Union Treatment of Civilians and Private Property in Mississippi, 1862-1865: An Examination of Theory and Practice

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UNION TREATMENT OF "CIVILIANS AND PRIVATE PROPERTY IN MISSISSIPPI, 1862-1865: AN EXAMINATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of History
The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by
Nathaniel A. Jobe, Jr.
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APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the
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Master of Arts

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Approved, August 1972

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the treatment of the civilian population in Mississippi by the Union Army from 1862 to 1865. In order to understand the proper conduct for troops in the field relative to the civilian population, the international rules of war as established prior to the Civil War are examined. These rules were applicable to the Civil War until March 1863, when the Union Army issued new orders. The new orders were based primarily on the established rules for the protection of the civilian. Their purpose was also to standardize troop conduct in the field for the entire Union Army.

In addition, an analysis of the positions of the leading commanders in Mississippi on the treatment of civilians will shed further light on the general theory of the military. The orders and correspondence of Generals Grant and Sherman are carefully scrutinized, since they were the commanders of the major campaigns in Mississippi. Their positions vacillate between an indifference to the rules of war and a strict adherence to the rules. Sherman, in particular, felt that the civilians were collectively responsible for the war, and they were to suffer the horrors of war.

Descriptions of the actual treatment of the civilians come from officers and common soldiers of both sides with particular emphasis on the Union accounts. Vivid descriptions are also given by the civilian inhabitants. This evidence shows extensive destruction and pillaging of private property which resulted in widespread suffering for the people of Mississippi. These depredations were primarily the result of a lax enforcement of the rules of war and of a lax discipline among the volunteer troops.
UNION TREATMENT OF
CIVILIANS AND PRIVATE PROPERTY
IN MISSISSIPPI, 1862-1865:
AN EXAMINATION OF THEORY AND PRACTICE
INTRODUCTION

The occupation of Mississippi in 1862 by the Union forces inflicted extensive damage to the private property of the civilian population and also brought severe suffering to these non-combatants. Some of this damage resulted from normal military assaults on specific targets. For example, the shelling of Vicksburg caused considerable damage and suffering to the residents, but this damage was inflicted on them because of their proximity to the military target. Much of the destruction, however, occurred from direct attacks by the Union soldiers against the civilians, and with few exceptions, these attacks represented needless violations of human rights and of the established rules of conduct for troops in the field.

From the military point of view, the treatment of civilians raised practical and moral problems. The field commander was responsible for the conduct of his troops and for the obedience of the rules of war. He was also responsible for the military success of his troops against the enemy. As the descriptions of the Union occupation in Mississippi clearly show, the rules of war and the exigencies of war were sometimes in conflict. Furthermore, the fundamental problem of maintaining discipline with volunteer
soldiers in enemy territory presented the Union commanders with some hopeless situations—particularly in the case of foraging expeditions.

This study addresses itself to the theory of the military with regard to the civilian and to the actual treatment of the Mississippi civilian population during the occupation, 1862-1865. Both the military and the civilian accounts of troop conduct reveal the cruel side of war that was visited on the defenseless inhabitants of this state. They further suggest the extensiveness of the damage that befell the Confederate states in general after four years of Union occupation.
I
THE RULES OF WAR

With the outbreak of hostilities in 1861 in the United States, the entire body of citizens of the belligerent states became enemies in a legal sense. In an actual sense, however, the citizens were separated into two distinct categories: combatants and non-combatants. The status of the non-combatant was defined by the international rules of warfare that had evolved since the publication in 1631 of Hugo Grotius' work, De jure belli ac pacis.1 Perhaps the most authoritative compendium of these rules in 1861 was written by the General-in-Chief and Chief of Staff of the Union Army, Henry W. Halleck.2 His work provided military leaders with an historical analysis of the rules of war as well as an interesting rationale for these rules.

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1 Edwin M. Borchard, "International Law," Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, ed. Edwin R. A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson (New York, 1932), VII, p. 169. Naturally, international jurisprudence could be traced back to the ancient writers, but Grotius was one of the most influential writers of modern history in bringing "natural justice" to international law. He is called the father of international law.

2 Henry W. Halleck, International Law; or, Rules Regulating the Intercourse of States in Peace and War (New York, 1861).
Halleck's sections concerned with the rights of civilians with regard to person and private property were based upon the works of several significant writers on international law. Among the earlier writers was, of course, Grotius, whom Halleck acknowledged as "the great master-builder of the science of international jurisprudence." He also relied quite heavily on Emmer de Vattel's work, Droit des Gens, which was published in 1748. Nineteenth-century sources included the work of Andres Bello, Principios del Derecho Internacional, published in Chile in 1832; L. B. Hautefeuille's work, Droits et Devoirs des Nations Neutres en Temps de Guerre Maritime, published in 1848; and Charles de Martens' 1822 publication, Causes Celebres du Droit des Gens. Major American writers on the subject upon whom Halleck relied were: Henry Wheaton and his 1836 work, Elements of International Law; James Kent's discussion of fundamental principles of international law in his 1826 edition of Commentaries on American Law; Justice Joseph Story's Commentaries on the Conflict of Laws which was published in 1834; and Francis Lieber's Manual of Political Ethics which was published in Boston in 1838 and 1839.

3 Ibid., p. 13.

4 Ibid., pp. 1-41. Chapter 1 provides an historical sketch of the evolution of international law from the ancient writers to the writers of the early nineteenth century.
Since the military policy of the Union Army was founded on these traditional principles of international law, Halleck's work is helpful as a statement of the established rules of conduct for the armies in the field at the outbreak of war.

In discussing the status of civilians, Halleck identified those who were exempt from direct involvement with war.

Feeble old men, women, and children, and sick-persons, come under the general description of enemies, and we have certain rights over them as members of the community with which we are at war; but, as they are enemies who make no resistance, we have no right to maltreat their persons, or to use any violence toward them, much less to take their lives. 5

His source of authority in this case was Emmer de Vattel's work, The Law of Nations. This was an absolute rule of conduct for all civilized nations—"a maxim of justice and humanity. . . ." 6 According to Halleck, it extended in modern practice "to ministers of religion, to men of science and letters, to professional men, artists, merchants, mechanics, agriculturists, laborers,—in fine, to all non-combatants, or persons who take no part in the war, and make no resistance to our arms." 7 However, in order to be spared military reprisal, the non-combatant must "refrain from all hostilities, pay the military contributions which may be imposed on them, and quietly submit to the authority of the belligerent who

5 Ibid., p. 427.
7 Halleck, International Law, p. 427.
may happen to be in the military possession of their country.

Vattel explained that the method of contributions was a humane substitution for the custom of pillaging. His point on contributions was certainly appropriate for the Union Army in the Southern states.

Whoever carries on a just war has a right to make the enemy's country contribute to the support of his army, and towards defraying all the charges of the war. Thus, he obtains a part of what is due him; and the enemy's subjects, by consenting to pay the sum demanded, have their property secured from pillage, and the country is preserved.

He cautioned the general against excess which would only show "avarice or greediness." The fine line separating the essential from the nonessential was often the subject of disagreement between the officers and the troops. Since forage was sanctioned by the rules of war, it was generally left to the individual forager to decide the quantity and quality of "contributions." As Vattel anticipated, unless rules of foraging were strictly enforced, the old custom of pillaging would be resumed.

Furthermore with regard to the status of non-combatants, the military reserved the right to punish citizens who committed hostile acts against the army in occupation. This included the acts of taking up arms or of inciting others to do so. "Even if a portion of the non-combatant inhabitants of a

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8 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
particular place become active participants in the hostile operations, the entire community are sometimes subjected to the more rigid rules of war.\textsuperscript{11} In effect, the inhabitants of an area in which guerrilla actions were taken against the invading armies would be at the mercy of the commanding general.

\ldots even where no opposition is made by the non-combatant inhabitants of a particular place, the exemption properly extends no further than to the sparing of their lives; for, if the commander of the belligerent forces has good reason to mistrust the inhabitants of any place, he has a right to disarm them, and to require security for their good conduct. He may lawfully retain them as prisoners, either with a view to prevent them from taking up arms, or for the purpose of weakening the enemy. Even women and children may be held in confinement, if circumstances render such a measure necessary, in order to secure the just objects of the war.\textsuperscript{12}

The flexibility of the rules of war, however, did not absolve the soldier from the responsibility of conforming to customs "established by humanity."\textsuperscript{13}

The fate of a captured town in which the inhabitants did not offer resistance to the occupying army depended on the ability of the general to discipline his troops. Halleck was quite clear in his assessment of the general's role in the prevention of the sacking of towns.

It is true that soldiers sometimes commit excesses which their officers cannot prevent; but, in general,

\textsuperscript{11} Halleck, International Law, p. 428.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., pp. 428-429.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., p. 429.
a commanding officer is responsible for the acts of those under his orders. Unless he can control his soldiers, he is unfit to command them.  

He attributed the "most atrocious crimes in war" to the militia and to volunteers "suddenly raised from the population of large cities, and sent into the field before the general has time or opportunity to reduce them to order and discipline." In such cases the responsibility for criminal actions rested with the state and not with the general. Halleck also argued that a sizable gap existed between the rules of warfare and the actual conduct of the soldiers. As past wars illustrated, the "soldiers were not to be controlled..." The generals, on the other hand, were in agreement that no "rules of modern warfare justified the sacking of captured fortresses, and the pillage and murder of their inhabitants." Thus the fate of the inhabitants of captured towns depended entirely on the seriousness with which the commanding officers regarded the rules of warfare and on their ability to control their troops. This was, at best, a precarious situation for the civilians.

As stated previously, in time of war one belligerent

14 Ibid., p. 442.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 443.
17 Ibid.
had "the right to deprive the other of everything which might add to his strength, and enable him to carry on hostilities."\textsuperscript{18} This right, however, was subject to several limitations and by no means was applicable to all property. As Halleck pointed out in his chapter on enemy's property on land:

\textit{... the positive law of nations distinguishes not only between the property of the state and that of its individual subjects, but also between that of different classes of subjects, and between different kinds of property of the same subject; and particular rules, derived from usage and the practice of nations, have been established with respect to each.}\textsuperscript{19}

One such limitation was explicitly placed on "state papers, public archives, historical records, judicial and legal documents, [and] land titles..."\textsuperscript{20} Such moveable property was made exempt from all the hazards of war. Possession of such property was permitted, but only with the condition that it would be returned to the original owner by the treaty of peace. The rationale behind this rule was clear:

Their destruction would not operate to promote, in any respect, the object of the war, but, on the contrary, would produce an animosity and irritation which would extend beyond the war.\textsuperscript{21}

The same rule applied to public libraries, monuments, and works of art.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 446.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Ibid., p. 447.
\item \textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 453.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
It is the modern usage, and one which has acquired the force of law, that such works cannot be wantonly, or unnecessarily, destroyed, and that all structures of a civil character, all public edifices, devoted to civil purposes only, all temples of religion, monuments of art, and repositories of science, are to be exempt from the operations of war.22

This, of course, only indirectly affected the private citizens in that such property was partially owned by the inhabitants of an occupied area and also, in that it reflected the tastes and the history of the people.

There seemed to be some conflict between the modern concept of property exemption and the ancient practice regarding private property on land. The ancient practice held that the invading armies had the right of seizure and of confiscation. Modern usage of the rights of conquering armies held that private property was exempt from such a fate with three exceptions:

1st, confiscations or seizures by way of penalty for military offenses; 2d, forced contributions for the support of the invading armies, or as an indemnity for the expenses of maintaining order, and affording protection to the conquered inhabitants; and 3d, property taken on the field of battle, or in storming a fortress or town.23

The first of these special cases was necessary to encourage cooperation with the army in occupation. One who refused to cooperate would have his property subject to confiscation. "So also, if the offense attach itself to a particular community or town, all the individuals of that community or town are liable to punishment, and we may either

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22 Ibid., p. 456.
23 Ibid., p. 457.
seize upon their property, or levy upon them a retaliatory contribution, by way of penalty." 24 Thus the actions of an individual made the whole community accountable unless the guilty party could be delivered.

Secondly, the invading army must depend upon the enemy's country for supplies in order to subsist. In this case, the military leader had two alternatives: he could requisition what he needed from the civilian population; or he could allow his troops to be responsible for supplying themselves. The latter system meant the relaxation of discipline, and this resulted in universal pillaging.

... the violation of individual rights, are usually followed by the massacre of straggling parties, and the ordinary peaceful and non-combatant inhabitants are converted into bitter and implacable enemies. The system is, therefore, regarded as both impolitic and unjust, and is coming into general disuse among the most civilized nations,—at least for the support of the main army. In case of small detachments, where great rapidity of motion is requisite, it sometimes becomes necessary for the troops to procure their subsistence wherever they can. In such a case, the seizure of private property becomes a necessary consequence of the military operations, and is, therefore, unavoidable... But even in most of these special and extreme cases, provisions might be made for subsequently compensating the owners for the loss of their property. 25

Halleck cautioned against this. Foraging should be conducted by trustworthy troops in order to prevent unauthorized pillage. Officers should accompany these troops as a protective measure and also to report any irregularities. "In case any corps should engage in unauthorized pillage, due re­stitution should be made to the inhabitants, and the expenses

24 Ibid., p. 458.
25 Ibid., p. 459.
of such restitution deducted from the pay and allowances of the corps by which such excess is committed." Unrestrained pillaging was thus a deplorable act, but one wonders whether or not this position was nullified by one major exception. If the general were without any means of support for his troops and if he were unable to purchase the necessary provisions, then he must take whatever measures are required for the success of his operations. The safety of person and property was protected, but the rules of war left room for the injury and oppression of non-combatants.

As for the final exception, "private property taken from the enemy on the field of battle, in the operations of a siege, or in the storming of a place which refuses to capitulate, is ... regarded as legitimate spoils of war." Halleck warned that this rule did not give license to the soldiers for "unrestricted sacking of private houses, the promiscuous pillage of private property, and the murder of unresisting inhabitants." The ambiguity of the rules left a large degree of uncertainty about what can and what cannot be appropriated. As in other cases, useless destruction was deplored, unless it was essential in destroying the operations of the enemy.

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26 Ibid., p. 461.
27 Ibid., p. 461-462.
28 Ibid., p. 462.
29 Ibid.
Thus, if we cannot bring off a captured vessel, we may sink or burn it in order to prevent its falling into the enemy's hands; but we cannot do this in mere wantonness. We may destroy provisions and forage, in order to cut off the enemy's subsistence; but we cannot destroy vines and cut down fruit trees, without being looked upon as savage barbarians. We may demolish fortresses, ramparts, and all structures solely devoted to the purposes of war; but, as already stated, we cannot destroy public or private edifices of a civil character, temples of religion, and monuments of art, unless their destruction should become necessary in the operations of a siege, or in order to prevent their affording a lodgment or protection to the enemy.30

The discretionary nature of the international rules of war protected the position of the military in most cases. The seizure of property by way of foraging or by pillaging was justifiable as either a contribution or a punishment for crimes committed, and the sacking of towns could be justified on the basis of legal booty or as necessary action in order to cripple the enemy's source of strength. It might be added in defense of the civilian that the rules of war as adhered to by civilized nations generally abhorred excesses committed by military troops against the non-combatants. But the failure to define clearly the limitations and the failure to provide the necessary enforcement of the rules made this theory on troop conduct an empty safeguard.

In addition to the ambiguities of these rules of war, the Civil War presented another confusing problem. The Lincoln administration viewed the war as a rebellion and, therefore, held that municipal law was to be applied instead of inter-

national law. Application of municipal law freed the mili­
tary to suppress the rebellion by any means necessary. "This
applied especially to the regulation of inhabitants of occu­
pied territory who were subjugated enemies and yet rebellious
citizens of the United States." To add to the confusion the
American military leaders suffered from a general ignorance
of the international rules of war. There was no concise
manual for volunteer officers to follow, and these men were
not expected to study the difficult treatises on international
law. West Point's Commandant even objected to Professor
Francis Lieber's request to add a course to the curriculum
on the rules of war. The reason given was that the curri­
culum was overcrowded.

Political pressure was applied from the Radical congress­
men, who wanted to see the South suffer. They dismissed the
rules of war as absurd in this case. Secretary of War
Stanton clearly stated this when he said the "sole object
of a just war ... is to make the enemy feel the evils of his
injustice." Those officers who did not follow this line of
thought were bitterly attacked by the Radicals. Henry W.
Halleck was among those who was often the target of the Rad­i-
cal criticism.

31 Frank Freidel, "General Orders 100 and Military Govern­
ment," Mississippi Valley Historical Review (March, 1946), XXXII, p. 542.
32 Ibid., pp. 542-543.
33 Ibid., pp. 543-548.
34 Ibid., p. 548.
35 Ibid.
In order to deal with the expected capture of large amounts of private property by the Union Army—and perhaps in order to silence the Radical critics—Congress passed an act March 12, 1863 on the subject of captured and abandoned property.\textsuperscript{36} Since it was considered desirable to capture the staple crops of the Southern people in order to reduce their resources, this act gave the Secretary of the Treasury the power to have agents collect property of this kind in the enemy's territory. Such property could be used for the public or could be sold in a loyal state with the proceeds going to the U. S. Treasury. Property was to be returned to loyal owners at the war's termination. Captured property was defined by the Attorney General as that "property hostilely seized by the military authorities on land. . . ."\textsuperscript{37} Abandoned property was defined as "property whose owner shall be voluntarily absent therefrom, and engaged in, or otherwise aiding or encouraging the rebellion."\textsuperscript{38}

The Supreme Court sanctioned this Congressional action on the grounds that Congress was competent "to provide for the forfeiture of the property of all persons within the Confederacy, loyal as well as disloyal, on the principle that all inhabitants of enemy territories are enemies."\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} James G. Randall, "Captured and Abandoned Property During the Civil War," \textit{American Historical Review} (October, 1913), \textit{XIX}, p. 66.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
Strict enforcement of the act showed in an 1868 Report that the total gross proceeds from captured and abandoned property was $25,257,931.\(^{40}\)

Cotton was by far the most significant commodity captured—totaling over ninety-five per cent of the property confiscated by Treasury agents.\(^{41}\) Because of the importance of cotton to the South the Supreme Court declared it "a proper subject for capture by the Union authorities during the Civil War, and not to be protected by the General rule of international law which condemns the seizure of private property on land."\(^{42}\)

It was apparent to all concerned—particularly Henry W. Halleck—that the rules governing the conduct of troops in the field needed to be standardized. Halleck encouraged Professor Francis Lieber to accept a commission from the War Department in 1862 to codify the rules of war.\(^{43}\) The result of the labors of Lieber and a board of United States Army officers was General Order 100 which "was less a rigid legal code than a persuasively written essay on the ethics of conducting war."\(^{44}\)

In his *Manual of Political Ethics* Lieber had discussed ethics as pertained to the behavior of armies during occu-


\(^{41}\) *Ibid.*

\(^{42}\) *Ibid.*


\(^{44}\) Freidel, "General Orders 100 and Military Government," p. 549.
pation of enemy territory. His concern was also more than just that of a detached scholar since two of his sons fought for the Union side and another son had died while fighting for the Confederate Army. Furthermore, he had served in the Waterloo campaign, so he was cognizant of military necessities during time of war.\textsuperscript{45} These points were clearly defined in Section I of General Order 100.

Military necessity admits of all direct destruction of life or limb of armed enemies, and of other persons whose destruction is incidentally unavoidable in the armed contests of the war; it allows of the capturing of every armed enemy, and every enemy of importance to the hostile government, or of peculiar danger to the captor; it allows of all destruction of property, and obstruction of the ways and channels of traffic, travel, or communication, and of all withholding of sustenance or means of life from the enemy; of the appropriation of whatever an enemy's country affords necessary for the subsistence and safety of the Army, and of such deception as does not involve the breaking of good faith either positively pledged, regarding agreements entered into during the war, or supposed by the modern law of war to exist.\textsuperscript{46}

However, he carefully defined the role and position of citizens of hostile countries. As a constituent of the hostile state, the citizen was an enemy and was thus "subjected to the hardships of the war."\textsuperscript{47} He was nevertheless to be distinguished from men in arms in that he was "to be spared in person, property, and honor as much as the exigencies of war will admit."\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{47} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
Private citizens are no longer murdered, enslaved, or carried off to distant parts, and the inoffensive individual is as little disturbed in his private relations as the commander of the hostile troops can afford in the overruling demands of a vigorous war. 49

Lieber's humanitarian concern for the private citizen was blended with his knowledge of the practical necessities of warfare. He appealed to the moral side of man when he reminded the combatants that they did not "cease on this account to be moral beings responsible to one another and to God." 50

For the most part Lieber included the same general guidelines in defense of personal property and the rights of peaceable citizens of occupied territory as Halleck did in his work. All cultural and educational treasures were to be secured against injury. Temporary use could be made of "houses, lands, boats or ships, and the churches" as military needs dictated. 51 Such use, however, entitled the owner to obtain indemnities provided the private property had not been "forfeited by crimes or by offenses of the owner. . . ." 52

The general rule stated:

The United States acknowledge and protect, in hostile countries occupied by them, religion and morality; strictly private property; the persons of the inhabitants, especially those of women; and the sacredness of domestic relations. Offenses to the contrary shall be rigorously punished. 53

49 Ibid., p. 151.
50 Ibid., p. 150.
51 Ibid., p. 152.
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
With regard to the rules governing pillaging and wanton violence against the inhabitants, the Orders were explicit.

All wanton violence committed against persons in the invaded country, all destruction of property not commanded by the authorized officer, all robbery, all pillage or sacking, even after taking a place by main force, all rape, wounding, maiming, or killing of such inhabitants, are prohibited under the penalty of death, or such other severe punishment as may seem adequate for the gravity of the offense.

A soldier, officer, or private, in the act of committing such violence, and disobeying a superior ordering him to abstain from it, may be lawfully killed on the spot by such superior.\(^{54}\)

It should be noted that such protection applied only to the loyal citizens of the occupied territory. The Orders were careful to distinguish between the loyal and the disloyal citizen, and the commander had the authority to compel the citizen to take an oath of allegiance or by some act to declare "his fidelity to the legitimate government."\(^{55}\)

The citizen who refused to comply with this demand was considered disloyal and was thereby placed at the mercy of the commander.

The commander will throw the burden of the war, as much as lies within his power, on the disloyal citizens, of the revolted portion or province, subjecting them to a stricter police than the non-combatant enemies have to suffer in regular war.\(^{56}\)

General Order 100 had a dual purpose and herein lay its weakness with regard to the protection of the civilian population in the South. It did place limitations on the mili-

\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 153.

\(^{55}\) Ibid., p. 164.

\(^{56}\) Ibid.,
tary's treatment of civilians and their property. This helped to enlighten the Union command in an area in which instruction had been sorely lacking. Since most of the war was to be fought on Southern soil, generally all of the Union officers were affected by its code of conduct. Disobedience of this order, and any order for that matter, could bring serious reprisal from the Union Army's high command.

On the other hand, the other purpose of the Order built in some protection for the officer. While he must be cognizant of the rights of non-combatants he was also reminded of the soldier's responsibility to defeat the foe. In fact, two sentences in the General Order 100 could conceivably nullify the aforementioned protection of the citizen: "The more vigorously wars are pursued the better it is for humanity. Sharp wars are brief." In order to comply with this "suggestion" the commander might apply the logic of the following syllogism: High morale among the civilian population is essential to the total war effort of its army; the destruction of private property is an effective means of lowering the civilian morale; therefore, in order to hasten the end of the conflict, civilian property must be an essential object of the occupying army. This ultimately raises the question of priorities regarding the rights of civilians and the victory in the field. Both Halleck's compendium on international law and Lieber's General Order 100 illustrated the ambivalence of

57 Ibid., p. 151.
the rules of war, however noble the attempt to "civilize" warfare. In the final analysis, the protection of the non-combatants depended on the commander's interpretation of the Order 100 and on his concept of ethical conduct in enemy territory. And, of course, protection was also dependent on his control of his troops.
II
MILITARY POLICY IN MISSISSIPPI

The policy of the Union commanders in Mississippi with regard to civilian rights was marked by inconsistency. On occasions the general orders and private correspondence showed concern over the treatment of the civilian population and indicated a willingness to impose harsh punishment for misconduct by the troops. On other occasions the rights of the civilians were superseded by the exigencies of the war. There is also evidence that indicates a gradual shift in the policy of certain Union officers—particularly in that of William T. Sherman, who played such an important role in the conquest of the state.

On March 11, 1862, General Henry W. Halleck was given command of the newly organized Department of the Mississippi. This Department included the Departments of Missouri, Kansas, and part of the Department of the Ohio. ¹ He remained in command through the Corinth campaign and until General

Ulysses S. Grant was appointed to command the Department on July 16, 1862. During his brief command in Mississippi, Halleck did not make any significant statements on troop conduct toward the non-combatants.

Halleck's successors, however, were responsible for the major campaigns in Mississippi from July, 1862 through 1864, and they were quite vocal on the subject of the treatment of the civilian population. With the exception of the period from July until October of 1862, these commanders were with the Department of the Tennessee which was created on October 16, 1862. This Department included Cairo, Illinois, Western Kentucky, Tennessee, and Northern Mississippi, and it was commonly referred to as the Army of the Tennessee. General Grant was commander of this Army from October 16, 1862 to October 24, 1863; General Sherman from October 24, 1863 to March 26, 1864; General James B. McPherson succeeded Sherman and commanded the Army until July 22, 1864; General John A. Logan headed the Army from July 22, 1864 until July 27; and General O. O. Howard was appointed to command the Army of the Tennessee until the termination of the war in 1865. Since the major military operations in Mississippi took place from

\[\text{\footnotesize \text{\cite{Ibid., p. 1015.}}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize \text{\cite{Francis T. Miller and Robert S. Lanier, ed., The Photographic History of the Civil War (New York, 1911), X, p. 168.}}}\]

\[\text{\footnotesize \text{\cite{Frederick H. Dyer, A Compendium of the War of the Rebellion (New York, 1959), I, p. 486.}}}\]
May, 1862 to March, 1864, the policies of Generals Grant and Sherman best illustrate the military position relative to the civilian population and the rules of conduct.

General Grant's orders regarding the civilian and his private property consistently supported the established rules of conduct. In July, 1862, Grant's confidant and Assistant Adjutant General, John A. Rawlins, issued Order 133 which forbade officers, non-commissioned officers, and soldiers from trespassing on the orchards, gardens, and private grounds of the civilian population. "Marauding, pilfering, and any unauthorized and unnecessary seizure or destruction of private property is [sic] prohibited by General Orders of the department . . . and will be punished with the extreme penalty imposed by the laws of war, which is death."\(^5\)

From Oxford, Mississippi on December 6, 1862, Grant ordered the cavalry to subsist on the country, but he included specific instructions to suppress the "plundering propensity" of the Union cavalry. Each regiment was to have a special detail responsible for procuring "rations and forage and replacing broken-down animals."\(^6\) Additional measures were taken to prevent pillaging.

All property taken should pass through their [quarter-master and commissary] hands and be accounted for and go to the benefit of the Government. Receipts must be


\(^6\) Ibid., p. 388.
given for all property taken where proprietors are at home, and in no case should wanton destruction of property be tolerated.7

These orders alluded to the pillaging that usually accompanied the foraging expeditions. As mentioned above, the rules of war did sanction the taking of certain items that were essential for the survival of the troops. Unless the commanding officer drew the line between the essential and the nonessential, and insisted upon strict enforcement, the foraging troops were likely to be wandering bands of thieves. More often than not, the foraging was left completely to the indiscriminate tastes of the soldiers, notwithstanding the general orders which admonished the soldier to refrain from wanton destruction of property and from pillaging.

Grant's orders on December 29, 1862 illustrated the dilemma of the commander who apparently sympathized with the plight of the civilian, but who also was responsible for sustaining his troops.

Foraging parties will leave for the use of families and their servants a sufficient supply of provisions for sixty days, and when families have a less supply beyond this if found in the country within reach of the army. This order is not, however, to be construed to deprive the soldier of his rations whilst the country affords it. If suffering must fall on one or the other, the citizen must bear it.8

Grant even ordered Generals Sherman and McPherson to designate a "commissary of subsistence, who will issue articles of prime necessity to all destitute families calling

7 Ibid., p. 394. This Order was issued December 8, 1862.
8 Ibid., pp. 505-506.
for them." Non-destitute families were required to pay for these provisions.⁹ His willingness to help the starving Mississippians, however, did not replace his zeal for crippling the Confederacy. He instructed Stephen A. Hurlbut on May 5, 1863, to "destroy corn, wheat crops, and everything that can be made use of by the enemy in prolonging the war." However, he made clear that women and children were not to be insulted and that personal items such as clothing and jewelry were not to be taken.¹⁰

Grant did assume a harsh position against the citizenry when guerrilla attacks were concerned, especially when these attacks interfered with his plans to control the Mississippi rail system. His orders were quite clear: "For every raid or attempted raid by guerrillas upon the road I want ten families of the most noted secessionists sent South."¹¹ This was standard policy of the Union command on land and on water, and, of course, was in keeping with the position of the rules of war on guerrilla actions.

In contrast to Grant's rather considerate policy regarding the civilian was the vacillating position of his successor, General William T. Sherman. Sherman's policy evolved from

⁹ Ibid., Vol XXIV, Part 3, p. 571.
¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 274-275.
¹¹ Ibid., Vol XVII, Part 2, p. 525.
a determination to protect the rights of the civilian in 1862 to a policy in 1863-1864 that held the civilian population collectively responsible for the war and thus fit subjects for retribution.

In June, 1862, Sherman's position on foraging was in keeping with that of his superior officer, General Grant.

Too much looseness exists on the subject of foraging. The articles of war make it almost a capital offense for an officer or soldier to pillage, which means taking private property for his own use. It makes no difference if that property be of friend or enemy. Pillaging demoralizes the soldier, allows him to straggle from his ranks and neglect his duty, which in many cases heretofore have proven fatal to whole armies.12

In order to enforce his orders on foraging, he instructed the brigade quartermasters to request their commanders to give special escorts for all wagon trains and to give a receipt to the party from which the forage was acquired.13 The dual purpose of this order was to eliminate unguarded foraging expeditions and to protect the civilian. This order was reiterated just three days later on June 21, and again in much stronger language on July 7, 1862.

Stealing, robbery, and pillage has [sic] become so common in this army that it is a disgrace to any civilized people.

No officer other than the general commanding will grant passes beyond the line of pickets, and he will grant none except on extraordinary occasions. . . . Major Gibson will detail a patrol daily of an officer and 10 mounted men, who will patrol the country round the camp. This patrol will fire upon

12 Ibid., p. 16.
13 Ibid.
any party engaged in robbery and pillage, or who attempt to escape. All found outside the lines will be delivered to the provost-marshal, who will put them on bread and water until relieved by the commanding general.

This demoralizing and disgraceful practice of pillage must cease, else the country will rise on us and justly shoot us down like dogs and wild beasts.14

Perhaps the most explicit statement made in 1862 on foraging was that issued in General Order 2 by Sherman. In chiding the troops for indiscriminate plundering, he argued that the Union Army's "mission is to maintain, not to violate, all laws, human and divine." The order enumerated the items that could be legally foraged.

The Government of the United States undertakes to pay, clothe, and feed her troops well, and is prepared to do it. The officers and soldiers have no right to look to any other quarter for compensation and subsistence. By existing orders the quartermasters and commissaries of brigades may take corn-fodder and any species of forage, and cattle, hogs, sheep, meal, or any species of subsistence stores, which property they account for to the Government . . . to pay for the same or not according to the loyalty of the owner. Firewood can be taken by the troops from the standing or fallen timber, or even rails, when such timber is not to be had; but the taking of chickens, turkeys, pigs, or anything by soldiers is as much pillage and stealing as though committed in our own country, as these articles in fact belong to the Government of the United States, whose agents are present prepared to take them and issue to the troops as a part of their regular rations.15

Such well-disciplined foraging parties as Sherman's orders intended to establish were certainly needed, but it would be inaccurate and unfair to place the complete burden

14 Ibid., p. 81.
15 Ibid., p. 390. This order was issued on December 6, 1862 from College Hill, Mississippi.
of guilt for misconduct on the troops. Moreover, there is reason to question the sincerity of the Union commander's desire to prevent maltreatment of the civilians. General Sherman best illustrated this inconsistency, and he was among the most significant Union leaders in Mississippi in 1863 and the winter of 1864. In spite of his earlier determination to prevent pillaging, Sherman advised Grant as early as October 4, 1862, to make the people "dread the passage of our troops through their country."\(^{16}\)

We cannot change the hearts of those people of the South, but we can make war so terrible that they will realize the fact that, however brave and gallant and devoted to their country, still they are mortal and should exhaust all peaceful remedies before they fly to war.\(^{17}\)

This privately expressed opinion was aimed primarily at the loyal Confederates, whose morale the Union command desired desperately to break. Sherman was also as intent as Grant on discouraging the civilians from offering support to the bands of guerrillas that attacked the Union forces. Whether or not the guerrilla action was condoned by the civilians unfortunate enough to be living in the area of such attacks was of little concern to this Union commander. His policy on this subject was designed to strike fear in the civilians.

We must make the people feel that every attack on a road here will be resented by the destruction of some one of their towns or plantations elsewhere. All adherents of their cause must suffer for those cowardly acts.

I propose to expel ten secession families for every

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 260.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., p. 261.
boat fired upon, thereby lessening the necessity for fighting boats for their benefit, and will visit on the neighborhood summary punishment. It may sometimes fall on the wrong head, but it would be folly to send parties of infantry to chase these wanton guerrillas.\textsuperscript{18}

Sherman's friend, Admiral David Porter, had issued a similar ultimatum that warned the persons who fired on unarmed vessels from banks that they would be treated as highwaymen and assassins.\textsuperscript{19} Guerrillas had ambushed Union ships from the river banks without attempting to identify the ships as armed vessels. Some of these ships, as Porter pointed out, were even hospital ships.

This policy was adhered to by the Union Navy with or without provocation by the Southern guerrillas. Riverfront plantations were often vandalized, and on many occasions they were totally destroyed by the Union raids.\textsuperscript{20} Needless to say, these actions did not endear the Union Navy to the inhabitants living along the rivers. They also raise many questions

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 280. Order issued on October 18, 1862.


\textsuperscript{20} Following an attack from the shore of the Atchafalaya River on the Queen of the West, the commander, Charles Rivers Ellet, and his notorious Marine Brigade, ordered "all the buildings on three large adjoining plantations" to be burned. See \textit{O. R. (Naval)}, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, p. 384. On another occasion the marine brigade aboard the Forest Rose raided a plantation near Natchez and killed cattle, and seized mules, cows and horses. The plantation owner showed his protection papers which were issued by the Union Provost Marshal of Natchez, but this only led to his arrest and the confiscation of his horse and saddle. The same treatment was accorded every plantation for four miles along the river. See \textit{O. R. (Naval)}, Ser. I, Vol. XXV, p. 697.
about which side, the military or the civilian, could claim justifiable retaliation.

Certainly in Sherman's view of war, the citizen could never claim "justifiable retaliation" against the Union Army, regardless of the depredations committed against him. The aforementioned statements by Sherman in October, 1862, were indicative of the direction in which his theory of war was traveling. He began to view the civilian population as collectively responsible for guerrilla raids in particular and for the war in general. It is interesting to note, however, that his policy statements in the summer of 1863 showed a willingness to provide the civilians with protection. On August 8, 1863, Sherman said that it was in "the interest of our Government that all plundering and pillaging should cease."21 He also ordered his subordinates to invoke punishment "on the spot and with rigor any wanton burning of houses or property without your specific orders."22 There was no mistaking the fact, however, that by September, 1863, his doctrine of collective responsibility had crystallized.

In a letter written in September to H. W. Hill, chairman of a citizen's committee of Warren County, Mississippi, he warned that the citizens would not be protected by the Union Army. His reasons provide an interesting insight into his rather abrupt shift in thinking.

22 Ibid.
Of necessity, in war the commander on the spot is the judge, and may take your house, your fields, your everything, and turn you all out, helpless, to starve. It may be wrong, but that don't [sic] alter the case. In war you can't help yourselves and the only possible remedy is to stop war. I know this is no easy task, but it is well for you to look the fact square in the face and let your thoughts and acts tend to the great solution. Those who led the people into war promised all manner of good things to you, and where are their promises? . . . Our duty is not to build up; it is rather to destroy both the rebel army and whatever of wealth or property it has founded its boasted strength upon.23

His position ten days later, on September 17, 1863, showed an expanded view of the power of the military in enemy territory, and the theory of collective responsibility was fully implied. This was expressed in his communications to Halleck from his camp on the Big Black River in Mississippi.

I would banish all minor questions and assert the broad doctrine that as a nation the United States has the right, and also the physical power, to penetrate to every part of the national domain, and that we will do it; that we will do it in our own time, and in our own way; that it makes no difference whether it be in one year or two, or ten or twenty; that we will remove and destroy every obstacle—if need be, take every life, every acre of land, every particle of property, everything that to us seems proper; that we will not cease until the end is attained. That all who do not aid are enemies, and we will not account to them for our acts. If the people of the South oppose, they do so at their peril; and if they stand by mere lookers-on the domestic tragedy, they have no right to immunity, protection, or share in the final result.24

By January 31, 1864, when Sherman was in command of the Army of the Tennessee, the "rights" of the military had replaced the "rights" of the people. The citizens were thus at the mercy of the United States Army.

24 Ibid., p. 698.
When men take arms to resist our rightful authority we are compelled to use force, because all reason and argument cease when arms are resorted to. When the provisions, forage, horses, mules, wagons, &c., are used by our enemy it is clearly our duty and right to take them, because otherwise they might be used against us. In like manner all houses left vacant by an inimical people are clearly our right, or such as are needed as store-houses, hospitals, and quarters. But a question arises as to dwelling used by women, children, and non-combatants. So long as non-combatants remain in their houses and keep to their accustomed business their opinions and prejudices can in nowise influence the war, and therefore should not be noticed, but if anyone comes out into the public streets and creates disorder, he or she should be punished, restrained, or banished, either to the rear or front as the officer in command adjuges. If the people or any of them keep up a correspondence with parties in hostility they are spies, and can be punished with death or minor punishment.  

These were Sherman's views as expressed in a letter to Major R. M. Sawyer. He argued that the Southerners could find no protection under the Constitution because they had appealed to war and thus to its rules and laws. Furthermore, the United States as the ultimate sovereign "have a right to change the population, and it may be and is both politic and just we should do so in certain districts."  

A "change" in the population meant the banishment of the inhabitants and the appropriation of all the lands by the United States. This was aimed particularly at the planter class about whom Sherman held very definite views.

No man will deny that the United States would be benefited by dispossessing a rich, prejudiced, hard-headed, and disloyal planter, and substituting in his place a dozen or more patient, industrious, good families.

26 Ibid.
even if they be of foreign birth. I believe that some of the rich and slave-holding are prejudiced to an extent that nothing but death and ruin will extinguish, but hope, as the poorer and industrial classes of the South realize their relative weakness and their dependence upon the fruits of the earth and good will of their fellow-men, they will not only discover the error of their ways and repent of their hasty action but bless those who persistently maintained a constitutional Government strong enough to sustain itself, protect its citizens, and promise peaceful homes to millions yet unborn.27

During the Meridian expedition in February, 1864, Sherman's orders leave little doubt about his intentions.

If the planters find that we can make a yearly visitation and clean up old scores they will give less encouragement to the enemy, which has heretofore crossed over to the Mississippi and annoyed our steamboats. They may protest against our holding them responsible for the acts of the Confederate authorities, but in war we have a perfect right to produce results in our own way, and should not scruple too much at the means provided they are effectual. 28

Remarks such as these help to explain, partly at least, why the planter class suffered from the acts of incendiaries and pillagers. General Sherman, who was in command of the major campaigns in Mississippi from October, 1863 until March, 1864, had progressed in his thinking to the point that any military measure was right that would prevent an enemy action. Military actions against the lives, the homes, and the lands of the planter class were justifiable since they were the people primarily responsible for the war. Upon this theory of collective responsibility rested Sherman's belief in total war which transgressed the accepted rules of war. This belief was clearly

27 Ibid., pp. 279-280.
implied in his statement that "war is simply power unrestrained by constitution or compact." 29

In contrast to Sherman's policy, other officers in the Army of the Tennessee attempted to protect the civilian population against direct attacks by the Union troops. In February, 1864, the following order was dispatched by Colonel William T. Shaw to each command in the Second Brigade, Third Division of the Sixteenth Army Corps:

Information having been received at these headquarters that men of this command have been guilty of pillaging from private houses articles of no value to the soldiers, but important to every household, such as clothing of women and children, a species of plunder unknown to civilized warfare, it is hereby ordered that hereafter during the march no soldier shall enter a house occupied by a family unless under direction of a commissioned officer; and further, that nothing is to be taken from private houses by officers or men, except provisions and such articles as are necessary for the subsistence of the army. 30

The Chief of the Cavalry in Mississippi for the Union Army, William Sooy Smith, expressed deep concern over the incendiary acts of Union soldiers in Mississippi. He ordered that any man caught in the act was to be shot, and he also offered a $500 reward for the detection of arsonists. 31

Stephen A. Hurlbut issued similar orders on February 25, 1864, that "the destruction of cotton and all other property by burning or otherwise must cease, save when ordered by the department commander." He placed stringent limits on foraging

30 Ibid., p. 427.
31 Ibid., p. 431.
and even insisted that "in all cases a reasonable amount will be left for each family." In addition, Hurlbut ordered that houses were to be entered by commissioned officers only, and that they were to be held responsible for the prevention of pillaging.32

Sherman's successor, General James B. McPherson, issued a rigid order against pillaging and destruction to the 17th Army Corps on February 25, 1864:

First, no house, cotton-gin, or building of any description will be burned or destroyed unless by special orders from these headquarters; second, no officer or soldier will be permitted to enter any house or other building unless by special orders from these headquarters, division or brigade headquarters; third, no foraging party will be sent out except by special orders from division or brigade headquarters, and then the names of the officers in charge will be registered at the headquarters of the brigade or division to which they belong, in order that any misconduct or violation of this order on the part of officers or men may be properly reported and the offender summarily dealt with.33

It is apparent that the most clearly definable pattern in military policy from 1862 to 1864 was that of vacillation between a strict adherence to the rules of war and a virtual denial that those rules were applicable to that particular war. General Sherman ranged from one extreme to the other. Other officers in the Army of the Tennessee paid lip service to the rules of war, but there was almost a note of desperation in their orders to cease the pillaging and the burning. One

32 Ibid., p. 471.
33 Ibid.
can only assume from the widespread destruction and pillaging in Mississippi during the Union occupation that there was little, if any, enforcement of the stringent orders. Strict discipline was certainly difficult, if not impossible, with the volunteers in the Union Army. It is also conceivable that officers, such as General Sherman, actually encouraged the troops to take the war to the civilian population. Whatever the case, the attacks on person and the destruction to private property--except for damage incurred during military combat between the belligerent armies--were needless violations of the international rules of war and of General Order 100.
This country is a dreary spectacle indeed. The largest plantations are thinning out, grown up in weeds & pastured upon by a few scattering cattle; fences are pulled down & destroyed; house burned; negroes run off. A general gloom pervades everything and the people appear to be in a listless spirit, . . . subjugated, in some instances, by prospective want and suffering, and utterly devoid of any disposition to continue longer the struggle for Independence. In the glow & hurrah of excitement that ushered in the war, they doubtless freely participated. Flag presentations and gay parties have however given place to a serious war and the end is not yet. What the poor people here as elsewhere will do I know not. The prospects are gloomy enough and may be worse. I think the present year will wind it up and next December, by the blessing of Providence see me at home again.1

Such was the wretched scene in Mississippi as described by William L. Nugent in a letter to his wife in March, 1864. Nugent had captured the aura of desolation resulting from nearly two years of Union occupation, and whether or not the Mississippians had felt collectively responsible for the war, it was apparent that they had collectively suffered.

Following the conclusion of the Battle of Shiloh on April 7, 1862, the Union forces under the command of General

1 John K. Bettersworth, ed., Mississippi in the Confederacy, As They Saw It (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 213.
Henry W. Halleck began to pursue the Confederate Army which had retreated to Corinth, Mississippi, about twenty miles southwest of Shiloh.\(^2\) This invasion, accompanied by naval campaigns along the Mississippi River, marked the beginning of full-scale operations in the state. The devastation that followed Union occupation ranged from wanton plunder and atrocity to the relatively harmless foraging parties that preyed on the available quantities of edibles to be found in the countryside. Aside from the operations around the Jackson and Meridian areas, most of these Union activities were concentrated in the northern and western counties of Mississippi, where "there existed for almost two years a considerable no-man's land, subject to constant raiding and pillage."\(^3\)

The following description of Union occupation does not presume to cite every incident involving the Mississippi civilian and the military over this span of three years; the intent is to provide carefully selected accounts from the participants--military and civilian--which should serve as a firm basis on which to draw conclusions about the treatment of the civilians by the Union Army.


\(^3\) James D. Silver, *Mississippi in the Confederacy: As Seen in Retrospect* (Baton Rouge, 1961), p. 255. The Vicksburg campaign in 1863 and the Meridian Expedition of Sherman in February, 1864, brought extensive destruction to the central and southern regions of the state. Naval operations along the river system throughout Mississippi were notorious for their plundering and destruction.
On May 29, 1862, the Confederate General, P. G. T. Beauregard, was forced to evacuate Corinth. As the Confederate troops retreated to Tupelo, General Halleck moved his huge Federal army into this vital rail and road center. Before evacuating, Beauregard had ordered all the buildings containing Confederate stores to be burned. General Sherman described the scene in his May 30 report.

For the town itself many houses were still burning, and the ruins of warehouses and buildings containing commissary and other Confederate stores were still smoldering; but there still remained piles of cannon balls, shell and shot, sugar, molasses, beans, rice and other property, which the enemy had failed to carry off or destroy. Major Fisher, of the Ohio Fifty-fourth, was left in Corinth, with a provost guard, to prevent pillage and protect the public stores still left.

Corinth served the Union Army as a supply depot, and from this point Union forces launched their foraging and their military expeditions for the remainder of 1862 and for the first months of 1863. These expeditions also served to introduce the civilian population to the Federal troops.

Private Elisha Stockwell, Jr. of the 14th Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry described in a matter-of-fact manner an incident on a raid near Corinth.

As we came in sight of one house, the regiment ahead was leaving the well, which was some rods in front of the house and near the road. We saw a woman run out to the well and cut the rope, letting both buckets fall in the well. The water was pulled up over a pulley; one

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bucket going down as the other came up. We marched a little past the house and stopped and sat down. The colonel sent his orderly back with four men and burned the house. They didn't let the woman take anything out—only what she had on. This looked tough to me, but it was war and it was a good lesson to her at least, and possibly to others.°

The rationale was simple: the woman had deprived these hot and thirsty soldiers of water and she deserved to be punished. From the accounts given by the Union soldiers, such treatment as this was apparently commonplace. An Illinois soldier, John Wilson, remarked in his diary of the conditions of the farms along the roads out of Corinth. On September 21, he said that "all farms we passed to day [sic] were torn up by our troops..." On October 7 he reported the burning of a large house north of Corinth worth $12,000. The reason for the destruction according to this soldier was that this was proper treatment for secessionists.8

An account by a New York Herald correspondent of the foraging parties around the Corinth area showed the kind of indiscriminate stealing that the Union officers tried to prevent.

The soldiers did not always confine their foraging to

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8 Ibid., p. 191.
articles of necessity. A clergyman's library was invaded and plundered. I saw one soldier bending under the weight of three heavy volumes on theology, printed in the German language. Another soldier, a mere boy, was carrying away a copy of Scott's Greek Lexicon. In every instance when it came to their knowledge, the officers compelled the soldiers to return the books they had stolen.

The selection of valuable items from houses was commonplace with the Union soldier as evidence clearly shows. Unsupervised foraging expeditions allowed the common soldiers the freedom to pillage at will if he so desired. One Illinois soldier, Private Charles W. Wills, bitterly described the extent of such pillaging in Mississippi in the early part of 1862.

There is the d—st state of affairs in this country now that 'tis possible to think of. Every house within ten miles of the army is visited about five times a day by our soldiers, and the guerrillas (both work on the same principles) and each time visitors divide with the family the provision of household goods. There is more stealing in one day here than the whole United States suffered in a year before the war.

Of course, the soldier could justify his actions—especially in the case of food. As one soldier candidly remarked: "'jayhawking' had become a part of every man's duty for his own preservation for the time being." Insufficient rations

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11 C. Barney, Recollections of Field Service With the Twentieth Infantry Volunteers (Davenport, Iowa, 1865), p. 85.
encouraged the soldier to provide his own commissariat from the inhabitants. As this soldier commented: "We drew from the inhabitants by their fears—from hen-roosts by the tail—and thus made amends for the quartermaster's neglect in not giving us beef." 12

Private Wills provided a vivid account of a typical foraging expedition at a Mississippi farm:

When we stopped at his farm there was a large flock of sheep, at least 40 goats and pigs, turkey, geese, chickens, and ducks without number. After we had been there a half hour I don't believe there was a living thing on the farm that did not come with our train. I never saw a slaughter house on as large a scale before... 13

Unimpressed by the reprimanding that followed this action, the young soldier felt that the troops' extensive foraging was justifiable. "When we are marching through a country as thoroughly secesh as this is, I think that the men should be allowed fresh meat at the expense of the natives; but there is a proper and soldier-like way to get it." 14

The soldier had even devised an imaginative hiding place for the articles of foraged food that were not readily consumed. One Indiana volunteer proudly explained how great quantities of food were hidden in a secret (and illegal) box that was buried just underneath his crackerbox.

12 Ibid.
13 Wills, Army Life, p. 40.
14 Ibid.
We have known the half of a hog that would weigh 200 pounds to get into that box, and a quarter of a yearling calf; or a dozen chickens, or a bushel of sweet potatoes; or a jug of molasses that would come into camp and get into that box. . . .

This soldier admitted that such concealment of excess forage was contrary to the officer's orders, but strict foraging orders were generally disregarded anyway. On one occasion General Vandever even threatened his troops with execution if they picked fruit from the trees along the road as they marched from Yazoo City in 1863. The soldier's reaction to the order showed no fear of reprisals: "General Vandever might shoot and be d---d, as that mode of death was preferable from want of water."

The soldier's rationale for mistreatment of the civilian population was candidly described by Sergeant Stephen Forbes, one of Benjamin Grierson's men:

This is the most disagreeable part of a soldier's duty, for taking the all of a defenceless citizen when the women cry and the men turn pale, appropriating the last horse of a poor old woman, and driving off a man's team from before his plow, certainly seems to be tolerably small work for a soldier, but then what is all war but one monstrous evil by the use of which we hope to overcome a much greater, and so long as it tends to subdue the rebellion I suppose that the means are justified by the end.

16 Ibid.
17 Barney, Recollections, p. 215.
Expeditions during the fall and winter of 1862 led Federal forces across northern Mississippi in pursuit of the Confederate Army and with the objective of capturing major rail centers along the Mobile & Ohio and the Mississippi Central Railroads. These expeditions also terrorized the civilian population. Descriptions of the occupations of College Hill, Holly Springs, and of Oxford during December, 1862, provide vivid accounts of the gruesome side of war witnessed and suffered by non-combatants.

On December 1, 1862, Sherman's division of the Army of the Tennessee encamped at College Hill. The advanced cavalry, having already entered the town, had found some liquor and, in their inebriated state, were terrorizing the inhabitants. As Chicago Times war correspondent, Sylvanus Cadwallader, reported, they were robbing "the people right and left of everything they fancied. It was nothing uncommon for them to hold up a darky and take his watch, paying in green express labels stolen from the depot." Bearing in mind that this kind of behavior had been strictly prohibited in orders issued at College Hill by General Sherman, it appears that the orders were no deterrent to the troops in the town. The degree of maltreatment of the civilians was vividly described in the following reflections of Maud-Morrow Brown, a resident of College Hill during the Federal occupation in December.

During that month they occupied College Church and its vicinity depriving the congregation the privilege long granted to it of worshipping God in his own house. No sooner were they in our midst than they exhibited the true characteristics of the Yankey. Before the first tent was struck or a single camp fire was lighted from twenty to thirty were in every house appropriating to themselves such articles as gratified their fiendish dispositions. Many families when they left them were almost utterly destitute of necessary food, raiment, and bedding. While they were ravaging within our attention was scarcely directed to what was going on without doors and to our astonishment the depredations of poultry, cattle hogs sheep mules and horses were no less distinctive. But this first evening's experience was but a faint foretaste of the ignominious treatment which we were destined to receive from their hands. They would enter dwellings at a late hour of the night arouse the sleeping inmates and with the most profane and blasphemous language demand money and search ladies' trunks and private dressers and enraged at finding nothing which they desired they would deface and destroy furniture with their sabers and bayonets. In some instances they forced worthy citizens to leave at once their homes and then set fire to their domiciles. They were regardless of the pleas of females and offered insults to the old helpless and inoffensive and often when protection was sought from those in command it was denied. Thus from day to day as we were subjected to the insults and cruel treatment of our insolent unprincipalled [sic] foe they not only robbed us of all property which they could appropriate to their benefit but destroyed much which was of no use to themselves but which they knew was invaluable to us. . . . By their short and destructive stay they greatly embarrassed agricultural and mechanical operations in our community leaving many worthy citizens in almost a helpless condition. The amount of property destroyed and rendered useless to the community is variously estimated probably the lowest estimate which is two hundred thousand dollars is nearest the truth. Teaching us the solemn lesson that it is easier to destroy than to make. 20

In conjunction with Sherman's maneuverings, General Grant was moving his troops during the summer and fall of 1862 against a large Confederate force headed by General Pemberton. These

operations occurred about thirteen miles north of Oxford, on the Mississippi Central Railroad. After deciding that the Union forces were too strong to confront at that time, Pemberton ordered his forces to retreat to Grenada. In pursuit of the Confederate Army, Grant moved his troops into Oxford in November, 1862. The citizens of this railroad town, defenseless and offering no resistance, became the victims of a reign of terror of frightening dimensions. The following account of the Union occupation of Oxford is that of an unidentified Mississippi jurist.21

The citizens were aware that Grant's forces were at hand, and that they might be expected at any moment to make their appearance; but being themselves unarmed and defenseless, they apprehended no personal danger, and many of them, led by curiosity, remained upon the street. They were destined shortly to be undeceived. The Federal advance, consisting of Kansas and Wisconsin cavalry, armed with repeating rifles, rushed into the town like a whirlwind, firing indiscriminately upon every one found in the streets. A boy of fourteen, the son of a widowed mother, was shot down while he was chopping wood in the yard. A negro man, belonging to Dr. R. R. Chilton, went to a gate with a couple of his master's children, to look at the soldiers as they passed. A volley was directed at the group, and the poor negro fell, shot through both thighs. An elderly citizen, quietly walking along the street, was fired on by a squad of cavalry. Drawing a white handkerchief from his pocket, he waved it at them in token of surrender. The murderous wretches replied by another volley. He then endeavored to gain the shelter of a neighborhood building, and, as he ran, the soldiers galloped forward and sent a third volley after him, but he escaped unhurt. Doubtless, had the workmanship of the "Union" soldiers been commensurate with their malignity, at least two score of inoffensive citizens would then have been butchered in cold blood, for more than fifty of them were fired on. It is almost needless to observe that this conduct of the troops was not provoked by any attempted resis-

21 Henry Clay Dean, Crimes of the Civil War and The Curse of the Funding System (Baltimore, 1869), pp. 112-113.
tance on the part of the citizens.

The cavalry rapidly scoured the different streets of the town, and then, finding that they had no armed enemies to fear, they commenced the work of pillage and destruction. It was late in the afternoon when they entered the town. Before the morning dawned again, the place had been so thoroughly sacked that little remained to tempt the cupidity of the spoiler. Those "jayhawkers" well understood the art of "making night hideous" to the inhabitants, whose dwellings were overrun by ferocious and brutal ruffians, many of them intoxicated, who searched everywhere for valuables, appropriated all that they coveted, including, in many cases, the personal ornaments and even the dresses of ladies; demanding the surrender of watches and money at the mouth of the pistol, and wantonly destroying what they were unable to remove. Looking-glasses were smashed, pianos broken up, carpets cut to pieces, china demolished, paintings mutilated by thrusting bayonets through them, windows destroyed, feather beds ripped up and their contents given to the winds, and, in many cases, the large stocks of provisions which the families of that region were accustomed to keep in their smokehouses, were rendered unfit for food by knocking in the heads of barrels containing sugar, molasses, flour, vinegar, etc., and mingling all together with salt and ordure from the stable. Many a family who on the morning of the 2nd of December were surrounded with every comfort and supplied with stores sufficient for a twelvemonth, were twenty-four hours thereafter, without a morsel of food upon their premises, or even the means of preparing the most simple meal, for they had been deprived of everything that could serve as a cooking utensil. From time to time, during the 3rd and 4th of December, fresh bodies of Federal troops arrived in the town, and these, in turn, swarmed through every habitation, eagerly seeking to glean something from the wreck that had been left by their comrades, and exasperated against the citizens because they had so little remaining to be plundered. In one instance a negro woman was encouraged to make a personal assault upon her mistress, and armed soldiers stood by, declaring that they would shoot the latter if she resisted. Refined and delicate ladies were compelled to listen to every species of profane and obscene language; to submit to the grossest and most cruel insults, and, too often, even to the only outrages that can be perpetrated against womanhood. 22

22 Ibid., pp. 113-114.
In light of these atrocities, the lack of discipline among these troops, as well as the general disregard for the orders of their commander, is apparent. Further evidence of the violation of Grant's orders by his troops while in Oxford is presented in an incident involving a safe-conduct pass. Grant had granted to the Honorable James M. Howry a pass that required "all United States troops to permit him to proceed unmolested, with a wagon and certain trunks, to his plantation, some forty miles below." The pass was countersigned by General Quinby, who was in command of a company of cavalry encamped just outside Oxford. Howry was compelled to stop by the Union cavalry and to produce his pass.

He produced Gen. Grant's pass, countersigned by Gen. Quinby, but the soldiers, cursing him and Grant and Quinby, refused to respect the pass. They stripped the Judge to the skin, robbed him of all the money found upon his person, broke open and rifled his trunks, stole his mules and saddles, and left him in the wood. He made his way back to Oxford and reported the facts to Gen. Grant, who listened impatiently to his statement and refused to afford him the slightest redress.

In addition to this outrage, Judge Howry's office was vandalized by the Federal troops. As Secretary of the Board of Trustees of the University of Mississippi, Howry had deposited the University's archives in his office in Oxford. These documents were fully protected under the established rules of war, but, in this case, "the federal soldiers were permitted

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23 Ibid., p. 115.
24 Ibid.
by their officers in open day, to break open Judge Howry's office and to scatter the documents found therein . . . in the deep mud of the streets."25 The collection of the State Geological Survey—the product of many years of labor—suffered a similar fate by being reduced to "an almost undistinguishable mass of rubbish."26

By December 20, 1862, Grant had moved his forces south near Grenada with the objective of capturing Jackson and Vicksburg. In the meantime, immense Federal supplies valued at seven million dollars were shipped from Columbus to Holly Springs which lay just north of Oxford on the Mississippi Central Railroad. Grant's plans for Vicksburg were foiled by the cunning of the Confederate cavalry leader, Van Dorn. On December 20, Van Dorn's small cavalry force captured the federal garrison at Holly Springs and destroyed the abundant supplies stored in this small town, thus making impossible the entire plan of Grant for the capture of Vicksburg.

25 Ibid.

26 Ibid. Oxford was revisited on August 22, 1864, and burned. The burning was supervised by General A. J. Smith, and it included some "34 stores and business houses, the courthouse, Masonic Hall, 2 fine large hotels, besides carpenter, blacksmith, and other shops; also 5 fine dwelling houses . . . ." The motives for burning Oxford were studied by Howard T. Dimick. He concluded that the major reasons were based on the "cumulative hatred and frustration caused by the alleged Fort Pillow massacre and the failure of the Federal expedition to eliminate . . . Forrest as a military factor in Mississippi and Tennessee." See Howard T. Dimick, "Motives for Burning Oxford, Mississippi," The Journal of Mississippi History (July, 1943), VIII, pp. 141-154.
On hearing the news of this capture, the people of Oxford rejoiced because they thought "Grant's army would be starved into surrendering." As Sylvanus Cadwallader explained, they were to be sadly disappointed.

This feeling of joy turned into one of consternation when his troops began to supply themselves from the surrounding country, thus making the Confederacy feed his army. Trains of wagons, heavily guarded, were sent out by scores, for twenty-five miles on both sides of the road from Yocknapatafa to Holly Springs, and stripped the country of all food for men and animals. Mills were erected, grain ground, fat stock driven in and slaughtered by thousands, and abundant supplies obtained. To people's inquiries as to what the inhabitants should live upon, Gen. Grant advised them to move further south. His army would not be allowed to starve while there was anything to live upon within reach.27

On December 21, these Union forces were reentering Holly Springs with vengeance in mind for the loss of their supplies. Unfortunately, the residents of Holly Springs--not Van Dorn's cavalry--were held responsible for this loss.28

These ferocious soldiers, who, on their backward march from Oxford, through a thickly-settled region, had burned every house along the road, were at once turned loose to gratify their cupidity and wreak their malice upon the citizens. The work of indiscriminate pillage was instantly inaugurated. Every dwelling was soon swarming with men in uniform, some of whom wore the shoulder-straps of captains and colonels, who, with oaths and curses, brandishing their weapons, and threatening death to any who should oppose them, ransacked every nook and corner, every drawer, closet, cupboard, work-box, trunk or other receptacle in which money, plate and other valuables might be stored, and "confiscated" or "jay-hawked" ... whatever of

27 Cadwallader, Three Years With Grant, p. 40
value they were able to carry off with them. Nothing came amiss to these marauders. Provisions, money, silver plate, jewelry, watches, blankets and other covering, parlor ornaments, daguerreotypes, books, china, glassware, table cutlery, kitchen utensils, clothing, (and especially rich and costly articles of ladies' apparel, with which these brigands afterwards decked the sable damsels who filled their camps,) all such articles, as well as the contents of the numerous stores in the town, were speedily appropriated. Furniture, in some instances, was uninjured by the soldiers, either during or after the process of plunder. In others, such articles as wardrobes and bureaus, which were locked, were broken open, the soldiers refusing, even when the keys were presented to them, to use them, or suffer them to be used for unlocking them. In other cases still, all the furniture in the house was smashed, and everything of value, that had not been stolen, wantonly destroyed. . . .

Incendiaries were also at work. The residence of Mrs. John D. Martin and all the buildings on the grounds were in flames only minutes after the Federal Army had reentered Holly Springs. The soldiers prevented the servants from rescuing anything from any of the dwellings, since Mrs. Martin was being punished for collaborating with the enemy. The enemy with whom she collaborated was her son, who was a captain under Van Dorn. He had visited briefly with his mother on the day of the Van Dorn raid, and she had begged him--ironically enough--to show kindness to a Federal officer captured that morning. 30

The soldiers showed no concern for age or for the condition of health of the citizens whose homes they entered.

Wm. F. Mason, Esq., upwards of sixty years of age, and

29 Ibid., p. 110.
30 Ibid., pp. 110-111.
an invalid, for his presumption in daring to implore some soldiers not to enter the room where his wife lay sick, was knocked down with the buts [sic] of their muskets, kicked, trampled on, and left for dead. His dwelling, filled with rich and costly furniture, was then completely "gutted." Three weeks afterwards, his life was still considered to be in danger from the frightful injuries he had sustained. Many other citizens were subjected to personal violence, while none, whatever their age, sex or condition, escaped the most brutal insults that could be heaped upon them. The epithets applied to ladies by the freebooters who thronged through their houses day after day, are unfit for publication. ("Damned bitch of a secesh whore" was one of the most decent of those which were unusually employed.)

Public edifices such as the churches and even the cemeteries of Holly Springs also received their share of the wrath of the Union soldiers.

The Presbyterian Church was used, without necessity, as a depository of ordnance stores. The Episcopal Church was broken open, the seats destroyed, the carpets cut up, the prayer-books mutilated, the organ chopped open with axes and the pipes taken out of it by the soldiers to amuse themselves with, upon the streets, the altar disgustingly defiled, the walls defaced with obscene inscriptions, and the building itself devoted to the vilest of human use. Even the beautiful cemetery of the town was not spared from the hand of ruthless violence. The soldiers entered its hallowed precincts with sledge-hammers and axes, broke down the ornamental iron railings around the private lots, made a wreck of the costly monuments that marked the resting-place of the departed, but the day before, had been so lovely, a scene of ruin and devastation.

31 Ibid., p. 111.

32 Ibid., p. 112. The Roman Catholic Church was also vandalized. The church organ was torn to pieces, the library was scattered over the floor, and the silver image of Jesus, worth several hundred dollars, was stolen. See Bettersworth, Mississippi In the Confederacy, As They Saw It, p. 208.
This "reign of terror" continued for nearly two weeks as Grant's long trains passed through Holly Springs en route to Memphis. Each night the Federal incendiaries set fire to the private dwellings—ultimately reducing one-third of the town to ashes. A Union soldier, Cyrus F. Boyd, of the Fifteenth Iowa Infantry described the scene in Holly Springs:

On the east side of the square the large brick buildings which we saw there two weeks ago were now one vast shapeless mass of ruins. Some of these buildings had been stored with shell and other ammunition and explosive material. Fully one half the fine buildings on North side of the square were likewise blown to pieces. Sudden and complete destruction has overtaken this city.

Since General Grant maintained his quarters in a private residence in the town, it seems rather difficult to imagine that he was oblivious to the plundering of his troops. One can only speculate that he condoned it or that he was incapable of controlling it.

Again, one is reminded by the barbaric conduct of the Union troops in each of these Mississippi towns of the desperate tone of the general orders issued by the Union command with regard to proper treatment of civilians. Notwithstanding the fact that these 1862 atrocities were committed before the issuance of Lieber's General Order 100, the rules of international law clearly condemned such treatment of the civilian population. But to whom could the civilian appeal for just treatment? The field commander was the only obvious

33 Ibid., p. 112.

34 Bettersworth, Mississippi In the Confederacy, p. 208.
protector of civilian rights; and in light of the atrocities committed in College Hill, Oxford, and Holly Springs, it appears that this protection was non-existent.

Three Mississippi river towns were also victims of the Union torches and of their plundering in 1862: Grand Gulf, Prentiss, and Friars Point. This destruction was primarily the result of Union Naval retaliation for Confederate bombardment from the shore. There were also strategic reasons for Grand Gulf's destruction, since it was an important shipping port for Port Gibson (eight miles southeast) and was also the site of extensive Confederate fortifications. Its critical importance to the Confederate hopes of maintaining control of the Mississippi River was noted by Admiral Porter: "Grand Gulf is the strongest place on the Mississippi. Had the enemy succeeded in finishing the fortifications no fleet could have taken them."  

In the case of Prentiss, the almost total destruction was conducted with machine-like efficiency. The following description of and the justification for this Union action is from the diary of Captain Charles E. Wilcox, who was aboard the Alhambra on September 14, when the "rebel" attack

35 Silver, Mississippi In the Confederacy, p. 255.  
37 Ibid., p. 21.
came from the shore. The Union ships shelled the shore and then landed with "turpentine and pine knots and burnt the whole village... destroying about $100,000.00 worth of property."

A flag of truce was sent before we landed, giving the women and children a half hour to leave the place. We burnt everything, a single thing not being allowed to be pillaged. I saw a great many things which we as soldiers are actually in need of, committed to the flames, but all must go according to orders. Pianos, guitars, melodeons, superior household furniture of every kind, a store full of goods, the court house with all the county papers, the jail, the tavern, and about thirty dwellings some of which cost $15,000, all, committed to flames. This is the destruction the rebels brought upon themselves by their mean dastardly [sic] skulking in the brush on the bank of the river and firing into us. They have a just retribution. Our Lieut. Colonel who commanded the expedition, believes in a just retribution. After we had satisfied our—shall I say incendiarism we returned to our boat and then we anchored in the middle of the stream.38

The fate of these three towns was a rehearsal for the extensive damage that would befall other communities along the Mississippi and other inland waterways during Grant's campaign in 1863 to capture Vicksburg. The Port Gibson area was visited by the ravages of war in May, 1863. As one Confederate soldier described the conditions of this area: ". . . scarcely a house had been passed without receiving a call, The negroes had left the plantations, and all the equipages had been carried off by the Federals."39


the victims of Port Gibson, James A. Maury, described the pillaging of Grant's army in a letter to his son.

My slaves, horses and mules are carried off, my fences torn down, and my crops destroyed—and that my eyes may be turned from the scenes of desolation and my family protected from the visitation of stragglers. Other items pillaged by the Federal soldiers from the Maury farm included his wife's "carriage horses and a box containing all her silver plate, jewelry and golden trinkets of every description, except a few silver spoons and forks. . . ." Expenditions that were associated with these were sent along the White River in Arkansas in May of 1863. Acts of reprisal against the "fine and spacious" plantations on the river were reported. Lieutenant Joshua Bishop on board the U. S. S. General Bragg filed the following report on the destruction of houses in the vicinity of Argyle Landing. These were apparently provoked by Confederate attacks from shore on the Federal steamers.

. . . Mr. Ferguson, with his party of "scorchers" was rapidly performing his work of destruction, and at 8 o'clock had the buildings attached to the Blandonia and Roach plantations, with their magnificent and costly furniture, splendid library, etc., enveloped in flames. . . . Lieutenant J. N. Gillhan, aboard the U. S. S. Rattler, reported finding a beautiful mansion uninhabited along the White River.

"We set this house on fire, with all its out-offices, negro quarters, etc."<sup>43</sup> A quarter of a mile inland this same raiding party discovered a fine cotton gin, a family dwelling with a large barn and eleven other houses on the plantation. "All these were burned to the ground."<sup>44</sup> Near Greenville, they "burned a large and well-finished stable, capable of stalling some fifty horses." Further on inland, their torches found another large plantation along with about thirty small cottages, two large store houses, and three rows of slave houses.<sup>45</sup>

Although not directly related to this particular White River Expedition in May, General Sherman issued an interesting order in March of 1863 to General Steele on the Deer Creek Expedition that sheds light on the incendiary motives of Lieutenant Gillhan. In his instructions, Sherman cautioned General Steele not to molest the planters who remained at home and behaved themselves. However, if planters had abandoned their plantations, it was to be inferred that they were hostile and the Federal Army could then "take their cattle, hogs, corn, or anything..."<sup>46</sup> This appears to be little more than an official sanction of unrestrained pillaging, and, as in the incidents along the White River, for arson.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 641-642.
<sup>44</sup> Ibid.
<sup>45</sup> Ibid.
The Yazoo River area fell victim to this "scorched-earth" policy on three occasions in 1863. The first expedition in May and early June resulted in the burning of two towns—Austin and Mechanicsburg. Motives for destroying Austin apparently stemmed from the firing on the Fairchild by a Confederate battery nearly one-half mile north of the town. The task of the destruction was done in the same mechanical manner as that rendered to Prentiss. Lieutenant Colonel George E. Currie, although a part of the Federal occupation of Austin, was, nonetheless, appalled by the treatment accorded the "peaceful citizens" of Austin. The following description by Lieutenant Colonel Currie is informative, and it is also quite moving in its compassion for the plight of the inhabitants of the town.

I can never recall the scene without feeling a flush of indignation, that I was compelled to witness such vandalism and seemingly to abet by my presence what was utterly beyond my control, and abhorrent to me. As though it happened but yesterday, the scenes stand out before me black and bold, a plot upon a discipline that allowed passion to dominate and revenge itself on helpless, innocent victims.

To our surprise we noticed the General's [Alfred W. Ellet] orderlies going from house to house reading to the inmates an order issued from the brigade headquarters that at the hour of four p.m. every house in the Town would be burned. The people were privileged [sic] to remove their house effects should they see fit, if not, all would be consumed. In vain the women besought the Commander to spare their little homes, telling him of the great suffering he would impose upon


48 Ibid.
their helpless children, the old, the feeble, the indi­gent, pleading their irresponsibility of the war and above all of the congregation of the rebel force at the academy the day before. Pleading, beseeching as only woman can when she is put to the test to save her loved ones from danger. To all appeals he was unyielding and his answer fell like a knout on their heads already torn and bleeding with sorrow and anguish. There was no one to protect and none dared to protest against the cruel measure. Some of the women went to work carrying out their furniture and piling it up in the streets, but the majority of them, feeling that he who would render them homeless would not offer them protection against marauders and it was just as well to see all perish as to save some only to sustain another loss by having it stolen. So they sat in their homes soon to be the funeral pile of their hopes and awaited the application of the torch. . . . As previously arranged the tap of the bell on the boat is the signal to begin the conflagration. From house to house rush those detailed to do the fiendish work and those who in boasted chivalry, had gone in the service for protection of home and country, are now engaged in the valiant struggle of still further subduing a handful of women and children by that most barbarous crime of arson.49

According to the Confederate report of General William H. Jackson on June 7, 1863, Mechanicsburg also suffered extensive damage to personal property. He reported that the "enemy destroyed property of every description; burned sixteen houses in Mechanicsburg and several on the road; also gin- houses. . . ."50 The Federal report only noted the destruction of corn and bacon and the acquisition of great quantities of

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49 Ibid., pp. 82083. This was apparently the work of Ellet's Marine Brigade. General Ellet's report of May 25, 1863, said that every building in Austin was searched, and then the town of Austin was burned. See O. R. (Naval), Ser. I, Vol. XXV, pp. 127-128.

forage—no mention of burning the town. However, one Federal soldier commented in his memoirs that "our troops burnt Mechanicsburg. . . ." The motives behind this property damage remain obscure.

The second visit to the Yazoo area was a two-week expedition which began on July 12, 1863. This was part of a general cleanup of the Mississippi Valley which commenced in Vicksburg and terminated in Yazoo City. But it appears that any serious military objectives were overshadowed by the troops' carnival-like mood and appetite for plundering—unless, of course, plundering were considered a serious objective. One Union officer expressed utter exasperation with the conduct of the troops.

I am pained to witness the pillaging, plundering, and irregular foraging on the part of some of the commands of this expedition. This morning at 9 o'clock we came up with the Ida May, the men from which steamer were on shore shooting cattle, and many of them rushing pell-mell through and around the house on the plantation, catching chickens, turkeys, geese, pigs, &c. The women at the house were greatly frightened, and fearful that they were to be slaughtered. This officer issued an order prohibiting pillaging which he vowed to enforce even if he had "to shoot men both in and out of shoulder-straeps. . . ." The descriptions of the wild

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51 Ibid.
53 Long, The Civil War, p. 384
55 Ibid.
melee in and around Yazoo City indicate that the troops were not intimidated by such threatening orders.

Property pillaged in Yazoo City by one Iowa regiment "consisted of clothing, which was taken from various stores in the city. . . . Fine broadcloth coats were peddled about by the men and sold at prices ranging from ten cents to nothing, and satin vests, cloth pantaloons, and fur hats went at proportionately low rates—the hats being converted into foot-balls." Some of the men demonstrated an imagination for making money at the expense of the citizens. They found

a large silver-mounted family carriage at one of the residences in the city, which with a span of fine spirited horses and silver-mounted harness, they confiscated, and proceeded to establish, with this splendid turnout, what they termed a "Lightning Omnibus Accommodation Line" to run between our transports and the city—charging 25 cents fare.

The area around Yazoo City was also ravaged by the bands of foragers and plunderers. A former Yazoo City lawyer, Robert Bowman, gave a vivid description of the conditions resulting from Union occupation.

For an area of several miles around Yazoo City, foraging or rather ravaging squads roamed over the county, forcibly seizing and carrying away cotton, mules and other property. These marauders invaded the premises of a wealthy old planter named Andrews, over seventy years of age, who lived alone on the river near Yazoo City. They gathered up his mules, horses and wagons and seized all of his cotton, amounting to over two hundred bales, which they had loaded on a boat at his landing. The old man, filled with rage, let loose on the pillagers

a volley of violent oaths. In venting his curses, he opened his mouth so wide that he exposed the gold plate of his false teeth. This being seen by the Federals, they threw him down and took his plate, which they carried away with such other valuables as they desired. They carried away every bale of cotton, every mule and horse they could lay their hands on. Cattle were seized and killed for beef without compensation to the owner. Fear of Confederate troops in the interior or on the border of the county restrained their invasions to a limited space around Yazoo City and along the Yazoo river. Many planters, apprehending the conquest of Vicksburg, had made their preparations for this event, and as soon as news of the surrender came they moved their negroes, stock and some of their household furniture and valuables to the eastern portion of the State and to Alabama and Georgia, leaving the growing crops to waste and ruin. The lower end of the county was harassed by frequent inroads of the invading spoilsmen until that section was despoiled and nothing of value was left to seize and carry away.58

Yazoo City was visited again in September, and this time by a large fleet of gunboats whose occupants brought terror once again to the county. Bowman, in his somewhat hyperbolic style, placed the responsibility for this destruction on a Kansas Brigade under the command of Brigadier General McArthur.

They were the most grasping, ruthless and rapacious spoilers that ever invaded Yazoo county. As ravers, pillagers and plunderers they equaled if they did not surpass the Goths and Vandals. They burned the courthouse, but fortunately all the deed books and other records of the county had been removed to a place of safety. They burned every house unoccupied. They raided law offices and pillaged many valuable law books, which after the war were found in book stores in Chicago and Cincinnati and other Northern cities. They burned a large number of store houses on Main Street in Yazoo City. They ravaged the surrounding country for several miles, killing every cow, mule, horse and hog that came in their reach, and leaving their dead carcasses to rot. For many days and weeks after they retired the atmosphere for miles was laden with a foul and sickening stench arising from the decaying bodies of the animals they had slain and left on the roadsides and in the fields. They robbed nearly every house on their route of its

furniture, which they carried off in wagons taken from
the planters and farmers.

Mr. Thos. Clark, a once prosperous merchant of
Benton, had his residence in that town remarkably well
furnished. They [sic] jayhawkers drove wagons up to his
house and loaded them with the furniture, leaving only
an old broken pitcher. As they were driving away
Mr. Clark seized this pitcher and following them, said
in a loud voice, "here, you d--d thieves, is something
you left. Take it and carry it away with the other things
you have stolen." 59

Perhaps the most feared part of the Union Army for the
civilian was the cavalry. As most of these accounts of pilla­
ging and burning have indicated, the cavalry was the advanced
unit which entered the towns and plantations before the other
regiments. The people of Mississippi spoke quite bitterly
of one particular cavalry leader—Benjamin H. Grierson. On
April 17, 1863, Grierson along with seventeen hundred cavalry
moved south from La Grange, Tennessee, for a daring raid
into Mississippi which lasted until May 3. 60 The purpose of
this raid was to divert attention from Grant's Vicksburg
offensive, but the raid also brought its share of grief to
the civilian population. One Mississippi lady, Cordelia Scales
of Hudsonville, was vehement on the subject of this cavalry,
whom she called "Grierson's Thieves."

I cant [sic] write of these; it makes my blood boil to
think of the outrages they committed. They tore the
ear rings out of the ladies's [sic] ears, pulled their
rings and breast pins off; took them by the hair,
threw them down & knocked them about. . . . One of
them sent me word that they shot ladies as well as men,
& if I did not stop talking to them so & displaying my

59 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
Confederate flag he'd blow my damn brains out. I sent him word by the lady that I did not expect better from Yankees, but he must remember two could play at that game.61

Mrs. Elizabeth Beach, who was visited by Grierson's cavalry during another campaign in July, 1864, exonerated Grierson personally on the charges of stealing that were generally leveled at him and his cavalry. She told how he was even willing to provide her with his body guard to protect her property.62 However, she had no kind words for his soldiers, who, according to her description, had an insatiable appetite for looting. She described them as working all day like ants, "all over the house up stairs and down, in every hole and corner, searching & peeping everywhere."63

[63]The rascal went up in the corner and in stooping to put his hand under the floor, put it against the planks, and they slipped a little, he pulled them off, and says, by george, boys here is the place, they just ripped the planks off and in they went. One says run down and guard the door, dont [sic] let another fellow come up, we'll divide the things amongst us. I had in there, meat, flour sugar, coffee, molasses, lard & salt, All [sic] of Asas [sic] good clothes, Sarahs[sic]mine and the childrens [sic]. We all had new shoes in there that we had not worn, in a pillow case. They pulled them all out and looked at them. I stood over them and as they would pull out the shoes & clothes, I would grab them and tell them that they could not have them, but every time they came to anything of Asa's they would take it. Took his over coat, a pair of new blue jeans pants, three pair of summer pants all his drawers except the ones he had on, one shirt, a new silk handkerchief. So you know he is very near without clothes. They did not take


63 Ibid., p. 45.
any of my clothes, except pocket handkerchiefs. The only thing the looters did leave Mrs. Beach was a jar of lard and some salt.

The inhumane treatment of civilians by these cavalrnymen was even criticized by one of their members, Sergeant Stephen Forbes. He described with disgust the unrestrained looting done by his comrades while passing by the house of a poor widow. They attacked her poultry, butchered her hogs, and cleaned out her smokehouse and granary as the "poor lone woman wrung her hands and cried in an agony of despair and terror, and prayed to God to help her, while her children sobbed and screamed in a perfect frenzy of fear." 

The Columbus, Mississippi, Republic reported a raid on Starkville by Grierson's cavalry:

At Starkville, they robbed the inhabitants of horses, mules, negroes, jewelry and money; went into the stores and threw their contents (principally tobacco) into the street or gave it to the negroes; caught the mailbox and took the mail, robbed the postoffice, but handed back a letter from a soldier to his wife, containing $50.00, and ordered the postmaster to give it to her. Doctor Montgomery was taken prisoner and kept in camp all night, six miles from town, and allowed to return home next morning, after relieving him of his watch and other valuables. Hale & Murdock's hat wagon, loaded with wool hats, passing through at the time was captured. They gave the hats to the negroes and took the mules.

64 Ibid.
65 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
66 Brown, Grierson's Raid, p. 42.
Starkville can boast of better head covering for its negroes than any other town in the State.67

Grierson's cavalrmen did enhance their reputation somewhat when they assisted the citizens of Brookhaven and Hazlehurst in fighting a fire. The fires on both occasions resulted from explosions of military stores and rail equipment set by the cavalry. When the wind shifted the flames threatened to engulf nearby dwellings. Grierson's men willingly climbed to rooftops and kept them wet until there was no danger of the fire spreading.68 Grierson's biographer felt that the cavalry had found "genuine Union sentiment in Brookhaven," and that this perhaps accounted for their willingness to help the people of this town.69 Perhaps the same reason was applicable to the good behavior in Hazlehurst, or one might assume that perhaps Grierson's cavalry specialized in looting and not in arson.

As Colonel Grierson staged his raids in northern and central Mississippi, General Grant doggedly sought to conquer the Confederate stronghold on the Mississippi--Vicksburg. By mid-May, Grant's forces had driven General Joseph E. Johnston out of Jackson, and by mid-afternoon on May 14,

68 Brown, Grierson's Raid. The account of Hazlehurst fire is on p. 155, and the account of the Brookhaven fire is on pp. 175-176.
69 Ibid., p. 175.
the Federal Army occupied the capital city. Johnston's army at Jackson was the final major obstacle between Grant and Vicksburg, so while Grant advanced his troops toward Vicksburg, General Sherman remained in Jackson with two divisions to destroy the Confederate installations. From all accounts of this occupation, it appears that Jackson suffered greater property damage than any other Mississippi city—and perhaps, even greater than any other Southern city during the war. A large portion of the destruction was incurred during the May 14 to May 16 Federal occupation, but the people of Jackson suffered through three other occupations: July 17-23, 1863; February 5-7, 1864; and July 5-6, 1864. Each brought its share of wanton destruction until this one-time thriving city was reduced to a war-torn "chimneyville" with only ten buildings standing on State Street in the Spring of 1864.

One Union soldier of an Ohio regiment apparently expressed the mood of many of the occupying troops:

The chimneys of Jackson were the monuments left to mark the once wealthy city. Our boys were seven or eight days under shot and shell and when the opportunity came to retaliate, they used the torch effectively.

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70 Long, The Civil War, p. 353.
71 Ibid.
73 Bettersworth, Mississippi In the Confederacy, p. 205.
74 John K. Duke, History of the Fifty-third Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry During the War of the Rebellion, 1861 to 1865 (Portsmouth, Ohio, 1900), p. 112.
As these troops entered Jackson, a reporter wrote that their arrival "presented more the appearance of a raid... than a march of an army in force to take possession and occupy."75 Thousands of dollars worth of property was pillaged by Federal soldiers, negroes, and poor whites from private homes, shops, and stores. According to one witness, the "streets were filled with people, white and black, who were carrying away all the stolen goods they could stagger under, without the slightest attempt at concealment, and without let or hindrance from citizens or soldiers."76

A Jackson resident described the indiscriminate looting by the troops:

The Yankees broke into my room, broke open the boxes, stole my flute, 1 pr. fine blankets, all my white bed clothes, 1 case drafting instruments—all my clothes. . . 1 pr. boots, 1 fine brush and comb, 1 fine mosquito net . . . 1 pr. fine vases, and many other articles. . . left me nothing but books in bad condition, papers and furniture.77

A British officer, Lieutenant Colonel James A. L. Fremantle, arrived in Jackson just after the Federal occupation and recorded in his diary that Grant's "troops had wantonly pillaged nearly all the private houses."

They had gutted all the stores, and destroyed what they could not carry away. . . . I saw the ruins of the Roman Catholic church, the priest's house, and the principal

75 McCain, The Story of Jackson, p. 198.
76 Cadwallader, Three Years, p. 75.
77 McCain, The Story, p. 198.
hotel, which were still smoking, together with many other buildings which could in no way be identified with the Confederate government. The whole town was a miserable wreck, and presented a deplorable aspect.78

The destruction was officially begun when Grant and Sherman ordered the torch to be applied to the Pearl River Mills early in the afternoon of May 14. Following this official action, the torch was applied to the "penitentiary, the Southern Agricultural Implement Factory, the Jackson Foundry and Machine Shop, the depot buildings the railroad rolling stock, the hat factory, the cotton warehouses, ... " and the buildings mentioned by Lieutenant Colonel Fremantle.79

The second occupation of Jackson came after the fall of Vicksburg, when Sherman moved his troops against Joseph E. Johnston at Jackson. Johnston's Confederate forces were under siege for seven days until July 17, at which time Johnston withdrew to the east side of the Pearl River.80 The Federal

78 Walter Lord, ed., The Fremantle Diary: Being the Journal of Lieutenant Colonel James Arthur Lyon Fremantle, Coldstream Guards, on His Three Months in the Southern States (Boston, 1954), pp. 87-88. In his memoirs, General Sherman explained why the hotel was burned. It seems that some of his troops had been captured at Shiloh and had been permitted to have supper at this particular hotel while passing through Jackson as prisoners. They had nothing but greenbacks with which to pay for their meal, and these were refused by the proprietor with insults to the prisoners. Sherman claimed that these same men had gotten revenge by burning the hotel and that he personally had no intention of burning it. See Memoirs of General William T. Sherman (New York, 1904), II, p. 350. Sherman also said that the burning of the Catholic Church was an accident, and he was convinced that the acts of pillage committed by the Federal troops were the effects of "some bad rum found concealed in the stores of the town." See O. R. (Armies), Ser. I, Vol XXIV, Pt. 2, p. 754.


80 Ibid., p. 201.
Army followed Johnston to Brandon, Mississippi, and, after burning the town, they returned to Jackson.\textsuperscript{81} Once again, the people of Jackson felt the brutal hand of the invading army.

A soldier of the Illinois 47th Regiment recalled the scene in Jackson with disgust.

Again Sherman's troops destroyed the railroads and everything that might prove of value to the Confederate forces. The demon of destruction having been loosed, the soldiery passed beyond control. Jackson became the prey of vandals, private residences were looted and such scenes enacted as disgraced the heroes of that matchless campaign that was sealed with the fall of Vicksburg.\textsuperscript{82}

A \textit{New York World} reporter wrote:

The first few hours were devoted by our soldiers to ransacking the town and appropriating whatever of value or otherwise pleased their fancy, or to the destruction of such articles as they were unable to appropriate or remove. Pianos and articles were torn to pieces and trampled in the dust, pictures thrust through with bayonets, windows broken and torn from their hinges. Finally after every other excess had been committed in the destruction of property, the torch was applied. The entire business portion of the city is in ruins except a few old frame buildings. One residence after another has been burned until none of the really fine ones remain, save those occupied by some of our general officers. Such complete ruin and devastation never followed the footsteps of an army before.\textsuperscript{83}

Sherman's report to Grant on July 21, 1863, acknowledged the extensive damage: "We have desolated this land for 30


\textsuperscript{83} McCain, \textit{The Story}, p. 201.
miles round about." He estimated in his report that nearly eight hundred women and children would perish unless they received relief. In order to alleviate this situation, Sherman made arrangements with the mayor of Jackson and a citizen's committee to give them two hundred barrels of flour and one hundred barrels of salt pork. Some of these influential citizens also indicated to Sherman that the scourge of war had produced a defeatist psychology. They had petitioned "Sherman to organize Mississippi under the lawful authority of the United States." Nothing concrete was realized from this petition, but it was apparent that the "scorched-earth" policy of Generals Sherman and Grant had seriously affected the morale of the civilian population.

While in the vicinity of Jackson, the wrath of the Union Army was also visited on the South's highest official. For about three days "foraging" parties gleefully ransacked Jefferson Davis' plantation.

Boxes were torn open and emptied of their contents; books and papers were strewn over the yard and scattered through the woods for miles; fine carpets were cut to pieces and carried off for saddle blankets and saddle covers & fine window curtains were taken for tent blankets; and in fact every thing useful or ornamental was plundered and destroyed with a ruthlessness worthy of Attila himself.

85 Ibid.
87 Bettersworth, Mississippi In the Confederacy, p. 211.
In assessing the value of the stolen goods, one Federal soldier said that "the most valuable of all was Jeff Davis' private correspondence." This was positive evidence in this soldier's mind of the "deep duplicity practiced by the leading rebels long before the final outbreak." 

Jefferson Davis' brother, Joseph, was also the victim of a plundering expedition. This incident, according to the account of Elizabeth Avery Meriwether, had more serious consequences than the loss of property.

Yankee Cavalry had descended one day and learning that he was the Confederate President's brother, carried his sick wife out of the house, laid her on the grass under a tree, then set fire to the house and burned it to the ground. Next they burned his barns, cotton gins and fences, then those brave Yankee cavalrymen rode away. Mrs. Davis, old and ill, died that night in one of the negro cabins--killed by the excitement and rough handling to which she had been subjected.

Another story of barbarism that apparently occurred during one of these raiding parties from Jackson in July, 1863, was vividly described by a Confederate soldier in a letter to his wife. Union soldiers had entered a house near Vicksburg that contained two beautiful young ladies.

... they took two negro women in the parlor before their young mistresses and sent in soldier after soldier till they had actually killed the negro women by violation.

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88 Lucius W. Barber, Army Memoirs of Lucius W. Barber, Company "D" 15th Illinois Volunteer Infantry (Chicago, 1894), p. 120.
89 Ibid.
90 Silver, Mississippi In the Confederacy, pp. 181-182.
The Federal occupations of Jackson in February and July of 1864 brought a limited amount of burning and looting, but, as one might imagine, the first two raids in 1863 had left very little of any significant value for the soldier to steal or despoil. As a preventive measure, Mayor D. N. Barrows even pleaded with the Union Commander in July to provide Jackson with a guard before the troops entered the city.\(^9^2\) The Mayor's request was met with full compliance by the Union command, and the assault on property was kept to a minimum.\(^9^3\)

The only other major Mississippi city in 1864 to receive comparable damage to that of Jackson was Meridian. The Meridian campaign began on February 3, 1864,\(^9^4\) under the command of General Sherman with the purpose of destroying "the enemy's railroads at and about Meridian, and to do the enemy as much damage as possible in the month of February..."\(^9^5\) Sherman's military objectives were realized, and the non-combatant inhabitants of Meridian and the surrounding countryside discovered the meaning of "total war."

The New York Tribune summarized the devastation in Meridian:


\(^9^4\) Long, The Civil War, p. 460.

Nearly every building in Meridian was destroyed save those which were occupied, and the smoking ruins, with their blackened walls and chimneys standing as giant sentinels over the sorrowful scene, sent a thrill of pity to the hearts of those whose stern war and military necessity compelled to apply the torch.

Meridian's civilian population lived in constant terror during the military occupation. A description by a Meridian resident of the conduct of military troops showed the same general lack of respect by the military for the rights of civilians that were recorded by other Mississippians during the Federal occupation. She referred to the troops as a "mob" that entered houses in search of anything worthy of carrying off and with a propensity for destruction.

Oh! such destruction! I do not believe that you or any one would know the place. There is not a fence in Meridian. I have not one rail left. Some of the ladies about town have but one bed left, and but one or two quilts. Mrs. McElroy (her son is colonel in the rebel army) has not one thing left, except what she and her daughter ran out of the house with on their backs—just one dress. The soldiers told me, when I asked them the reason she was done so, that Mrs. McElroy and daughter had insulted an officer and a private the day her house was burned down. . . . I do not think that you have any idea how bad the Yankees are. I thought I knew, but I did not know the half. They took old Mrs. ___'s teeth, all her spoons and knives, and destroyed all provisions and corn which they could not use.97

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97 Ibid., "Description By a Southern Woman," pp. 486-487. One recorded incident of arson was the result of malice. A Federal soldier taken prisoner at Vicksburg in 1863 had stopped in Meridian with his guards for food. The treatment accorded this prisoner at this stopover was extremely hostile. "The woman of the house, after heaping all manner of insults upon the prisoner, finally spit in his face." Unfortunately for this woman, the soldier had escaped and was part of the 1864 campaign against Meridian. Consequently, "he proceeded to the
This particular resident was given protection by General Leggett and his staff, who occupied her house while in Meridian. She was warned, however, that if she gave shelter to the above-mentioned Mrs. McElroy, her house would be burned within an hour.98

The 1882 Business Directory of Meridian accused Sherman's troops of burning every house in town "except the Jones House (used as a hotel), Mr. Ball's log residence, the Gary House and probably one or two other residences."99 When asked if Sherman's troops did much damage, the Mayor of Meridian replied: "Why he took it with him! . . . a strong east wind was blowing and smoke and ashes--almost all that remained of the ruined town--were wafted in the direction of the march of the army toward Vicksburg."100

Expeditions were sent from Meridian to destroy anything that was useful to the rebellion. Among the places that were devastated by these expeditions were: Enterprise,

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100 Ibid., p. 96. Sherman was in agreement with this assessment of the work of his troops. In a report dated March 7, 1864, Sherman described the destruction in Meridian. "For five days 10,000 men worked hard and with a will in that work of destruction, with axes, crowbars, sledges, clawbars, and with fire,
Marion, Quitman, Hillsboro, Canton, Lake Station, Decatur, Bolton, and Lauderdale Springs. As one Federal soldier described the post-Meridian march:

Sherman's army left fire and famine in its track. The country was one lurid blaze of fire; burning cotton gins and deserted dwellings were seen on every hand. I regret to say it, but oft-times habitations were burned down over the heads of occupants, but not by orders. . . . I have seen the cabin of the poor entered and the last mouthful taken from almost starving children.

In terms of property damage, Sherman's Meridian campaign was as devastating as his several occupations of Jackson--only more widespread. It was estimated by S. D. Lee, a Confederate officer in Mississippi, that nearly "10,000 bales of cotton and 2,000,000 bushels of corn were burned." The total property damage was assessed by Lee at fifty million dollars, with an estimated three-quarters of this damage to

and I have no hesitation in pronouncing the work as well done. Meridian, with its depots, storehouses, arsenals, hospitals, offices, hotels, and cantonments no longer exists." See O. R. (Armies), Ser. I, Vol. XXXII, Pt. 1, p. 176.

101 Moore, ed., "New York Tribune Accounts," Rebellion Record, VIII, p. 482. A report on March 8, 1864 by Captain L. M. Rose of the 17th Army Corps sarcastically described the cavalry expedition to Lake Station: "While the cavalry were fighting the rebels the signal corps went through the town like a dose of salts, and just as we were leaving I noticed a man hunting around to get someone to make an affidavit that there had been a town there. Property destroyed valued at $1,000,000." See O. R., Ser. I, Vol. XXXII, Pt. 1, p. 222.

102 Barber, Army Memoirs; p. 138.

private property.\textsuperscript{104} The Meridian expedition marked the end of military campaigns in Mississippi by General Sherman. On May 7, 1864, he was ordered by Grant to advance his army against Johnston in Georgia.\textsuperscript{105} This did not mean the termination of Union occupation in Mississippi, but it did mean the removal of Mississippi's major nemesis in the Union command along with the removal of the greater portion of Union troops from the state.

Northern Mississippi was the area in which most military operations were concentrated during the remainder of 1864. The strategic significance of these operations was to prevent Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry from cutting off Sherman's communications and supplies in Tennessee.\textsuperscript{106} Aside from their military importance, these expeditions brought more destruction and plundering to the inhabitants who had suffered so severely from occupation in 1862 and 1863. The Confederate cavalry leader, General James R. Chalmers, provided a general description of the Union march through the northern counties and the destruction that lay in its wake.

I cannot close this report without mentioning the robbing and desolation which attended the march of the invading army. Not only were non-combatant citizens maltreated, their houses rifled of clothing, money and other valuables, besides the theft of every pound of bacon and every ounce of meal, but the same course of rapine and

\textsuperscript{104} Ibid.  

\textsuperscript{105} Long, \textit{The Civil War}, p. 495,  

\textsuperscript{106} Robert Selph Henry, "First With the Most," \textit{Forrest} (Indianapolis, 1944), Chapters 18-23 describe operations in northern Mississippi during these months.
cruelty was shown towards unprotected widows and orphans, who were stripped of their all, and in many cases turned out of doors, with nothing left save the wearing apparel on their persons. Cows and calves were killed from mere wantonness and left in private yards and on public thoroughfares.107

Many of the towns in these counties were almost totally destroyed. Okolona, which had been under Union occupation in December, 1862, was raided again in July, 1864. This attack was primarily aimed at the hospital and depot that contained 100,000 bushels of cotn. In addition to the burning of these buildings, the raiding troops destroyed several miles of prairie-belt, "reaching from Okolona to West Point." Okolona received its third attack from the Federal troops during the first week of January, 1865, and this time incendiary acts destroyed every store in the town.108 Raiding parties which moved along the roads leading out of Okolona terrorized the local inhabitants. One group "rode through the newly built house of a farmer by the name of Cook (almost frightening his young daughter to death) and then burned it."109 Silverware, ladies' dresses, and all the stock were carried off the plantations by the troops.110

Harrisburg was burned by General A. J. Smith's troops


109 Capleman, "Local Incidents of the War Between the States," P. M. H. S., IV, p. 84.

110 Ibid.
in July as the Union forces were attempting to capture Forrest.111 Oxford fell victim to the Federal torch in August,112 and Grenada was reported burned by Grierson's cavalrmen in January, 1865.113 Depredations committed by Negro regiments were reported in September and October of 1864 in Woodville, Rodney, and Fayette. These incidents occurred during expeditions from Natchez.114

Union troops remained in Mississippi until the end of the war, and they no doubt continued to take advantage of the defenseless civilian population as they had done since their occupation in 1862. However, after nearly three years of military oppression, there was little, if anything, that could add to the suffering of these civilians. As Mr. Nugent so ably stated in 1864, Mississippi was a "dreary spectacle indeed."

111 Henry, Forrest, p. 322.
112 Refer to the note on p. 51 of this chapter on Oxford burning.
CONCLUSION

As evidenced by these accounts of the depredations committed against the civilian population in Mississippi, the efforts of Halleck, Lieber, and others to civilize warfare did not produce positive results. Certainly their labors, and all those others from the time of Grotius in the seventeenth century, were noble attempts to make war more humane. The conduct of the soldiers during the Civil War, however, reemphasized once again the dehumanizing effect that war had on the human being.

Primarily responsible for the behavior of his troops was the officer. Notwithstanding the numerous orders that clearly prohibited pillaging, burning, and general harassment of the civilian, it is all too clear that the field commanders in Mississippi were indifferent to the very orders they issued. It is difficult to see how Sherman and Grant could have been oblivious to the atrocities committed by their troops in Holly Springs, Oxford, College Hill, Jackson, and Meridian, and they apparently made no serious efforts to control their troops. There are two possible conclusions to be drawn about the indifference of the officers to the plight of the civilians. First, they had no intention of controlling the troops against the civilian, because the collapse of morale by the civilian
The indifference to the rules by the commanders could also be attributed to their utter inability to control their troops. The orders prohibiting the mistreatment of civilians suggest a sense of exasperation by the commanders. Each order was couched in stricter language and promised harsher punishment for violations. According to the writings of the soldiers, these threats were no deterrent to their appetite for pillaging. This disregard for orders and the lack of respect for the rights of civilians could be attributed to several factors: for the most part, the Union volunteers were ill-trained and ill-disciplined; their pay was low, and their rations were sometimes insufficient; and, of course, the unguarded homes and stores were a great temptation to the invading soldier—after all, this was war, and these were the enemies! It is apparent in Mississippi, at least, that for the soldier there was no distinction between the combatant and the non-combatant.

Professor Lieber had appealed to the moral side of man in his Order 100, but it is apparent that the appeal fell on deaf ears. In light of the devastation and suffering in Mississippi, very few Union officers and soldiers felt any moral responsibility for the protection and well-being of the defenseless civilian. The officers were negligent in their
disciplining of the troops, but, moreover, they were more concerned with military victory at any cost than they were concerned with the rights of the civilians. The soldier seemed more inclined to satisfy his lust for the food and the personal property of the enemy inhabitants than to feel compassion for their suffering. Whether one places responsibility for these atrocities on the shoulders of the belligerent nations' leaders, the military commanders, the common soldiers, or even on the citizens for their initial support of the war, it is clear that one significant result of the Civil War was the dehumanization of the soldier.
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