



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 inarnation 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

