battle:
The catastrophe in the tragedy which was this war.
Malvern Hill was prophecy of failure on that third
Day at the Pennsylvania crossroads, for Malvern Hill
Was frontal assault after artillery barrage,
And the result—the same as that attained against
The fishhook shank of Cemetery Ridge: mass murder
Of the Rebel infantry. And history, if it would
Record the truth, must note the irony involved:
Malvern Hill was Longstreet's plan; Pickett's futile
Charge, Lee's. And so an idol of America, an enigma
To epic poets, a delight to moralizing biographers
Proved short on memory or, worse yet, demanded
His will to compensate for failure to properly
Exercise that will—in fine, gained some small
Measure of revenge upon a chief subordinate as
source

Of previous frustration: first, upon the eagle
For his delay at White Oak Swamp; second, upon
The bull for his failure to move in time to take
Little Round Top. And in each act the aristocrat
Of gentlemanly discipline found destruction of his
Aim the price for his lack of proper focus
On military motives: Jackson was guilty of discretion,
Longstreet of disobedience, and Lee punished himself
More than them because he would not discriminate
Between the two. No wonder the Commander of
The Army of Northern Virginia kept saying, "I am
Always wanting something." He knew—far better
Than his flatterers will dare admit—how much he
Lacked of perfect proportion. No, Marse Robert
Was not a god—merely man, with many of the ills
That attend on mortal greatness, flaws which show
The need for something higher than the self to save

The self from all the weaknesses that are the factual
 Ground for the myth of apple and serpent,
 Or in the case of a general, Achilles' vulnerable
 Heel. Let enthusiasts revere the marble man,
 The bronze rider, the statue without an aching heart,
 The mysterious pillar of a nation—they never come
 To understand the pearl of pain, the life which is
 Disease, the sin that begs for grace, the soul
 Who yearns to cleanse the blood he sheds
 With the breath of God. Yes, Malvern Hill,
 Gettysburg in miniature, was Longstreet's plan
 And Lee's mistake of accepting such locked horns
 In frontal rush instead of Jackson's matadoring
 Dance and thrust along the flank. Yes, Malvern Hill
 Was Longstreet's plan, and this is how the slaughter
 Came about:

Up and moving early, Stonewall ordered stragglers
 Forwarded for vanguard action. Though the Yankees
 At the bridge had pulled away during the night,
 The Valley army's march was not an easy one: thirst
 Picketed the advance, for the enemy retreating had
 Poisoned wells and springs so that Confederate
 Tongues would choke the Rebel yell to death.
 And as Sam Stover sent his wagons creaking off
 With captured coffee, rice, and beans, he cursed
 The bloody bastards who had made him suck a stone
 As chaser to the remedy he drank for fever
 And the boiling sun:

Any son of a bitch who would fling
 Bitter medicine into the water
 Ought to have his ass in a sling
 And a billy goat riding his daughter.

And though the lieutenant of supply delighted in
 The sublimity of Sam's profane rage, Dr. Butler
 Wade was too much in need of drugs to be amused
 By the sergeant's blistering report on why
 He had no anodynes for youth in agony:

I have respect for the Yank in hell
 Who tries to shoot our men in the head