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The Rebel Press: Six Selected Confederate Newspapers Report Civil War Battles

Henry Gabler

College of William & Mary - Arts & Sciences

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THE REBEL PRESS: SIX SELECTED CONFEDERATE
NEWSPAPERS REPORT CIVIL WAR BATTLES

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
Henry Gabler
1971
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Author

Approved

Ludwell H. Johnson

Richard B. Sherman

John E. Selby
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine how six Confederate newspapers reported war news during the Civil War. Six important battles, three eastern battles and three western battles, were selected. These were followed in the six newspapers with particular regard to the accuracy of coverage and the speed of reporting.

It is shown that the reporting of war news, except for the Battle of Fredericksburg, was inaccurate and that the newspapers distorted the news, particularly with regard to defeats. Three of the battles show two of the hindrances to Confederate newspaper reporting of war news: Union raids on telegraph and railroad lines and Confederate censorship.

The author believes that the available evidence does not enable one to determine whether the newspaper coverage helped or hurt Confederate morale. It does seem that Confederate censorship was basically informal rather than formal. In this way it was milder than Union censorship. On the whole, the poor quality of news in Confederate papers was caused by the difficulties of life in the Confederacy rather than by censorship.
THE REBEL PRESS: SIX SELECTED CONFEDERATE
NEWSPAPERS REPORT CIVIL WAR BATTLES
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: THE CONFEDERATE PRESS

In an August 1914 Punch cartoon, a newsboy told a potential customer, "Better 'ave one and read about it now, Sir; it might be conteradicted [sic] in the morning." That message remains valid. How many times have newspaper articles appeared heralding a military victory or even the end of the war in Vietnam? Nineteenth-century papers were often even more misleading.

The object of this study is to provide a general background to the Confederate press and to examine how it reported six Civil War battles, three eastern and three western: Fredericksburg; Gettysburg; Wilderness-Cold Harbor; Shiloh; Vicksburg (May-July 1863); and Chickamauga. This report is concerned mainly with the questions of the speed and accuracy of reporting, editorial comments, and the rumors which appeared in the press. Several of the battles illustrate some of the obstacles to war reporting in the Confederacy.

The author has used six Confederate newspapers in this study: Richmond Daily Whig; Richmond Dispatch; Lynchburg Daily Virginian; Wilmington Daily Journal; Charleston Daily Courier; Macon Daily Telegraph. These were daily papers located in Atlantic Coast states. During the 1850s the leading
form of newspaper in the South was the weekly and not the daily. In 1860 only 11 per cent of all papers in the United States were dailies. Of 111 Civil War newspapers and periodicals in Georgia, only 22 were dailies. Weekly journals did not omit as much late news as one might think, because many of them set pages one and four early in the week and pages two and three shortly before press time so as to be able to include late news items.

The Confederate papers did not resemble the modern American newspaper. Generally, they were limited in size to four pages with the first page devoted exclusively to advertisements. News articles usually did not have bylines. There were no maps or illustrations. Many Confederate journals devoted space to digests of news from Northern papers but warned their readers to be wary of those accounts.

There is little information about Confederate papers and reporters. Joseph J. Mathews writes that the Southern reporter's "name does not appear in the general histories of American journalism, even when considerable space is devoted to the news coverage of the Civil War, and he seems to be almost as conspicuous by his absence in learned articles." Louis M. Starr states that "save in the early months of the war, the Bohemian Brigade of the North had no counterpart in the Confederacy." The few correspondents used pseudonyms, symbols, or initials to sign their dispatches, often employing a different pseudonym for each paper they wrote for. Research has been further hampered
because the small group of Confederate reporters failed to leave records of their activities. 9

One should not attempt to compare Confederate newspapers to today's papers, and one should be careful about comparing them to contemporary Northern journals. T.C. DeLeon claimed that ante-bellum Southern papers were less influential than those of other sections. 10 The following table gives an idea of the number of papers and periodicals in the four states represented by the six papers and in New York and Massachusetts. The figures for 1860 are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>all papers and periodicals</th>
<th>circulation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>301,622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>79,374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>180,972</td>
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<tr>
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<td>542</td>
<td>6,034,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>1,368,980</td>
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With regard to the number of daily papers and their circulation, the figures for 1860 are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>circulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>44,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
<td>1,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>18,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>487,340</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>169,600</td>
</tr>
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</table>

These figures show that Northern papers were able to
influence many more people than Southern papers. Furthermore, the number of Confederate papers decreased during the war. For example, by the end of 1862 only 14 per cent of all pre-war Virginia papers were still being published.¹²

Richmond's five dailies, the Dispatch, Whig, Examiner, Enquirer, and Sentinel, made it the newspaper center of the South.¹³ These five journals served a city of 37,900 people. Even though Richmond's population increased during the war, the Dispatch, the largest daily, never claimed a circulation of more than eighteen thousand,¹⁴ and only the Enquirer had a significant circulation outside Richmond in the years before the war.¹⁵

North Carolina had only eight dailies in 1860, although the number of papers and periodicals increased from fifty-one in 1850 to seventy-four in 1860. This small number can perhaps be explained by G.G. Johnson's comment that "North Carolinians in general were not reading people." This trait limited the circulation of the papers which survived.¹⁶

During the Civil War, a Georgia editor remarked that "if ever there was 'a hard road to travel' it is publishing a newspaper in war times."¹⁷ The editor was hurt by the shortage of paper in the Confederacy.¹⁸ In 1860 only 5 per cent of all the paper mills in the United States were located in the states of the future Confederacy and they provided Southern papers with only 50 per cent of their needs in 1860.¹⁹ The destruction of Confederate paper mills aggravated the situation. For example, the destruction by
fire of one of the largest paper mills in the Confederacy, which was located in South Carolina near the Georgia line, caused trouble for Georgia papers. Many newspapers in Richmond, Mobile, Memphis, Vicksburg, and New Orleans had to reduce their size to half a sheet as early as June 1862. In September 1861 the Charleston Daily Courier reduced its page size from thirty by forty-four inches to eighteen by twenty-six, and the number of columns from eight to seven, to six, and finally to five. In April 1863 the number of pages was reduced from four to two. All the newspapers used in this study had to reduce the size and the number of pages as the war went on.

As the war continued, advertising revenues fell off and subscribers often neglected to pay for their subscriptions. The reduction in size of the Charleston Daily Courier from six to five columns in April 1862 was caused more by increasing costs and decreasing advertising revenues than by the lack of paper. Sometimes editors had to cut the number of advertisements in order to include the increased amount of war news.

Before the war, Southern type and presses came from the North. When the war began, publishers could no longer obtain the chemicals, machines, and type needed to maintain normal operation. When machinery wore out it had to be replaced as well as was possible. From the beginning of the war only the worst ink was available. According to F.L. Mott, "good printing ink was almost unobtainable." By
1864 the Lynchburg *Daily Virginian* was paying four dollars for a pound of printer's ink which had cost it fourteen cents in 1860. In addition, poor transportation facilities hampered the distribution of Confederate papers. These problems, combined with runaway inflation, raised the cost of production; consequently, the price of newspaper subscriptions climbed during the war.

There were also local hazards of publication. Newspapers in an area invaded and occupied by Union forces faced obvious restrictions and in effect were no longer Confederate papers. The Memphis *Appeal* temporarily avoided this fate by moving with the Confederate forces when Memphis fell in 1862. It finally came to Atlanta where it published for one year and was known as the "Moving Appeal." The Charleston *Daily Courier* did not appear from November 11-30, 1863, when its building was shelled by the Union fleet. It renewed publication at a new site, presumably more distant from the Union guns.

Confederate newspapers also suffered from the effects of war on their staffs. Virginia was the first state to exempt "one editor and one assistant editor of each daily newspaper" and employees designated by the editor or publisher from military duty. The Confederate Congress eventually excused editors and a certain number of employees from military service.

On September 24, 1862 the House of Representatives received a bill from the Senate entitled "an act to exempt
certain persons from military duty...." Included were "all foremen, pressmen, and journeymen printers employed in printing newspapers having at least five hundred bona fide subscribers...." Editors were not included and on September 27 a wording change to encompass "all necessary editors" was defeated. But a compromise was reached, and the final wording of the law spared "one editor for each newspaper now being published, and such employees as the editor or proprietor may certify upon oath to be indispensable for conducting the publication," from military service.

The congressional debate on exemption continued in 1863. In January a bill was proposed in the House of Representatives to give the president a blank check on exemptions. Congressman Collier of Virginia objected because he felt that Congress and not military commanders should determine whether "the press shall not be interfered with." Collier was attacked by Representative Conrad of Louisiana who opposed excluding editors from the army. "He questioned if newspapers were not doing us more harm than good." Shortly thereafter, the Senate Military Committee reported a bill which contained exemptions for editors and employees. The final Senate bill excused one editor and such employees who were needed for publication upon oath of the editor or publisher. The House bill did not include editors and so the measures were sent to a Conference Committee. On April 16 the Senate rejected the Conference Committee bill and the law of September 1862 remained in
force.

The controversy sprang up again early in 1864. On February 17 a new law went into effect which included "one editor for each newspaper ... and such employees as said editor may certify on oath to be indispensable to the publication thereof." Three months later, Congress passed a joint resolution to incorporate magazines and periodicals under the newspaper designation with regard to exemption. President Davis vetoed this addition because "at a moment when our lives, our liberty, and our independence are threatened by the utmost power of our enemies ... I cannot but deem it impolitic to add to the list of exemptions without the most urgent necessity." It should be noted that the law of February 17 remained in force. By November 1864 the military situation had become so perilous that Davis recommended abolishing immunity from service for editors and employees. A resolution opposing this plan was introduced in the House. It was debated and then sent to the House Military Committee. The committee reported to the House which then supported President Davis by passing a bill which empowered the president and the secretary of war to excuse citizens from the army. The measure received final congressional approval on March 7, 1865, a month before the war ended. In spite of the exemption laws, many patriotic newspaper employees joined the armed forces. By so doing their skills were lost to their newspapers.

One important obstacle to the publication of news in
Confederate papers was the lack of professional war correspondents. Some reporters worked sporadically, but for the most part editors who went to the fronts provided most of the news coverage. This was a hit or miss system; consequently, there were no civilian reporters present at several battles.

The lack of reporters was also aggravated by military restrictions. In December 1861 General Joseph E. Johnston ordered that "professional correspondents of newspapers will be absolutely excluded from our camps," and in May 1862 General Braxton Bragg ousted journalists from his quarters. This policy was sometimes followed by other commanders, including P.G.T. Beauregard and "Stonewall" Jackson. Obviously, this had an adverse effect upon the quality and quantity of news.

President Davis did little to enlighten reporters about the war's progress. He rarely spoke to the reporters and editors of the Richmond papers. Even informal conversations with newspaper people could have provided the public with an insight into military news.

The Civil War also marked the first widespread use of the telegraph as a means of transmitting war news. When the war began, most of the lines in the South were operated by the American Telegraph Company and by the Southwestern Telegraph Company. In May 1861 the American Telegraph lines in the Confederacy became the Southern Telegraph Company, and in the fall of 1861 it obtained a Virginia charter as
the Confederated Telegraph Company. Its service was hampered by poor equipment and by a lack of trained personnel. Telegraph offices often shut too early in the evening to transmit late news. Press dispatches were incorrectly routed. According to J.C. Andrews, operators even "took liberties with the facts" of news dispatches. To cite one example of poor service, the Lynchburg Daily Virginian complained that certain telegrams reached Lynchburg in the morning while they had reached Richmond the previous evening, thus enabling the Richmond papers to carry the news a day before the Lynchburg press. This imperfect service continued until February 1865 when a law authorized the secretary of war to take control of the telegraph lines.

Another vital issue of wartime reporting was the question of controlling the news. Historians generally believe that Confederate papers exercised restraint in covering the news. James G. Randall feels that this restraint was not "ideal" but that it was "at least generally satisfactory." This internal discipline was aided by the fact that much Confederate news was obtained from Union papers, and by the lack of good Confederate correspondents. Clement Eaton holds that "in general, the Southern papers cooperated with the government in concealing vital military news...." Yet it should be pointed out that Generals Robert E. Lee, Joseph E. Johnston, Earl Van Dorn, and P.G.T. Beauregard complained frequently about the undesirable printing of military news. On the whole, however, when compared to
the Union press, the Confederate journals showed a much greater degree of self-restraint.  

The government encouraged papers to refrain from mentioning troop movements. Historians are undecided as to how effective Confederate censorship was. In January 1862 Congress passed a law making it a crime to publish news of "the numbers, disposition, movements, or destination" of Confederate troops. In August the House of Representatives received a resolution to provide the press with its military news through War Department press dispatches. This measure would have provided papers with information about battles, but it would have also tied them to the official version of the news. The resolution was tabled. In September the Senate Judiciary Committee prepared a bill which would have fixed penalties for "the abuse of such freedom [of speech and of the press] when exercised to disturb the public peace...." This so-called sedition bill was not passed. Finally, in May 1864 the Senate instructed its Judiciary Committee to investigate the reporting of military news with regard to the publishing of troop movements and strength. Though these three restrictive acts did not produce legislation, they show the views of some legislators towards freedom of the press.

In addition to censorship, wartime papers felt the threat of suppression. Confederate Secretary of War George W. Randolph stated that it was "the ardent wish of the Department that this revolution may be successfully closed
without the suppressing of one single newspaper in the Con-
 federate States, and that our experience may be able to
 challenge comparison with our enemy." His wish was ful-
 filled. This was in marked contrast to the Union where
 more than twenty papers were banned at one time or anoth-
er.

One can conclude that Confederate censorship and sup-
 pression were not severe. Contemporaries may have been jus-
tified in proclaiming the freedom of the Confederate
 press. This claim has a weak point. If Confederate re-
 porters were often barred from military camps, then the
 act of censorship was occurring at that stage of reporting
 just as effectively as if dispatches and printed pages had
 been repressed.

In an effort to overcome some of their difficulties,
 Confederate journals banded together in a self-help organ-
 ization. This idea originated with the Associated Press of
 New York, which was founded in 1848-1849 and reorganized in
 1851. It stationed reporters in various cities in the
 United States and Britain. When the Civil War started,
 the Confederate papers were cut off from this service. Un-
successful attempts were made by individual papers, such
 as the Richmond Examiner, to have correspondents at all im-
 portant locations.

In order to solve the problem of receiving news from
 the fronts, the editors of six leading newspapers met in
 Atlanta in early 1862 and formed the Confederate Associated
Press. Its goal was to sign contracts for newspaper use of the telegraph.\textsuperscript{75} The editors hoped that as a united body they would be able to improve their working conditions with regard to such matters as postal restrictions on the mailing of newspapers.\textsuperscript{76} The Richmond press did not join the Confederate Associated Press but instead formed its own group, the Mutual Benefit Press Association, which was designed to provide Richmond news and all telegraphic news received in Richmond to papers in other cities. E.M. Coulter writes that this organization "seems never to have amounted to much."\textsuperscript{77}

A second meeting of Confederate editors was held in March 1862 at Atlanta and a third meeting in February 1863 in Augusta. At the third meeting, which was organized by the editor of the Macon \textit{Daily Telegraph}, Joseph Clisby, the Confederate Associated Press was renamed the Press Association of the Confederate States of America. Officers and a board of directors were elected and J.S. Thrasher was appointed superintendent. This organization served forty-three papers including all the dailies used in this study.\textsuperscript{78}

The Press Association used the telegraph and established correspondents at certain army headquarters.\textsuperscript{79} Its dispatches were copyrighted after the Southwestern Telegraph Company began selling the telegrams to whoever would pay for them.\textsuperscript{80} Thrasher encouraged papers to send their reports to other journals.\textsuperscript{81} His reporters were warned against
sending anything but truthful accounts. They were urged to supply information about Union troop movements but to remain silent about Confederate maneuvers and plans. This system aided the coverage of war news in the Confederate papers. It had one disadvantage in that it funneled all news through one organization thus making it easier for the news to be distorted, controlled, or censored.

One last point which should be mentioned is the attitude of papers towards President Davis. Criticism of Davis began late in the winter of 1861-1862. His leading critics were the Charleston Mercury and the Richmond Examiner. The Richmond Daily Whig changed from neutral to anti-Davis as the war went on. Other anti-Davis papers were the Lynchburg Daily Virginian, Macon Daily Telegraph, Memphis Appeal, Atlanta Southern Confederacy, and Savannah Republican. The Richmond Dispatch and the Richmond Sentinel occupied a middle position between the pro-Davis and anti-Davis papers. He was defended by the Richmond Enquirer and the Charleston Daily Courier. These attitudes naturally influenced the news coverage because the news articles often merged with the editorials.

These are the factors which influenced the way in which Confederate newspapers covered war news. The next step is to examine how Confederate papers reported several battles.
CHAPTER II
THE NEWSPAPERS

1. RICHMOND DAILY WHIG

The Richmond Daily Whig was founded in 1824 and served as the organ of the Whig party in Virginia. It had close connections with the Lynchburg Daily Virginian, another leading Whig paper.\(^1\)

The Daily Whig was not enthusiastic about secession. Edited by Robert Ridgway, who opposed secession and resigned his position when Virginia left the Union, the Daily Whig opposed a projected Southern conference proposed by the legislatures of Mississippi and South Carolina and favored by the Charleston Mercury. Yet one should not assume that the Daily Whig did not look out for Southern interests. For example, it attacked the proposed Homestead Bill as an anti-South measure.\(^2\) Ridgway was succeeded by Alexander Moseley under whose leadership the Daily Whig became anti-Davis early in 1862.\(^3\)

The Daily Whig was unable to maintain a degree of objectivity in its reporting because it gave full credence to the telegraphic reports it received. This can be shown by the coverage of the Battle of Shiloh. On April 7, 1862 the Daily Whig stated that "authentic information received this evening says we shall destroy or capture the Federal
force." It predicted that "a clean sweep will be made of
the Vandals in that quarter." 4 These accounts of victory,
none of which mentioned the second day's fighting on April
7, 1862, were followed on April 10 by the story of General
Beauregard's planned retreat of April 7.

What had happened was this: The Confederates were to
attack General U.S. Grant's Union army, cut its line of
retreat, and force it to surrender. This would be accom­
plished before another Union army under General Don Carlos
Buell could unite with Grant. The Confederates struck on
April 6 and though they inflicted a severe beating on
Grant's command, they did not achieve their goal of cutting
the Union line of retreat. Meanwhile, Buell joined Grant.
Beauregard became aware of this on the morning of April 7.
That afternoon the hard pressed Confederates withdrew. In
order to enhance his reputation, Beauregard telegraphed
Richmond that the retreat was "a movement which was part of
[the] plan contemplated when the offensive was taken." 5 As
the Daily Whig described it, "in consequence of Gen. Buell,
with his large force, having formed a junction with Grant's
beaten and flying army, he found it necessary to carry out
the purpose contemplated beforehand, of falling back on
Corinth." 6 In spite of this news, the Daily Whig still re­
garded Shiloh as "the most advantageous to us, yet fought." 7

It was first on April 14 that the Daily Whig began to
have some doubts about the glittering dispatches it had
received from Shiloh. It published an account of the battle
by P.W.A., the Savannah Republican correspondent, which in­
formed the public of the hard fighting of April 6 and 7
and that on April 8 "both sides [were] ... too badly
worsted to renew the fight this morning." This was accom­
panied by a long editorial denouncing the reporting from
Shiloh.

Why the reporting of a battle ... should de­
prive a man of every particle of common sense,
or every spark of principle, we know not.... A
battle is no sooner begun, than we are notified
by a "reliable" dispatch that the "whole army of
the enemy will certainly be killed or captured."-
This we have heard in regard to Donelson, Elkhorn,
Shiloh, and nearly every other battle which has
been fought.... We are fast learning to tell as
many lies, as big lies, as foolish and self-evi­
dent lies as the Yankees. Everybody knows that
"the whole army of the enemy will certainly be
killed or captured" means that the Confederates
will be defeated on the next day.... Why not say
"the advantage is so far of our side, but the
battle is not decided yet; the enemy's reinforce­
ments may come up?" ... Why raise false hopes and
false joy in the people? 8

This blast at irresponsible coverage became the hallmark of
war reporting in the Daily Whig. Had dispatches adhered to
these standards, readers of Confederate journals would
have been spared the terrible letdown which this story and
the accounts of victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg
caused.

The Daily Whig's responsible journalism is best shown
in its coverage of the Battle of Fredericksburg. As the
Union army advanced on Fredericksburg and paused on the
heights across the Rappahannock River opposite the city,
the Daily Whig's reports remained quite accurate. The sit-
uation remained so quiet that the Daily Whig predicted that there would be no battle near Fredericksburg. On December 11, 1862, just two days before the battle was to be fought, it discovered that the Union army was moving downriver to Port Royal where it would make its attempted crossing.

The Daily Whig's description of the battle was precise, even with regard to casualty figures which all Confederate papers generally exaggerated for the Union and minimized for the Confederates. Its coverage was aided by the direct rail connection between Richmond and Fredericksburg, and by a correspondent at Fredericksburg who provided lengthy dispatches.

In contrast to its reporting of Fredericksburg, the Daily Whig's accounts of Vicksburg were based mainly on rumors. On May 1, 1863, Union General Grant crossed to the east bank of the Mississippi River below Vicksburg, and on May 14 he cut the communications with the east of General John C. Pemberton's Confederate army. This was a large factor in the poor reporting of the Vicksburg campaign.

The coverage featured erroneous stories and delays in transmitting the news. One cannot fault the Daily Whig for printing the rumors contained in the Press Association dispatches, but one can criticize it for supporting those dispatches in its editorials. For example, the Union victory of Port Gibson (May 1, 1863) was initially described as a Confederate success. Not until May 6 was the truth re-
vealed. On May 16 the *Daily Whig* minimized rumors that Jackson had fallen, and the news of its fall on May 14 did not appear until May 19 when the Union army was said to have "evacuated" Jackson and to "have retreated towards Vicksburg." The *Daily Whig* did complain that "the military or telegraph authorities in imitation of one of the meanest of Yankee practices, either prohibited the transmission of the adverse news to the Associated Press or suppressed it after it had been sent."11

When the news of the Confederate defeat at Champion's Hill on May 16 arrived, the *Daily Whig* openly criticized General Pemberton.

The public was never able to account for the saltant promotion by which Col. Pemberton ... became, without trial or experience and without the possession of unusual abilities that were ever heard of, a Lieutenant General, commanding the Department of the Mississippi. His management of affairs in that quarter ... has not elucidated the mystery. 12

The reports from Mississippi made it appear as if it were Grant and not Pemberton who was in danger of surrendering. Union casualty figures were inflated to absurd levels. The *Daily Whig* stated confidently that Gentlemen familiar with the ground necessary to be occupied, in laying close siege to Vicksburg, express the opinion ... that no army can live there many days at this season of the year. A sufficient supply of water cannot be obtained, and great ... difficulty would be found in transporting provisions, ordinance, stores, etc. 13

As the siege progressed, optimistic dispatches continued to be sent from Mississippi. By July, the *Daily Whig*
began to worry why General Joseph E. Johnston had not yet relieved Vicksburg. On July 8 it cautioned that "it will do no harm to hold ourselves prepared for the worst." The news of the capitulation of Vicksburg on July 4 was printed on July 9, two days after the information reached Washington. The Daily Whig responded with a bitter editorial criticizing Pemberton, Johnston, and President Davis for weak generalship and for dividing the Confederate forces in the west. These arguments showed that the editor had a considerable degree of military knowledge.

While the Daily Whig stumbled through the Vicksburg campaign, it had to cover the Confederate invasion of Maryland. Because this movement began near Richmond, the Daily Whig was initially able to give it accurate treatment. On June 8, 1863, it announced that "Gen. Lee has put his army in motion. His designs are known only to himself...." It was able to follow Lee's progress northwards through Virginia but only as far north as Martinsburg. When Lee's army crossed the Potomac River and entered Maryland, direct communication was cut off and accurate news was replaced by a series of rumors.

On June 22 the Daily Whig reported that units of Lee's army had entered Pennsylvania. It recounted stories of Union depredations in Virginia and urged that "if Gen. Lee gets Yankeedom fairly on the rack, he should not stay his hand till every sinew in its monstrous carcass is snapped and every bone broken." In this vein it advocated the de-
struction of the Pennsylvania coal fields. 17

The Daily Whig's correspondent in Martinsburg passed on a report that Harrisburg, Pennsylvania had been captured by the Confederates. 18 The War Department supposedly received a telegram which confirmed this news. 19 Yet the Daily Whig remained cautious and stated that "no confirmation of the report has been received. ... we apprehend that the reported occupation of Harrisburg is rather in advance of the 'fact.'" 20

The first word of the battle appeared in the July 6 paper. The intelligence was taken from Northern journals and dealt with only July 1 and 2. On July 7 the Daily Whig printed a dispatch from Martinsburg which said that "Gen. Lee has defeated the enemy. Gen. Meade is retreating on Baltimore - Gen. Lee pursuing." This was followed on July 8 by a report of an immense Union defeat on July 5. This is how the Daily Whig's correspondent transmitted that story:

General Lee, unwilling to expose his troops unnecessarily in the storming of the fortified mountains, on Saturday [July 4], caused the semblance of a retreat. Our wagon train retired some distance towards Williamsport, and our centre and right also retired. The ruse had the desired and intended result. - The enemy ... came down from their position on the mountain, and about three or four miles distant encountered our skirmishers who fell back in accordance with orders. - Then Hill and Longstreet fell upon them and drove them with great slaughter. Meanwhile, Ewell ... got behind a range of hills and rocks which most effectively concealed his men, and moved so as to cut off the Yankees and get them between him and Hill and Longstreet. - Thus over fifty regiments
and thirty pieces of artillery were cut off and captured. Of this, there is no official confirmation; but all who have left the scene of action — some very intelligent officers and men — uniformly concur in the statement.... Accounts from every source that have reached here agree in its reliability. 21

On July 9 the bubble burst. Reports were printed that although he was successful on July 1 and 2, Lee had failed on July 3 and had retreated into Maryland. The Daily Whig remarked that "the intelligence from Gen. Lee falls far short of the promise of the despatches published yesterday, and will prove a grievous disappointment to the high wrought hopes of the public. Superadded to the calamity at Vicksburg, it casts a sombre shadow over our affairs...." 22 Finally, on July 17 the Daily Whig published the news that Lee's army had returned to Virginia on July 14.

The description of the Battle of Chickamauga in the Daily Whig was brief. The accounts were sent by authority of General Bragg; consequently, they were limited in scope. For example, the evacuation of the strategic city of Chattanooga on September 8, 1863, was mentioned in the Daily Whig only on September 14. This news came not from the War Department but from a Union paper, the Baltimore American, which had reached Richmond.

When the intelligence of the victory of September 19 and 20 arrived, the Daily Whig added that now "Rosecrans' Army must be destroyed or driven out, else we fight to but little purpose.... General Bragg, of course, understands this, and knows the necessity of pushing his present advan-
The reporting of the Wilderness-Cold Harbor campaign of 1864 was accurate but skimpy. Accounts of the numerous battles and maneuvers were printed within one or two days after they occurred. The *Daily Whig* expressed its confidence in Lee but failed to understand the ultimate results of the grinding process taking place. "On our part, we are perfectly willing for Grant to cypher away at this sum until he finds and proves it. We think ... that recent events go to show that it will not be the Confederacy which is first exhausted." On June 6, 1864, when the Union army was closer to Richmond than it had been at any time since June 1862, the *Daily Whig* boasted that "Richmond was never safer, nor the Confederate cause on higher or firmer ground."

In summation, the *Daily Whig* showed much editorial restraint. Its news columns carried rumors found in the press dispatches. Its reporting of Fredericksburg and the Wilderness campaign, which were fought in the general vicinity of Richmond, was quite good. On Shiloh it was reserved, if somewhat inaccurate. Its coverage of Gettysburg and Vicksburg was poor. On the whole, the war news in the Richmond *Daily Whig* was superior to that in any of the other papers used in this study.

2. RICHMOND DISPATCH

The Richmond *Dispatch* was founded in 1850 by James A. Cowardin, a veteran newspaperman who had also been a Whig
member of the Virginia House of Delegates. It emphasized "news ... presented without political bias." Its initial penny price attracted readers, and by March 1861 it had a circulation of eighteen thousand, which was larger than that of the other Richmond papers combined.\(^1\) By war's end, its circulation had grown to thirty thousand.\(^2\) A contemporary described it as a "cheap paper, selling for two cents a copy ... professing no political creed, 'catering to the taste of the masses,' and enjoying a large circulation."\(^3\) The day after Lincoln's inauguration, it stated that "the Inaugural Address of ABRAHAM LINCOLN inaugurates Civil War," and proceeded to advocate secession.\(^4\) During the war, it became slightly anti-Davis following the defeats at Fort Donelson and Roanoke Island.\(^5\)

The Richmond *Dispatch* printed many rumors in its news columns and often supported them in its editorials. But when the *Dispatch* realized that it had been deceived by false reports, it lashed out at those sources of information. On April 7, 1862, it carried a telegraphic dispatch on the Confederate victory of April 6 at Shiloh which predicted the surrender of the Union army. After receiving further reports, none dealing with the Confederate defeat on April 7, the *Dispatch* proclaimed that "the news of this victory will change the face of things in Europe." The Confederate army would "rid the sacred soil of Tennessee of the presence of the invaders." In short,
Shiloh was "one of the most important triumphs of the whole war...." Then came the news of the Confederate retreat.

The Dispatch faced this by admitting that "the latest news from the Southwest is not so favorable as that conveyed in previous dispatches," but it remained confident that "our present intelligence is not of a character to discourage or dishearten." This information became more complete when the Dispatch printed an account of the battle by the Savannah Republican's war correspondent, P.W.A. In addition, the Dispatch had its own writer, "Quel Qu'un," at Shiloh, but his story was not printed until April 24.

In spite of the fact that Shiloh had turned out not to be the smashing success which had been reported on April 7, 8, and 9, the Dispatch continued to insist that it was a victory. It had nothing but praise for General Beauregard, "a man designed by Providence to work out some great work...." According to the Dispatch, "the name of Gen. Beauregard is associated with success. ... no General of the South can be more safely trusted with the immense responsibilities confided to his hands." But the Dispatch had some harsh words for the rumors it had received on the first days after the battle.

It seems to us when a great battle has been fought - no matter what may be the result - the public should be put in possession of the facts.... ... it seems to us, our Generals might send reports of their movements, which might be laid before the public, all things which it might be improper to make known having
been first carefully excluded.... It would put an end to the enormously exaggerated rumors by which the public are liable to be distressed every moment in the day.... We should not see them exalted to the skies, by hope, and at the next cast down to the earth by despondency. They would be sure of having the truth, whatever it might be, whether good or bad. Nothing can be more detrimental to a cause, among those who adhere to it, than false statements with regard to successes. The truth will be sure to come out at last, and, when a victory is claimed where a defeat has been sustained, the reaction in the public mind is always proportional to its previous exaltation as soon as the truth leaks out. 12

It seems that the Dispatch preferred to depend upon censored War Department dispatches rather than on the accounts of free-lance journalists.

The coverage of the Battle of Fredericksburg was much better than that of Shiloh because of the direct railroad line between Richmond and Fredericksburg. Union General Ambrose E. Burnside had arrived opposite Fredericksburg on November 17, 1862.13 When he remained inactive for a week, the Dispatch suspected that a change of plans was likely and that instead of attacking at Fredericksburg Burnside would "'change his base,' and ... come down to the South side of [the] James river."14 Burnside remained inert and the Dispatch then guessed that he would cross the Rappahannock River downstream from Fredericksburg at Port Royal.15 It should be noted that the possibility of a Union crossing at Port Royal was suspected by General Lee.16 Finally, two days before the battle was to be fought, the Dispatch asserted that
"Burnside] will not risk his reputation by precipitately throwing his columns across the Rappahannock." 17

The news of the battle of December 13 was reported promptly and accurately. The Dispatch's correspondent at Fredericksburg helped to enrich its account of the affair. There was much praise for the Confederate army, and particularly for General Lee. "This is the tenth pitched battle in which General Lee has commanded, within less than six months, and in all of them he has been victorious. No other campaign except that of Italy in 1796, and that of France in 1814, presents such a result." 18 Confederate editors constantly compared their military affairs to various Napoleonic campaigns. Only with regard to casualty figures, understated for the Confederacy and overstated for the Union, 19 did the coverage of Fredericksburg leave something to be desired.

In contrast to its accurate reporting of Fredericksburg, the Dispatch's account of the Vicksburg campaign was poor. The telegraph dispatches were late, skimpy, and usually highly inaccurate. In its editorial columns, the Dispatch combined criticism of these reports with a hopeful view of the final outcome of the campaign.

A perfect example of this took place with regard to the fall of Jackson, Mississippi, which occurred on May 14, 1863. On May 18 the Dispatch stated that "nothing that we have yet received from official or unofficial quarters satisfies us that [Jackson] ... has really fall-
en into the hands of the Yankees." At the same time it admitted that "it is difficult to know what to believe from the Southwest. Accounts from that quarter are very unintelligible generally, and often contradicted." On the next day the Dispatch printed the news of the fall of Jackson and of the Confederate defeat on May 16 at Champion's Hill. In spite of this the Dispatch remained confident of success because "the presence of Gen. J.E. Johnston will infuse new confidence in our soldiers...." There was no "danger of the fall, immediate or remote, of Vicksburg." It felt "assured that Vicksburg is well supplied with provisions." The news of the Confederate failure at the Big Black Bridge on May 17 and the retreat into the Vicksburg fortifications appeared in the May 23 paper. But these reverses only inspired the Dispatch to praise Johnston and Pemberton. "A man skilled in strategy, and of so much forecaste [sic] and energy as [Johnston] ... possesses, we are convinced that he will leave nothing undone for the safety of Vicksburg and to defeat the enemy." And "nobly has General Pemberton vindicated the confidence placed in him by President Davis. From all accounts, the defence of Vicksburg is the most glorious episode in the already crowded annals of our military history."

News dispatches from Mississippi continued to treat the situation as if Grant and not Pemberton were under siege. The Dispatch complained that "the messages from
the Southwest ... have for many days been of the vaguest and most confused character.... Cannot the association for disseminating telegraphic news for the press employ agents who understand the business sufficiently to give a simple and connected statement of facts?" 25

Influenced by erroneous rumors of Confederate victories, the Dispatch stated on June 17 that "we have no fears for Vicksburg." A week later it reported that "the garison of Port Hudson and Vicksburg are both well provided and in fine spirits.... They have abundant supplies." 26 Even one week later it felt "firmly persuaded that the time is not far distant when that Yankee army will either be taken entire, or be compelled to make a disastrous retreat from the position it now occupies." 27 Finally, it commented on June 29 that "we have not the least fear that they will ever take Vicksburg."

But even the Dispatch began to notice that the Confederates had failed to end the siege. On July 1, it voiced its impatience with the inaction of Johnston's relief force. This mild note of criticism was soon abandoned. On July 8, four days after Vicksburg had fallen, the Dispatch felt sure that "Grant begins to feel the pressure of the iron-hand which Johnston has cast around him."

The next day's paper carried the news of the capitulation of Vicksburg and an editorial denouncing Johnston.

We do not know what may have been the situation
of Gen. Johnston. ... it does appear to us that some little risk might have been run, some attempt, however feeble, might have been made to relieve it [Vicksburg]. But Gen. Johnston thought differently, and we suppose he is right. Doubtless he thinks the same with regard to Port Hudson, and we may therefore make up our minds to a catastrophe in that quarter.

Port Hudson fell on July 8.

While it predicted a Confederate victory at Vicksburg, the Dispatch also had to cover the Gettysburg campaign, and, like Vicksburg, a lack of direct communication with the Confederate army made that task difficult.

After the capture of Winchester, in northern Virginia, direct contact with Lee's army was lost, although the Dispatch was able to report that "there is little doubt that our forces are ... treading the soil of Maryland...." It urged the Confederates to "retaliate upon the Pennsylvanians, some of the outrages they have been perpetrating against us.... The Valley of Pennsylvania ought to become a sea of flame." In the meantime the Dispatch's correspondent had reached Staunton from where he sent a story that the Confederates had burned Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

The first hint of the fighting at Gettysburg appeared in the July 6 paper. The news of the battle on July 1 and 2 was gathered from Northern newspapers, and the Dispatch concluded that

the fact seems to be that a division of the army has kept the whole Yankee force at bay two days, and that Gen. Lee is rapidly concentrating in the neighborhood of Gettysburg. In
a few days we expect to hear that Meade's army
has been defeated, and probably annihilated.

On July 7, this story was modified. The Confederate force
was put at one corps, not one division.

The Dispatch printed the telegraphic report of the
mythical Confederate victory of July 5 on July 8. Al­
though it expressed wonder at the alleged capture of
forty thousand Union prisoners, the Dispatch accepted the
story's veracity. But on July 9, it carried the account
of the Confederate success on July 1 and 2 and the re­
pulse of July 3 followed by the retreat to Hagerstown,
Maryland. According to a letter from a wounded Confed­
erate officer, the withdrawal had been caused by a "want
of provisions."

Though it continued to insist that "Gen. Lee is per­
factly master of the situation," the Dispatch blasted the
telegraphic story of the supposed battle of July 5.

We are informed ... that Gen. Lee, by an adroit
move, has captured forty thousand of the enemy....
The number of the prisoners are finally reduced
to four thousand, and some have been charitable
enough to imagine that there was a mistake in
transcribing the sum, by which four was magni­
fied into forty.... Yet again, ... the particu­
larity with which the message described the
movement of the falling back of the centre, and
the enveloping of the enemy by the closing in
of the two wings of our army, leaves no loop
hole for explanation. It is true the telegrapher
may, and no doubt did, hear a flying rumor to
the effect of what he wrote; but is that the
sort of information to be gravely transmitted
to the press and War Department? 31

In spite of this statement, the Dispatch continued
to refer to Gettysburg as "a triumphant success - an overwhelming victory." Lee had retreated because he chose to, not because he was forced to, and he had "no intention to recross the Potomac...." Again on July 14, the Dispatch affirmed that "General Lee gained a tremendous victory at Gettysburg. Of that we cannot see the slightest reason to doubt. ... the indications are that he will yet make a move upon Washington." On July 17, came the news that Lee had recrossed the Potomac and was back in Virginia.

All in all, the reporting of Vicksburg and Gettysburg was poor. Chickamauga was not much better. Fewer rumors were printed, but General Bragg placed restrictions on dispatches and caused a news shortage; consequently, the Dispatch learnt of the fall of Chattanooga from Northern papers and published it on September 14, 1863, a week after the city fell. The battle was reported skimpily. The Dispatch felt that "the battle of Chickamauga was undoubtedly one of the greatest of the whole war." Of course casualty figures were not accurate, and on September 19, the Dispatch published a story from a correspondent in eastern Tennessee that Bragg had defeated Union General William S. Rosecrans on September 16, an event which never occurred. Nevertheless, the coverage of Chickamauga was accurate if very sketchy.

The Wilderness-Cold Harbor campaign of 1864 was fought north of Richmond and so the coverage in the Dispatch was rather good. It received accurate tactical re-
ports from two writers, "X" and "Salust." Several editorials were overly optimistic.

The initial Union advance into the Wilderness was described as a "grand reconnaissance [sic] in force." The Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House were described accurately by press dispatches and by the Dispatch's reporters. On May 18, it expressed confidence in Confederate chances by denouncing and minimizing Grant's strategy of attrition. This attitude was reinforced in an editorial on June 1, which was a fine example of the trust which the Confederate public placed in Robert E. Lee.

The confidence in Lee and his army is not confined to the ranks of that army and to our fellow citizens. It is as extensive as the Confederacy itself. It pervades every neighborhood and every family circle. There are few who do not feel it, and bless God when they acknowledge it, for sending us so great a General to lead so brave an army. 35

In summation, the Richmond Dispatch printed rumors even as it condemned them. Its editorials were not as objective as those of the Richmond Daily Whig. Yet its reporting of Shiloh, Fredericksburg, and the Wilderness, at all of which it had correspondents, was equal to if not better than that of the Daily Whig. Only its rumor filled coverage of Vicksburg and Gettysburg was below an acceptable standard of war journalism.

3. LYNCHBURG DAILY VIRGINIAN

The Lynchburg Daily Virginian was edited by Charles
W. Button. It was a Whig party paper and was the only ma-

jor journal in Virginia which supported the Compromise of

1850. Until early 1861 it was pro-Union. Eventually, it

supported the war but became a critic of President Davis.

Unlike its Virginia rivals, the Richmond Daily Whig

and the Richmond Dispatch, the first news of Shiloh ap-

peared in the April 8, 1862, Lynchburg Daily Virginian,

two days after the first action on April 6. The dispatches

reported "a complete victory," and from this the Daily

Virginian concluded that "Memphis and New Orleans are now

safe, and we should not be surprised any day to hear that

Nashville has been evacuated." The Daily Virginian went

further on April 9, stating that "the result for good,

to us, of this battle can scarcely be overestimated. It

has turned the tide in our favor, saved Memphis and New

Orleans, will result, most probably, in the evacuation of

Nashville, the liberation of Tennessee, and give us a

mighty impetus in Kentucky and Missouri."

The news of Beauregard's retreat confounded these

predictions. On April 12, the Daily Virginian carried

the report of P.W.A., the Savannah Republican's war cor-

respondent, on the fighting of April 6 and 7 and on the

Confederate withdrawal. But later stories continued to

treat Shiloh as a great victory and the Daily Virginian

failed to correct this impression.

The Battle of Fredericksburg was fought in Virginia,

and so the quality of reporting in the Daily Virginian
improved. On November 19, 1862, it stated that Union General Burnside's army had reached the heights opposite Fredericksburg. But Burnside failed to advance and on December 5, the Daily Virginian tried to explain why.

He sat briskly about his work - packed up, and moved his army rapidly to Fredericksburg, thinking (unsuspecting man that he was) that he would thus out-flank and out-general the Confederates. What was his surprise, therefore, to find on reaching the north bank of the Rappahannock, that our forces were quietly waiting for his arrival on the south bank! General Lee was too fast for him and the game was blocked. ...

We want Burnside to remain at the head of the Yankee army, until Gen. Lee is enabled to encounter it again. We are sanguine that the result would be so completely and ruinously disastrous to the enemy's arms that it would end the war. 5

Burnside's inactivity continued, and on December 10, the Daily Virginian predicted that he would abandon the campaign against Fredericksburg and would shift his operations elsewhere. Of course the Daily Virginian was wrong. The battle was fought on Saturday, December 13. Because most papers did not publish on Sunday, the news of the fight appeared in the Confederate press on Monday, December 15. For some reason, the Daily Virginian did not carry the story until December 16, a day later than the Richmond papers. The telegraphic reports were accurate except for the casualty figures. The Daily Virginian boasted that "the world never saw a better army than that now marshalled under the greatest soldier of the age, Gen. Robert E. Lee." 6 Although its coverage was less com-
plete than that of the Richmond papers, the *Daily Virginian* reported Fredericksburg much better than it did Shiloh.

The obstacles to the successful reporting of the Vicksburg campaign were its distance from the east and the cutting on May 14, 1863, of the communications of General Pemberton's Confederate army with the east. The news was chronically late and usually inaccurate. For example, the Battle of Port Gibson, fought on May 1, was listed on May 4 as a Confederate success, and only on May 6 as a Union victory, which it was. On May 16, the *Daily Virginian* learned from Jackson, Mississippi journals that there was a possibility that Grant would cut off Vicksburg from Jackson. Grant did even better. He took Jackson on May 14.

The news of the fall of Jackson did not appear in the *Daily Virginian* until May 19. The next day it stated that a battle had been fought on May 16 but that it was ignorant of the result. It felt that "Pemberton has the reputation of a gallant and skillful officer, so that we hope our affairs are in good hands." On May 23, came the story that the Confederates had been defeated on May 16 and 17 and that "Vicksburg is closely besieged - the enemy closing in on all sides."

In spite of Grant's besieging Vicksburg, the press dispatches and the *Daily Virginian* editorials made it seem as if it were Grant and not Pemberton who would be
forced to surrender.

... we consider Grant [to be] in a very precarious situation.... If the Confederates have the formidable army in front of Vicksburg, which we have every reason to believe is there - with Johnston in the rear of Grant, we cannot see how his army will avoid being severely handled.... If it escape annihilation it will be fortunate. 7

On May 29, the Daily Virginian declared that "the gallant city still holds out, and we have little doubt that Gen. Johnston is preparing to bag Grant's army.... The situation of the Yankees, so far ... appears to be very critical." Several days later it added that "Grant will hardly risk the dangers of a siege in a season when the climate and disease will play havoc with his men.... With Johnston in his rear and Pemberton in his front, his situation is precarious."8 On June 25, it assured its readers that "the situation of Grant must now be very perilous, and he cannot be expected to maintain the siege much longer.... Grant can scarcely escape short of a miracle." As late as July 7, the Daily Virginian expected Johnston to attack at any moment.

The truth made a belated reappearance in the Daily Virginian when the news of the surrender arrived. All the Daily Virginian could say was that "it is a misfortune to us but not an irreparable disaster."9 In short, the coverage of the Vicksburg campaign in the Daily Virginian was quite fanciful.

While Vicksburg was besieged, the Daily Virginian was busy covering the Gettysburg campaign. Its first sto-
ry was printed on June 9, 1863, when it cited an article in the Richmond Whig that General Lee was moving northwards. On June 20, the Daily Virginian reported that Confederate troops had crossed the Potomac River, but it doubted "whether Lee intends to venture with his main body, very far from the Potomac." It hoped that Lee would subject the North to the destruction which had been inflicted upon Confederate territory.

As Lee moved on and outran his communications, the Daily Virginian was forced to rely upon rumors for information on his whereabouts. On July 1, it carried a telegraphic dispatch which reported the capture of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

The first news of the battle appeared in the July 7 paper. A rough account described a Confederate victory on July 5 in the "bloodiest battle of the war." On July 8 came the details of the supposed fight of July 5 including the story of the capture of forty thousand prisoners. Then stories filtered in that although Lee had been victorious on July 1 and 2, he was only partially successful on July 3 and was forced to retreat to Hagerstown, Maryland, because of "the difficulty of obtaining supplies through so long a line of communication."

During the night of July 13, Lee's army recrossed the Potomac into Virginia. Earlier on that day the Daily Virginian had predicted that he would regain the offensive and would not recross the river. Not until July 17,
did the Daily Virginian print the news of Lee's return to Virginia.

The coverage of the Battle of Chickamauga was also hindered by poor communication with the Confederate forces, this time caused by restrictions imposed by General Bragg. The Daily Virginian had little confidence in Bragg, remarking that "the perfection and culmination of generalship with Bragg and Johnston seems to be the successful execution of a retrograde movement."\(^{15}\)

Bragg prevented any word of his abandonment of Chattanooga from reaching the Confederate press. Not until September 14, did the Daily Virginian, citing a Northern paper, report the fall of Chattanooga. The account of the battle appeared promptly if skimpily in the September 22 paper. Suddenly, the Daily Virginian had only praise for Bragg.

Even if Bragg should not be able to follow up his victory, the battle at Chickamauga will not be less decisive than were those at Fredericksburg and Chancellorsville.... Though the effect may not be all that we could wish, the victory of Bragg is nevertheless a great and important one. \(^{16}\)

Bragg failed to follow up his victory, and so Chickamauga fell short of what the Daily Virginian had looked forward to.

Again with regard to the Wilderness-Cold Harbor campaign, the Daily Virginian suffered from a lack of communication with the Confederate army. This time the source of trouble differed from that of the Vicksburg, Gettys-
burg, and Chickamauga battles.

The Union army moved into the Wilderness and severe fighting occurred on May 5 and 6, 1864. The Daily Virginian did not mention this until May 9. Then a news blackout took place. On May 12, the Daily Virginian learnt that a Union attack on the railroad and telegraph lines which connected Richmond with Lynchburg had disrupted service. The cavalry division of General August V. Kautz was responsible for this. His force left Bermuda Hundred, rode south of Richmond, and struck the Richmond and Danville Railroad and the Southside Railroad, the two lines which linked the capital and Lynchburg. On May 13, the Daily Virginian received intelligence of the fighting on May 10 at Spotsylvania Court House. More sporadic reports came in. On May 16, it reported the bloody battle of May 12. These accounts were fragmentary. The Daily Virginian complained that "editors, and telegraph and railroad companies cannot be responsible for the deviltry of Yankee raiders. The Lord send us an early and happy delivery from those sons of Belial." 17

So while the Battles of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House were being fought, the Daily Virginian remained largely ignorant of them. Only on May 24, was full telegraph and railroad service restored. The Daily Virginian learnt that Grant had left his lines near Spotsylvania on May 20. From here to the Battle of Cold Harbor, the reporting in the Daily Virginian was reasonably
accurate.

In summation, the Daily Virginian showed little restraint in printing rumors. It frequently lagged behind the Richmond papers in reporting war news, particularly during the Wilderness campaign when its rail and telegraph links with Richmond were cut by a Union raid. Its reports were usually sketchy and, unlike its Richmond competitors, it did not have a correspondent at Fredericksburg or the Wilderness. On the whole, the Daily Virginian did not cover war news as well as its Virginia rivals, the Richmond Daily Whig and the Richmond Dispatch.

4. WILMINGTON DAILY JOURNAL

The Wilmington Daily Journal, founded in 1851, was the first North Carolina daily newspaper. It was put out by the owners of the Wilmington Journal, a weekly paper, which had been founded in 1844. The Daily Journal supported the Democratic party but had a reputation for critical fairness.¹

On April 7, 1862, the Daily Journal received some fragmentary information of the fighting on April 6 at Shiloh. It minimized the story "because of its being still unofficial and unconfirmed, and because, in a matter of such great importance, we cannot afford to raise any hopes that may dissapointed [sic], or indulge in any rejoicings which may turn out to have been premature."² Some details came in on April 8. The Daily Journal believed that "the defeat was indeed a total one." It ex-
pressed its confidence in "'the peerless Beauregard,' whose slightest word is a word of power to the Southern people, whose name seems allied to victory, whose very presence gives confidence of success."

As more news arrived, the Daily Journal became more enthusiastic about the results of the battle. It predicted that "the consequences of this battle will throw Fort Donelson, Fort Henry and Nashville into the shade." On April 10, it carried the story of Beauregard's so-called planned retreat. The fighting on April 7 "appears to have been comparatively a drawn battle," but the Daily Journal still believed that "the position of things ... remains favourable to our cause...." More information was printed on April 12, including the report of the Savannah Republican's war correspondent, P.W.A., and the account of "Personne," the Charleston Daily Courier's reporter. All in all, the Daily Journal did a credible job of covering Shiloh.

The reporting of the early stages of the Fredericksburg campaign in the Daily Journal was fuller than its early accounts of Shiloh. On November 20, it stated that Union General Burnside's army was on the heights opposite Fredericksburg. Burnside remained there although the Daily Journal expected "a conflict of immense magnitude at any moment."5

Burnside waited until December 13. Then he attacked. The first dispatches were printed in the December 15 pa-
per. Then silence set in. The Daily Journal learned that "yesterday afternoon [December 16]... both the wires on the line North from this point went down, and the telegraph ceased working. It was subsequently ascertained that a regiment of Yankee cavalry had suddenly made a dash on the Road ... cutting the telegraph wires and tearing up the track...." What had happened was that a Union force of ten thousand men under General John Foster had left the coastal city of New Bern, North Carolina on December 11 to raid Goldsborough, situated on the halfway point of the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad. On December 16, a cavalry force under Major Jeptha Garrard destroyed one mile of track and burnt a bridge over a swamp at Mount Olive Station, fourteen miles south of Goldsborough. Union troops had operated on the North Carolina coast since September 1861, when an army-navy expedition captured the Hatteras Inlet forts. In February 1862, another expedition occupied Roanoke Island, also on the North Carolina coast. The control of these shore areas allowed Union forces to harass Confederate communications between Virginia and points south, and presented a threat of an attack on Virginia from the south. All the Daily Journal could guess with regard to Fredericksburg was that "General Lee appears to have got Burnside into a big trap...." It felt that "the result of the collision there ... was substantially a great victory for the arms of the Confederacy," and it concluded that "we think that it is 'the
beginning of the end."\textsuperscript{10} In short, the fragmentary coverage of Fredericksburg was caused by factors beyond the control of the Daily Journal.

The Daily Journal also faced communications difficulties in its description of the Vicksburg campaign which occurred in an area of inadequate telegraph facilities. For example, the Battle of Port Gibson, a Confederate defeat, which was fought on May 1 was announced as a Confederate victory. The truth was reported on May 14.

In the meantime, Grant's army began to move on Jackson, Mississippi. The Daily Journal stated that "we have received nothing from Jackson, Mississippi, since the 13th, and then the Yankee forces were at a point within sixteen miles of that city.... On inquiry at the telegraph office, we learn that no dispatches are received for Jackson or points west of that place...." From this the Daily Journal concluded that "our forces have evacuated the town...."\textsuperscript{11} Only on May 18, did it learn that Jackson had fallen on May 14. The Daily Journal remained confident. "Now that we know that General JOHNSTON has got down to the vicinity of Jackson and Vicksburg and taken the management of things in his own hands, we begin to breathe more freely...."\textsuperscript{12}

Not until May 22, did the Daily Journal print the news of the Confederate defeats on May 16 and 17 and the resulting siege of Vicksburg. It admitted that "the Federal movements in Central Mississippi ... are among the
boldest and most important of the whole war." It criticized Pemberton but praised Johnston, adding that "the idea of starving [Vicksburg]... is foolish, since there are supplies there fully sufficient to last our army at that point from four to five months."\(^\text{13}\)

The siege of Vicksburg continued and the *Daily Journal* persisted in expressing its confidence in a Confederate success.\(^\text{14}\) On June 10, it reported that "the news from the West appears to be more than usually cheering," but at the same time it doubted the truth of a dispatch, which was false, that Confederate General E. Kirby Smith had taken Milliken's Bend and opened a backdoor to Vicksburg.\(^\text{15}\)

Johnston's sustained inability to lift the siege resulted in the *Daily Journal*'s losing patience with him. "The fact is whatever General JOHNSTON'S faults may be, great haste in delivering battle is not one of them.... The general feeling is that General JOHNSTON would please the people better in Mississippi, could he feel justified in adopting a less Fabian policy."\(^\text{16}\) By June 23, the *Daily Journal* was discussing the consequences of the fall of Vicksburg. "We do not think that if Vicksburg should fall, the Confederacy must, as a consequence, fall too.... ... but it is not to be denied that the fall of Vicksburg would be a heavy blow to the country."

The siege continued, and on July 7, the *Daily Journal* discounted an unofficial report that Vicksburg had
fallen. The official news appeared the next day. The Daily Journal commented bitterly that "Vicksburg fell on the 4th - and JOSEPH E. JOHNSTON is a great General - to do nothing." Johnston was also criticized on July 9. "At present the immediate pressure of public censure bears down upon General JOSEPH E. JOHNSTON, who ... made no effort to relieve Vicksburg.... He was 'getting ready' ... to perform his favourite strategic movement - a masterly retreat.... The result of General JOHNSTON'S tactics is before us." There was no mention of Pemberton. The Daily Journal had given up on him when Jackson fell.

At this same time the Daily Journal was covering the Gettysburg campaign. On June 10, 1863, it cited the Richmond Daily Whig's report that Lee was moving northward. The Daily Journal believed that Lee would take revenge on the North for Union depredations in Virginia. When Lee moved north of the Confederate telegraph system, the Daily Journal was left without reliable news of the invasion. It depended upon rumors; consequently, it stated on July 3 that "although we have no positive information of the fact, yet we have the utmost confidence that our forces occupied Harrisburg some days ago."

The first intelligence of the battle consisted of Northern newspaper accounts of the fighting of July 1 and 2. On July 7, the Daily Journal printed the story of the alleged Confederate victory of July 5. But soon the news of Lee's retreat appeared in the Daily Journal. "We
must confess the news from LEE'S army is not of a very cheering nature.... We fear the report of the capture of 40,000 prisoners will really turn out to be untrue." The withdrawal was believed to have been caused "by the difficulty in obtaining supplies through so long a line of communication." 20

The Daily Journal was extremely disappointed with the story of the July 5 battle. "We have never been more annoyed by the unreliability of telegraphic reporters than we have been during the week now about closing. We have got news of immense successes in Pennsylvania, which news had not even the slightest semblance of truth for a foundation." 21 But at the same time, it believed that "as far as the Army of Northern Virginia is concerned, we think that no apprehension need be entertained. That army has not been whipped and is not going to be whipped." 22 These statements bore little relation to reality because on July 17 the Daily Journal reported that Lee's army had returned to Virginia.

The coverage of Chickamauga in the Daily Journal suffered because of the censorship imposed on dispatches by General Bragg. It was only through Northern papers that Daily Journal readers learnt, almost one week after the event, of the fall of Chattanooga. 23

The evacuation of Chattanooga and the retreat into northern Georgia caused the Daily Journal to criticize Bragg.
"Falling back" - which means abandoning the most defensible positions and sacrificing the richest section of the country, is so much the order of the day out West - has been so long continued, that it has indeed acquired all the force of habit, and will be found hard to give up. 24

It believed that

BRAGG is evidently no match for ROSECRANZ [sic] in whose hands he is a [sic] infant. But then General BRAGG is in the good graces of the President.... This tendency of the President to continue to sustain those whom he has once sustained, come what may, and at whatever cost, is working [?] deadly harm in the Southwest. It is sacrificing our territory, disgusting our people, and jeopardizing our cause. 25

The Daily Journal's opposition to Bragg apparently prevented it from praising him when it reported the news of the Battle of Chickamauga on September 22 and 23. It hoped that Bragg would exploit his initial victory. In short, Bragg's censorship prevented the Daily Journal from covering events which occurred prior to the battle and caused the accounts of the fight to be rather sketchy.

The description of the Wilderness-Cold Harbor campaign in the Daily Journal also suffered from communications difficulties. The opening battle on May 5 was described accurately. The Daily Journal warned that "the only thing to be guarded against is the indulgence of such an unreasonable confidence as will prevent us from sustaining defeat, or looking its consequences firmly in the face...." 26. Then the wires went dead.

On May 10, the Daily Journal stated that "we have reason to believe that the line of the road from Weldon
to Petersburg is cleared of the enemy and that prompt measures are on foot to repair damages and put it in running order." But on May 12 it reported that the telegraph and railroad were cut between Richmond and Petersburg as well as between Petersburg and Weldon. The lines were cut by General August V. Kautz's cavalry division which struck the Petersburg and Weldon Railroad on May 7 and 8, prior to its expedition against the routes connecting Richmond and Lynchburg. As a result, the Daily Journal remained ignorant of the fighting at Spotsylvania Court House. - From undisclosed sources, the Daily Journal received the erroneous impression that "we have gained advantages, but the real strength of the respective forces had not yet been tried."  

By May 18, communication with Richmond had been re-opened, and the Daily Journal presented a brief summary of the events which had occurred during the news blackout. On May 28, it carried the Richmond Dispatch's tactical account of the bloody battle of May 12, and on May 30 it presented a chronological account of the events of May 4 through May 18. From this point to the end of the campaign, the Daily Journal covered the news accurately but incompletely.

In summation, the Daily Journal showed a great deal of editorial restraint. Nevertheless, it gave currency to many rumors. Its reporting suffered from disruptions of the telegraph during the Fredericksburg and Wilderness
campaigns, and its coverage did not equal in depth or in speed of reporting that of the Richmond Daily Whig or the Richmond Dispatch.

5. CHARLESTON DAILY COURIER

The Charleston Daily Courier was the offspring of the Charleston Courier, a weekly, which was founded in 1803 as a Federalist party paper. During the Nullification Crisis it opposed Calhoun and its Charleston rival, the Mercury. The Courier was a pro-Union paper in the 1850s in contrast to the Mercury, but by December 1860, it had abandoned its opposition to secession. The Daily Courier had three editors during the war years: A.S. Willington; William B. Carlisle; Colonel Augustus O. Andrews.

During the war, again in contrast to the Mercury, the Daily Courier became a supporter of the administration. It admitted that Davis had weaknesses, but it contended that a change of government would be dangerous. A Daily Courier reporter, F.G. de Fontaine, writing under the name "Personne," was one of the leading Confederate war correspondents.

The coverage of Shiloh in the Daily Courier featured screaming headlines which became a trademark of the paper throughout the war. On April 7, it ran this headline: "Great Battle Near Corinth! Confederates Triumphant! Great Slaughter of the Enemy! Their Whole Army Engaged." On April 8, the Daily Courier stated confidently that
the greatest battle ever fought on the American Continent has been terminated, and the God of Battles has decided that grand and bloody conflict in favor of the young Confederacy.... The way to Nashville and Louisville is open to our conquering chieftains.... Island 10 is relieved.... Memphis and New Orleans are no longer menaced.... Our troops have won the most important battle that has taken place since these States struck for independence.

The news of Beauregard's so-called planned retreat appeared in the April 10 Daily Courier. Two days later it carried the Savannah Republican's war correspondent's, P.W.A., description of the fighting on April 7. This was followed on April 15 by "Personne's" account of the struggle on April 7 and the retreat to Corinth. "Personne" felt that "on both days we obtained a victory...." His optimistic view coincided with the Daily Courier's opinion.

The reporting of Fredericksburg in the Daily Courier was more restrained than that of Shiloh. On November 18, 1862, it carried a dispatch that Burnside's Union army was on the heights opposite Fredericksburg. Burnside failed to advance, and on December 4, the Daily Courier explained why.

But, ah! the hero of Roanoke Island is met by an insurmountable obstacle - one that has amazed and astonished him. He finds the sagacious and energetic LEE, with his whole army, prepared to dispute the passage of the Rappahannock.... Will he cross the river in the face of our army? Poor BURNSIDE! He is doomed to inflict another disappointment on the Yankee people, and then, he goes the way of POPE and McCLELLAN.

Burnside remained inactive and on December 12, the
Daily Courier observed that
if he [Burnside] succeed in effecting the passage of that river, when he reaches this side his work will have just begun. In the plane that lies between that stream and the hills frowning with cannon, he will encounter opposition more fierce and unyielding than any those hostile arms have yet met with.

That was precisely what happened on December 13.

The news of the battle appeared in the December 15 and 16 papers. On December 18, the Daily Courier reported that "the enemy has disappeared in our immediate front and has re-crossed the Rappahannock." It concluded correctly that "our arms have been completely victorious at Fredericksburg."11

The Vicksburg campaign was difficult to cover because of poor communications in Mississippi and because the Union army cut Pemberton’s army’s contact with the east. Grant’s forces crossed to the east bank of the Mississippi River and captured Jackson on May 14, 1863. Two days later the Daily Courier stated that

information was said to have been received here yesterday stating on the authority of private dispatches that the Federals were in possession of Jackson. Our military authorities ... had received no such intelligence up to a late hour last evening.... Late accounts represented reinforcements to be pouring in there, and there was every prospect of GRANT’S army being driven back, if not completely routed, with a great part of his troops captured.

The news of the fall of Jackson was printed on May 18.

The inaccurate coverage continued in the May 19 paper which claimed a Confederate success on May 16 at
Champion's Hill. The story did not appear in a correct version until May 23 when the Confederate defeats of May 16 and 17 were related.

A Daily Courier reader would have believed that Grant and not Pemberton was under siege. On June 5, the paper disclosed that "GRANT will be compelled to raise the siege in a few days. It is reported that he is even now returning to Grand Gulf." On June 14, it cited the Mobile Tribune's dispatch that Grant was running out of food, and later it quoted the Jackson Mississippian to the effect that Vicksburg had "bountiful supplies for the next sixty days..."\(^\text{12}\)

The Daily Courier also carried a story of an unsuccessful Union assault on June 20 which cost Grant ten thousand casualties. A week later a dispatch informed the Daily Courier that "there was no assault made last Saturday [June 20]."\(^\text{13}\) The ten thousand casualties and many such other inflated figures were the subject of a humorous editorial, reprinted in the Daily Courier.

We have multitudinous rumors up here from Vicksburg. I figured up a few of them recently, and the result was that Grant had lost 365,000 killed, 1,823,000 wounded, and 2,000,000 prisoners, since he commenced attack upon the Hill City, and that he still had a tremendous force left! \(^\text{14}\)

The Daily Courier continued in an optimistic tone. On June 24, it confided that

a gentleman who arrived here yesterday from General JOHNSTON'S Headquarters ... represents the most perfect accord between General JOHN-
STON and General PEMBERTON. The latter was in no hurry for General JOHNSTON to move forward, but preferred that GRANT should remain where he is and continue his ineffectual assaults.... General PEMBERTON has provisions for full rations for two months....

That Pemberton did not have sufficient rations became obvious on July 8, when the Daily Courier received an unofficial account of the fall of Vicksburg. It refused to believe this, stating that "the above report is discredited in official circles both here and at Richmond." Thus another example of erroneous reporting became apparent when the official news of the capitulation was printed in the July 9 paper.

The siege of Vicksburg was several weeks old when the Daily Courier began its coverage of the Gettysburg campaign. The first news was a story from the Richmond Whig that Lee's army was moving northwards. As Lee advanced, he moved past the northern terminus of the Richmond telegraph line; consequently, news from his army became fragmentary. On June 20, the Daily Courier learnt that Confederate troops had entered Maryland. It thought that Lee "may advance upon Harrisburg, and, sweeping around, take Washington in the rear and flank; or he may design falling upon Baltimore or Philadelphia." It expressed its disappointment that "the brave and skillful LEE, in carrying the war into Carthage, is not likely to visit our Vandal enemies, with those horrors of war, which they have cruelly and wantonly inflicted on us with-
out scruple or qualm."\(^{17}\)

On July 2, the *Daily Courier* printed a rumor that Confederate forces had burned Harrisburg. This was a prelude to the news of July 7, that Northern papers had reported a Confederate victory at Gettysburg on July 1. The next day's *Daily Courier* told the story of the supposed success of July 5 and the capture of forty thousand Union prisoners. It felt that "the telegrams that inform us of that splendid victory may have made misstatements, but we are warranted in accepting the result of that battle as the most decisive and brilliant victory the Almighty has yet vouchsafed our arms."\(^ {18}\)

The news of Lee's retreat from Gettysburg appeared in the July 10 *Daily Courier*. Nevertheless, new dispatches confirmed the supposed battle of July 5. In spite of this alleged success, Lee ordered a withdrawal because of "the great difficulties caused by the great difficulties in obtaining supplies through so long a line of communication."\(^ {19}\) Interestingly, the *Daily Courier* never explicitly stated that Lee had returned to Virginia.

There is little to be said about the *Daily Courier* 's coverage of Chickamauga. It carried all the press dispatches promptly. But it had nothing to say about Bragg's generalship or on the censorship which he imposed on the press during the campaign.

The reporting of the Wilderness-Cold Harbor battles was also quite limited. The *Daily Courier* published all
the dispatches, but a day or two later than did the Virginia papers. It carried no information besides those sketchy stories and it made no editorial comments.

In summation, the Daily Courier highlighted its rumors by providing them with large headlines. It had little to say about Confederate generals. It failed to do as good a job as the other papers used in this study, but it should be remembered that much of its limited space was needed to recount the many Union attempts to take Charleston.

6. MACON DAILY TELEGRAPH

The Macon Telegraph was founded in 1826 and the Daily Telegraph, edited by Joseph Clisby, first appeared in 1860. The Telegraph, a Democratic party paper, was one of the most prominent central Georgia journals. It favored Georgia's secession from the Union. The Telegraph's circulation in 1860 was two thousand per week while the Daily Telegraph's circulation was seven hundred per day. During the war, the Daily Telegraph opposed Governor Brown. In September 1864, it was purchased by the owner of the Macon Confederate and it became the Daily Telegraph and Confederate.

On April 8, 1862, the Daily Telegraph presented the news of the first day's fight at Shiloh, one day later than the other papers. The press dispatches referred to the battle as a "complete victory" and heralded the destruction of the Union forces. In an editorial, the Daily
Telegraph stated that

the tide has turned. Henceforward our victorious legions will pour northward.... We cannot but hope also, that this victory will be no such barren triumph as that as Manassas. We do devoutly hope that it will be followed up to the extinction of the Federal force in Tennessee and Kentucky....

The Daily Telegraph's coverage was retarded by a breakdown of the telegraph. On April 9, it had no news of Shiloh, only "any number of rumors, not worth repeating." It had copies of the Atlanta papers but it placed "no confidence at all" in their stories. On April 11, it received a dispatch from Tennessee sent via Richmond with word of Beauregard's retreat, and on the next day full communications were restored. It also published P.W.A.'s account of the first day's fight. Not until April 19, did the Daily Telegraph carry a description of the second day's battle. Telegraphic difficulties hampered the Daily Telegraph's reporting of Shiloh.

The Battle of Fredericksburg also provided difficulties in coverage for the Daily Telegraph. On November 19, 1862, it learnt that Union troops were at Falmouth, across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg. There they remained while the Confederates wondered what their goal was. The Daily Telegraph admitted that "accounts from Fredericksburg ... are so confused that it is difficult to arrive at the truth." It also could not determine what Union strategy was.

Abandoning its silence, the Daily Telegraph stated
that the Union army was "evidently preparing to cross the river...". But on December 11, it carried a dispatch which stated that there would probably be no Union attack at Fredericksburg. Becoming confused again, the Daily Telegraph fell back upon an expression of blind confidence in General Lee. "Gen. Lee is master of the situation, and only biding his own time and selecting his own opportunity to demolish Burnside's army."11

The battle was fought on December 13, and was promptly reported in the December 15 paper. The accounts lacked depth because of another break in communications, this time caused by a Union raid on the railroad and telegraph south of Petersburg. The Daily Telegraph received some news via eastern Tennessee.12 It believed that the campaign was not over just because of the Union defeat at Fredericksburg. "A final repulse at this point would be morally disastrous...." After all, the Union forces had fought on only one day and had lost "at worst but 8,000 men...."13

The analysis of future Union movements was logical but inaccurate. Except for the ill-fated "mud march" the Federal campaign was over. The victory was "an easy, cheap and sudden prostration of the grand military enterprise of the winter's campaign, and of the war - to take our capital." It was logical for the Daily Telegraph to "look for important events in both this country and Europe to follow this last defeat."14 That European diplo-
matic and armed intervention did not take place may be ascribed to the Confederate reverses at Vicksburg and Gettysburg.

The reporting of the Vicksburg campaign was difficult because of poor telegraphic facilities in Mississippi. The Confederate defeat at Port Gibson on May 1 was described as a victory in the May 4 Daily Telegraph but this was corrected in the next day's paper. It accurately predicted that the Union army's objective was "to take possession of Jackson and thus cut off communication with Vicksburg," but it also thought that "there are already enough troops in the neighborhood of Jackson, not only to check their advance, but to destroy them utterly." This was not true. Jackson fell on May 14. The Daily Telegraph printed an unofficial dispatch on May 18, reporting the surrender, but it believed "the story groundless." Only on May 19, was the official news of the defeat published. The Daily Telegraph remained sure that Grant would be beaten.

Grant defeated Pemberton on May 16 and 17. The May 20 Daily Telegraph referred to the May 16 fight as a drawn battle, a more accurate account not being published until May 22. The Daily Telegraph praised Pemberton, calling him "one of the greatest heroes of the war." Yet in spite of the fact that the Daily Telegraph was receiving optimistic dispatches about Vicksburg, it assumed a pessimistic editorial position. On May 30, it
stated that "it is evident the fall of Vicksburg is a question of time only," and that "when it comes to a contest of reinforcements, the enemy can beat us at that game...."

The contrast of optimistic news dispatches and pessimistic editorials continued in early June. On several occasions the Daily Telegraph complained about the poor quality of news accounts. But towards the end of June, the Daily Telegraph began "to feel the strongest assurance that she [Vicksburg] will emerge triumphant, and the campaign of the Federals in Mississippi prove to them the most disastrous of the war." These statements were repeated on June 26 and July 7. This discrepancy probably existed because even though editor Clisby was personally convinced that the situation was perilous, he was obliged to print the Press Association's confident articles because they were the only accounts available to him.

An unofficial report of the fall of Vicksburg appeared in the July 8 Daily Telegraph. The official news was carried on July 9, along with an editorial praising Pemberton and Johnston but criticizing the government for failing to provide them with adequate supplies and soldiers. Though the Daily Telegraph made some wise comments during the campaign, it still printed many rumors which gave the impression that Grant and not Pemberton was about to surrender.

Also in June 1863, Lee began his invasion of the
North. The first news that he was on the march appeared in the June 12 paper which cited a story in the June 8 Richmond Whig. The Daily Telegraph favored the invasion because it "would have a powerful tendency to develop a peace party ... and would do good generally."  

As Lee moved on he soon outdistanced the telegraph line. The Daily Telegraph admitted on June 22 that "we are profoundly ignorant of the movements of our own army." It did learn that Confederate troops were not committing depredations in the North, and it defended this policy because it had faith in the governmental leaders who had adopted it.

On June 30, the Daily Telegraph announced the presence of Confederate soldiers in Pennsylvania and on July 2 it carried the false rumor of the capture of Harrisburg. Then on July 7, came the first news of the fight at Gettysburg. The Daily Telegraph cited Northern stories of a Confederate victory on July 1, and followed it on July 8 with the Confederate account of the alleged victory of July 5 and the capture of forty thousand Union soldiers. The Daily Telegraph felt that the battle had resulted in "the substantial destruction of the Northern 'Army of the Potomac...." Slowly, the truth filtered in. On July 10, the Daily Telegraph discovered that Lee had been victorious on July 1 and 2. A renewed attack on July 3 had been only partially successful, and the army had retreated to Hagers-
town. The Daily Telegraph believed that "while it is ap­
parent that Lee has met with a check, - that the story of
the great victory on Sunday last [July 5] is a fabrica­
tion ... we still do not feel any apprehensions for the
safety of Lee's army." 23

The news of Lee's withdrawal across the Potomac was
printed on July 18. The Daily Telegraph conceded that
"there can be no rational doubt" that Lee's invasion "hes
been a failure." 24 This statement contrasted with those
in the other papers. Only the Daily Telegraph admitted
that Lee had been beaten. The other papers never gave up
the claim that Lee had been successful in spite of the
fact that he had been forced to retreat.

The coverage of the Battle of Chickamauga was hamper­
ed by censorship imposed by General Bragg. On September
11, 1863, the Daily Telegraph learned of the fall of
Chattanooga from the September 9 Atlanta Appeal. The oth­
er papers used in this study discovered this from North­
erm journals. But Macon is near Atlanta, the closest ma­
jor city to Chattanooga. Apparently, Bragg could not pre­
vent the Atlanta press from reporting the news.

A dispatch, probably inspected by Bragg before it
was allowed to be sent, provided the stimulus for a Daily
Telegraph attack on the Associated Press. It stated that
Rosecrans "has refused, and it is believed still refuses
to give Bragg battle, but will aim at wintering in Chat­
tanooga." 25 The Daily Telegraph ridiculed this report.
Could anything be more unreasonable in Rosecranz [sic] ? After Gen. Bragg had fallen back from Chattanooga on purpose to give him battle, this faithless fellow does not hesitate to avail himself of Gen. Bragg's civility and take possession of the abandoned stronghold, but when asked for a responsive courtesy in the shape of a fight from his flanking column, "he has refused, and it is believed still refuses"! We sympathise deeply with the news agent of the associated press in a just indignation at such unreasonable conduct on the part of Rosecranz [sic] ! 26

There was little news until September 22 and 23 when the Daily Telegraph carried accounts of the fighting at Chickamauga. The encounter was "one of the greatest battles of the war ... and perhaps the most decisive victory of the war...." The Daily Telegraph hoped that Bragg would follow up by pursuing and destroying Rosecrans' army. 27

In addition to war news, the September 23 Daily Telegraph printed two letters on the censorship question. The first one, by Will O. Woodson, the Press Association correspondent with Bragg's army, showed how Bragg's censorship worked.

On my arrival at Rome, I found it impossible to gain any positive information in regard to the whereabouts of Gen. Bragg, and having been notified by Col. Alex McKinstry, provost marshal general of the army, that no dispatches for the press could be forwarded without his approval, I immediately returned to Kingston for the purpose of taking a train for Dalton, in order to reach General Bragg's headquarters....

On the following morning I proceeded to Gen. Bragg's quarters and asked Col. Mck. if I could commence work again. He replied that it was impolitic at that time. I then asked for a pass to remain with the army until the proper time should arrive which, after consulting with
General Bragg he declined to give me, stating that the General had refused to grant all persons not connected with the army, the privilege of accompanying it in the intended movement.

The second one, an open letter by J.S. Thrasher, Superintendent of the Press Association, to the Atlanta Appeal, complained about military interference with reporting.

It is to be hoped that officers commanding will come to entertain a more just view of the relations between the army, the press, and the people, and of the great fact, that as is the army necessary to the defense of the rights and possessions of the people, so are the confidence and sympathy of the people necessary to the army, and that the press is the link between them.

The coverage of the Wilderness-Cold Harbor campaign also presented problems for the Daily Telegraph. On May 7, 1864, it informed its readers of the May 5 battle, but the fight on May 6 was not mentioned until May 9. The Daily Telegraph stated that although "Grant has been repulsed," the campaign was not over because "Grant will endeavor to carry his point at any and all sacrifices." 28

After reporting the battle of May 8 in the May 10 paper, the Daily Telegraph's news supply was cut off. A Union raid had cut the railroad and telegraph lines south of Petersburg on May 7, but the Daily Telegraph had been receiving its news through an inland route. 29 Now this source had also been closed. The paper explained that the alternate telegraph line was being utilized by the government only, 30 but this could very well have been an attempt to cover up the news of another Union raid.
On May 17, telegraph service was resumed, and the Daily Telegraph printed the news of the bloody battle of May 12 at Spotsylvania Court House. From this point to the end of the campaign, it presented an accurate but thin account of the fighting. It also printed a chronological summary of the events of May 4 through May 18, in order to bring its readers up to date.31

In summation, the Daily Telegraph made several attempts to come to grips with reality when the results of Vicksburg and Gettysburg turned out to be less spectacular than had been promised. While its news reporting suffered because of Union raids on the telegraph during the Fredericksburg and Wilderness campaigns, its coverage of the three western battles, Shiloh, Vicksburg, and especially Chickamauga was superior to that of any of the other papers used in this study. This was so probably because the Daily Telegraph was closer to the scene of action, particularly with regard to Chickamauga which was fought in northern Georgia, than any of the other journals used in this study. By contrast and for the opposite reasons, its accounts of the three eastern battles of Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and Wilderness—Cold Harbor were the poorest of the papers used in this study.
CHAPTER III

CONCLUSION: THE CONFEDERATE CREDIBILITY GAP

This study has examined how the Confederate press reported six battles. The information presented in the preceding two chapters suggests certain questions about the role of Confederate newspapers during the Civil War. In this case there are three questions which need answering. Firstly, did the coverage of war news help or hurt morale? Secondly, how did the Confederate journals compare with Northern papers with regard to accuracy of accounts and questions of censorship and suppression? Lastly, did the Confederate journals report the news well, and is it reasonable to have expected them to do a better job?

Several historians contend, as R.L. Brantley does, that Confederate newspapers "preserved a high morale among the people and the soldiers."¹ James G. Randall believes that the Confederate press helped to promote morale by claiming great victories and by putting, what he calls, the "best interpretation" on Confederate defeats.² Finally, Lester J. Cappon states that "while there were exaggerations on the side of victory, no rumors of defeat, like those so often published in the North, appeared in the Virginia press to dishearten the people."³
The opposite claim, that Confederate papers hurt morale, also has its advocates. Clement Eaton believes that "in the attrition of Southern morale the Confederate newspapers played a significant role."^4 Harrison Trexler and Bell Wiley agree.5

What evidence is available to indicate how Confederate papers affected morale? Randall and Cappon offer no proof of their assertions. Harrison Trexler holds that Richmond papers attacked Davis, and "in view of the wide southern circulation of the Richmond press this attitude of their editorials must have affected southern morale." Trexler fails to support this conclusion with any documentation about morale. Clement Eaton cites Trexler, Randall, and Coulter; however, Coulter comments upon the discretion of Confederate journals rather than upon their effect on morale. The most impressive attempt at documentation is made by Bell Wiley. He cites three diary entries and two letters which denounced the effect of the papers on morale. Yet his three diary selections were written by a Texan after Vicksburg had fallen and Texas had been cut off from the rest of the Confederacy east of the Mississippi River. The news in the Texas press must have been miserable, but it can hardly be used as a representative sample for the entire Confederate press. Of the two citations from letters, one was written in January 1865, surely not an average month during the life of the Confederacy.6
It is impossible from this study to determine whether Confederate papers helped or hurt morale. Arthur C. Cole has stated that "news ... was highly colored to favor the Confederate cause." Editors, writes James W. Silver, "wishfully misinterpreted reports which were at best extremely unreliable," and this, believes another historian, resulted in "estimates of the military situation that bore scant resemblance to reality...." On occasion editors received their first news of military affairs from Northern papers. But Confederate journals encouraged their readers not to believe those reports, and it must be pointed out that some of those Northern accounts were as fanciful as some of the Confederate dispatches. All this proves only that the reporting in the Confederate press was poor. It says nothing about how this coverage affected morale.

Comparisons can be made between the effect of censorship and suppression in the Union and in the Confederacy. As early as April 1861, the United States State Department exerted some degree of control over telegraphic dispatches. In July, the War Department took over this job by creating rules as to what could be telegraphed. The examination of telegrams was to be performed by American Telegraph Company officials. Then came the First Battle of Bull Run, and the War Department assumed this task. The restrictions placed on reports from Bull Run were easily evaded. Throughout the war, the censorship
of the telegraph was erratic, and, even when effectively enforced, it only delayed stories, it never quashed them. This was so because the restrictions could be evaded by sending reports through the mails or by couriers.

Some Union generals excluded all or several correspondents from their camps. The ultimate governmental weapon was suppression of newspapers themselves. At least twenty-one Union papers were suppressed, including the Chicago Times and the New York World. The suspensions were all of a very short duration; therefore, Professor Randall concluded that the Civil War was marked by a "lack of any real censorship," in the twentieth century use of the term. In short, the Union press reported much information that should have been kept out of the papers.

It seems that Confederate journals also printed much news that they should not have. To cite one example, on October 11, 1863, General Lee complained to Secretary of War James A. Seddon that his army's movements had been reported in several Richmond papers, and urged him to encourage editors to refrain from mentioning "military movements until the result has been obtained." During his tour of the South, Colonel Fremantle found that "liberty of the press is carried to its fullest extent." Mrs. Chesnut recorded in her diary that "Mr. Preston says we will not be able to fight on equal terms until our press is muzzled...." Mrs. Chesnut herself did not
think highly of Confederate papers. R.G.H. Kean denounced several Richmond papers for "stirring up opposition, distrust, and hatred towards the President...." And finally, T.C. De Leon praised the freedom of the Southern press. But J.B. Jones complained that Confederate journals were restricted in their reporting "as our generals and our government are famed for a prudential reticence."

Why the disagreement among Premantle, Chesnut, Kean, De Leon, and Jones? The answer could be that Confederate censorship was informal and erratic. As early as June 1861, General Beauregard complained that estimates of his troop strength had appeared in the Charleston Mercury, and wrote to Secretary of War L.P. Walker that "I find that our regulations do not forbid such publications...." Because of this lack of official regulations, commanders often undertook the task of suppression. In December 1861, General Joseph E. Johnston barred "professional correspondents of newspapers ... from our camps...." General Earl Van Dorn threatened to suspend any paper in the area of his command that printed information "in reference to the movements of the troops," or that tended "to impair confidence in any of the commanding officers...."

This informal censorship extended to the Secretary of War as well. In May 1862, General Joseph E. Johnston complained to Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin about certain articles which appeared in a Richmond paper. Benjamin replied that "I will do all I can to help you, but
the application of military regulations within the Army will be much more efficacious than any attempt at punishment by jury trial." The essence of this informal policy was stated by Secretary of War George Randolph.

A more rigid censorship should be established by the papers themselves.... It is the ardent wish of the Department that this revolution may be successfully closed without the suppression of one single newspaper in the Confederate States, and that our experience may be able to challenge comparison with our enemy.

It would seem that the Confederate government did not suppress any journals, and that Confederate censorship was less formal than the Union's. But this does not mean that Confederate restrictions were less effective. As Clement Eaton points out, "Southern papers ... were less flagrant offenders in publishing military news than Northern papers, probably because they did not have the large number of war correspondents that the Northern newspapers had." For example, formal Union restrictions delayed but did not prevent papers from reporting the results of defeats in the Peninsula campaign, at Fredericksburg, and at Chancellorsville. By contrast, the shortage of reporters coupled with the "prudential reticence," as J.B. Jones put it, of Confederate officials resulted in outrageously inaccurate coverage of the Vicksburg and Gettysburg campaigns.

The last point which must be dealt with is whether it is reasonable to have expected a better performance
by the Confederate papers. One must admit that coverage was inadequate. Particularly significant was the lack of trained correspondents. When one was present at a battle, his stories were carried by many papers. For example, the dispatches filed from Shiloh by P.W.A. of the Savannah Republican were printed by all the papers used in this study. The shortage of reporters also explains why a rumor like that of the alleged battle at Gettysburg on July 5 was printed in all the journals. The acceptance of this rumor enables one to understand the difficulties which the Confederate press faced. J.B. Jones and R.G.H. Kean, both of whom worked at the War Department, had no news from Pennsylvania other than the press dispatches. There was no official word from Lee because he was not in direct communication with Richmond. The same can be said for the Vicksburg campaign. Kean recorded in his diary that the War Department depended upon the press telegrams for news from Mississippi.\textsuperscript{32} One cannot criticize the newspapers for printing dispatches which were the only available accounts of the progress of two vital campaigns. Once the truth came out, they generally printed it even if, as was the case with Gettysburg, several weeks after the events occurred. The hardships of the times are an excuse for the delays in covering events and for the rumors and falsehoods which appeared in the news columns. It cannot be argued that Confederate newspapers did a good job in covering war news. It can be argued
that they reported war news to the best of their ability, which was not good enough.
APPENDIX

IMPORTANT DATES

SHILOH

April 6, 1862 - Confederate attack on Union army under Grant is successful.

April 7, 1862 - Grant reinforced by Buell forces Confederates to retreat.

FREDERICKSBURG

November 17, 1862 - Union army begins to arrive at Falmouth across the Rappahannock River from Fredericksburg.

December 12, 1862 - Union army crosses the Rappahannock.

December 13, 1862 - Union army attacks Confederate positions and is badly defeated.

December 15, 1862 - Union army recrosses the Rappahannock.

VICKSBURG

April 30, 1863 - Grant crosses to the east bank of the Mississippi River.

May 1, 1863 - Battle of Port Gibson.

May 14, 1863 - Union army takes Jackson.

May 16, 1863 - Union victory at Champion's Hill.

May 17, 1863 - Union victory at Big Black Bridge.

May 18, 1863 - Siege of Vicksburg begins.

May 19, 1863 - Union assault fails.

May 22, 1863 - Union assault fails.

June 7, 1863 - Defeat of Confederates under Kirby Smith at Milliken's Bend.
July 4, 1863 - Vicksburg surrenders.

GETTYSBURG

June 9, 1863 - Cavalry battle at Brandy Station.

June 24, 1863 - Confederate army concentrates north of the Potomac River.

June 28, 1863 - Two Confederate divisions are at Carlisle, Pennsylvania; one Confederate division is at York, Pennsylvania.

July 1-3, 1863 - Battle of Gettysburg.

July 4-5, 1863 - Confederate retreat begins at night; by morning evacuation is complete.

July 7, 1863 - Confederates are at Williamsport.

July 12, 1863 - Union army arrives opposite Confederate lines.

July 13-14, 1863 - At night, the Confederate army crosses the Potomac into Virginia.

CHICKAMAUGA

September 8, 1863 - Bragg evacuates Chattanooga.

September 9-13, 1863 - Union and Confederate armies maneuver and skirmish in northern Georgia.

September 19-20, 1863 - Battle of Chickamauga.

September 21, 1863 - Retreating Union army arrives in Chattanooga.

WILDERNESS-COLD HARBOR

May 3, 1864 - Union army moves into the Wilderness.

May 5-6, 1864 - Battle of the Wilderness.

May 7, 1864 - Union army begins to move towards Spotsylvania Court House.

May 8, 1864 - Confederates arrive at Spotsylvania Court House.

May 10, 12, 18, 19, 1864 - Battle of Spotsylvania Court House.
May 20 - June 1, 1864 - Union army maneuvers further south.

June 3, 1864 - Battle of Cold Harbor.
TABLE 1

PRICES FOR ONE YEAR NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Note: Spaces without prices indicate that subscriptions for those time periods were not accepted by the papers.
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Note: Spaces without prices indicate that subscriptions for those time periods were not accepted by the papers.
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PRICES FOR THREE MONTHS NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Note: Spaces without prices indicate that subscriptions for those time periods were not accepted by the papers.
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2. In all the newspapers which I examined, editorial comment and news items were often interwoven.

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15 Cotterill, The Old South, 297.
17 T. Conn Bryan, Confederate Georgia (Athens, Georgia, 1953), 205.
18 Mary Elizabeth Massey, Ersatz in the Confederacy (Columbia, 1952), 139.
19 Mott, American Journalism, 362-363.
20 Brantley, Georgia Journalism of the Civil War, 97.
21 Massey, Ersatz in the Confederacy, 140-141.
22 H.R. Sass, Outspoken: 150 Years of The News and Courier (Columbia, 1953), 32.
24 Charleston Daily Courier (South Carolina), April 1, 1862.
25 Massey, Ersatz in the Confederacy, 141.
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49 Mathews, "Civil War News," South Atlantic Quarterly, LII (July 1953), 375.

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63 Mott, American Journalism, 365. Also see Coulter, Confederate States of America, 503.
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71. De Leon, *Four Years in Rebel Capitals*, 289.


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4. Richmond Daily Whig (Virginia), April 7, 1862.


6. Richmond Daily Whig (Va.), April 10, 1862.

7. Ibid., April 12, 1862.

8. Ibid., April 14, 1862.

9. Ibid., December 5, 1862.

10. Ibid., May 4, 1863.

11. Ibid., May 19, 1863.

12. Ibid., May 20, 1863.

13. Ibid., June 2, 1863.

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2. Richmond Dispatch

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6 Richmond Dispatch (Virginia), April 9, 1862.

7 Ibid., April 10, 1862.

8 Ibid., April 12, 1862.

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10 Ibid., April 18, 1862.

11 Ibid., April 17, 1862.

12 Ibid., April 21, 1862.

13 Ibid., November 18, 1862.
14 Ibid., November 26, 1862.
15 Ibid., December 2 and 9, 1862.
17 Richmond *Dispatch* (Va.), December 11, 1862.
18 Ibid., December 16, 1862.
19 Ibid., December 20, 1862.
20 Ibid., May 20, 1863.
21 Ibid., May 21, 1863.
22 Ibid., May 22, 1863.
23 Ibid., May 26, 1863.
24 Ibid., June 6, 1863.
25 Ibid., June 8, 1863.
26 Ibid., June 22, 1863.
27 Ibid., June 23, 1863.
28 Ibid., June 19, 1863.
29 Ibid., June 26, 1863.
30 Ibid., June 29, 1863.
31 Ibid., July 10, 1863.
32 Ibid., July 13, 1863.
33 Ibid., September 24, 1863.
34 Ibid., May 5, 1864.
35 Ibid., June 1, 1864.
36 Lynchburg *Daily Virginian*

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3 Lynchburg Daily Virginian (Virginia), April 8, 1862.

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5 In reality, Lee did not block Burnside. Burnside was delayed by a lack of pontoons. See West Point Atlas.

6 Lynchburg Daily Virginian (Va.), December 19, 1862.

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8 Ibid., June 3, 1863.

9 Ibid., July 9, 1863.

10 Ibid., June 26, 1863.

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13 Ibid., July 9, 1863.

14 Ibid., July 11, 1863.

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16 Ibid., September 26, 1863.


4. Wilmington Daily Journal


2 Wilmington Daily Journal (North Carolina), April 7, 1862.

3 Ibid., April 9, 1862.

4 Ibid., April 17, 1862.

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7 Bruce Catton, The Centennial History of the Civil War, II (Garden City, 1963), 92-95, 167, and 170. Also see War of the Rebellion: Official Records, 1st Ser., XVIII, 54-57.
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8 Wilmington Daily Journal (N.C.), December 18, 1862.
9 Ibid., December 22, 1862.
10 Ibid., December 23, 1862.
11 Ibid., May 15, 1863.
12 Ibid., May 19, 1863.
13 Ibid., May 22, 1863.
14 Ibid., May 23, 25, and 30, 1863, and June 2 and 4, 1863.
15 Ibid., June 10, 1863.
16 Ibid., June 11, 1863.
17 Ibid., June 17, 1863.
18 Ibid., June 27, 1863.
19 Ibid., July 6, 1863.
20 Ibid., July 10, 1863.
21 Ibid., July 11, 1863.
22 Ibid., July 13, 1863.
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24 Ibid., September 17, 1863.
25 Ibid., September 18, 1863.
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2 Laura A. White, Robert Barnwell Rhett: Father of Secession (New York, 1931), 138-143.
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8. Charleston Daily Courier (South Carolina), April 8, 1862.

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13. Ibid., June 23 and 29, 1863.

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16. Ibid., June 24, 1863.

17. Ibid., June 25, 1863.

18. Ibid., July 8, 1863.

19. Ibid., July 11, 1863.

6. Macon Daily Telegraph

1. R.L. Brantley, Georgia Journalism of the Civil War Period (Nashville, 1929), 22.

2. T. Conn Bryan, Confederate Georgia (Athens, Georgia, 1953), 203.


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Ibid., December 5, 1862.

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Ibid., December 18, 1862.

Ibid., December 17 and 18, 1862. Eight thousand men was an understatement.

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Ibid., June 20, 1863.

Ibid., June 26, 1863.

Ibid., July 8, 1863.

Ibid., July 11, 1863.

Ibid., July 18, 1863.

Ibid., September 14, 1863.

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13 Ibid., 649-650.

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