

“When Johnny comes marching home”

The Demobilization of Lee’s Army

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Lawrence Taliaferro’s Civil War should have ended on very familiar ground when he crossed the Rappahannock River near Fredericksburg shortly after the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House on April 9, 1865.¹ Instead Taliaferro, who served in the Forty-seventh Virginia Infantry, was struck by the drastic changes to the landscape. Abandoned and rusting war machinery littered the ground as well as the bones of mules and horses. The surrounding forests had been leveled to serve the needs of warring armies throughout the conflict. As Taliaferro traversed those final twelve miles to what he hoped would be the comforts of his family’s estate, he became disoriented by the numerous paths that obscured a well-known road. Eventually he lost his way and was forced to ask for directions. An elderly black man, who Taliaferro later learned was an ex-slave of the family, escorted the confused and tired young man to his home.

Taliaferro reunited with his father and sister and shortly thereafter an older brother who had also served in Lee’s army. With the help of only one mule, one horse, and a few ex-slaves who remained with the family, the Taliaferros began the process of rebuilding their estate by collecting old bones and iron from the surrounding area for resale. The Federal army, in recognition of the family’s hospitality during the war, supplied mules and food, which no doubt furthered the process of rebuilding and perhaps even fostered a sense of optimism that a brighter future was possible. No amount of succor from the Federal army, however, would have blinded Lawrence Taliaferro and his family to the challenges they faced in the immediate future.²

The confusion and uncertainty that Lawrence Taliaferro experienced on his journey home was repeated along countless roads and paths throughout Virginia. Unfortunately, much of the literature on the Army of Northern

Virginia and the Civil War ends with the furling of flags and the stacking of arms on the surrender field at Appomattox. Although the army ceased to function as the military arm of the Confederate government, it did not cease to exist after the surrender ceremony on April 12; rather, it slowly dissipated along the roads as small groups of men headed off to destinations around the South. Ending the Civil War narrative abruptly at Appomattox or focusing on stories of reconciliation and reunion obscures or minimizes the connections between the war and the postwar challenges surrounding emancipation and subjection to Republican rule, which defined the era of Reconstruction.³

A survey of the experiences of Lee’s men in the first few weeks after their surrender at Appomattox challenges the tendency to see a sharp break between the war years and Reconstruction. Indeed, many of the fears and lingering questions that Confederates carried home with them would play out in the following decades. For the newly minted veterans of Virginia, the journey home may have been particularly emotionally and psychologically taxing, given that they had fought four years on familiar ground, framing the war effort as a defense not only of nation but of home.⁴ It is not a stretch to imagine soldiers contemplating whether they would face retribution from the Federal government in the form of disfranchisement or property confiscation. Many worried about what a post-emancipation social order would look like, with the Federal government now in control and the U.S. Army in a position to realize the worst fears of white Southerners, associated with images of racial amalgamation and “Negro rule”—the very social order the Confederate army was meant to prevent from taking hold. The end of the war raised profound questions of identity that civilians and soldiers must answer. White Southerners occupied a precarious position in the days and weeks after the end of the war, as they clung to their former Confederate selves and wrestled with the question of whether they could once again embrace their prewar identification as Americans.⁵

More immediate concerns centered on the challenges of providing for themselves and their families—even as they were reminded of the physical destruction the war had wrought in the Shenandoah Valley, the cities of Richmond, Petersburg, and Fredericksburg, and elsewhere. Extending the story into the first few weeks after the surrender at Appomattox to include “these final acts of soldiering,” according to historian Jason Phillips, will “change the tone and meaning of the war’s outcome.”⁶

The suddenness of the collapse and surrender of Lee's army left no time to plan and execute an orderly demobilization. Life in the trenches of Petersburg may have been taxing on the mind and body, but it also conditioned Lee's men to maintain the belief that continued resistance to Grant and the Federal army was not only possible but likely to bring about independence.⁷ In short, within less than two weeks Confederates went from resistance with some sense of hope to defeat and surrender.⁸ The march west out of the trenches of Petersburg on April 2, 1865, was not carried out in preparation for an eventual surrender; it was intended as the first stage of an eventual linkup with Joseph Johnston's army in North Carolina. Writing ten years after the war, George C. Eggleston recalled the sense of optimism that he believed pervaded the ranks even late in the war, noting, "We refused to admit, even to ourselves, the possibility of failure."⁹

For thousands of Confederates the war ended along the roads leading west out of Petersburg as entire units disintegrated out of sheer exhaustion or the realization that the war was lost. Those Virginians who lived within close proximity perhaps found it easier to justify breaking ranks, given the army's bleak future. Not only did these men lack information regarding the status of the army in the coming days, they failed to procure the requisite parole papers that would eventually be distributed at Appomattox. Samuel Howard learned of Lee's surrender from Federal cavalry miles from the main body. At first he considered the news a hoax, until "party after party pass us unarmed repeating the same story." Confederates who abandoned the army during the retreat, as did Howard, proceeded without parole papers, which left them "uncertain what would be our fate in the event of our capture." As a result, Howard and his comrades tried to "avoid the Yanks as we would a pestilence." Only later did these men proceed with the confidence that they would be unmolested by Federal soldiers.¹⁰

Those who remained with the army as far as Appomattox Court House and who formally surrendered their arms were afforded the opportunity to bring some measure of closure to their four-year struggle. Between April 9 and April 13 Confederates interacted with Union soldiers, listened to their commanders for one final time, and said good-bye to friends who had shared the hardships of war. Lee addressed his men one final time in General Order No. 9, sharing his "admiration of your constancy and devotion to your country . . . and duty faithfully performed."¹¹

Popular perceptions of the surrender at Appomattox are shaped by im-

ages of Lee and Grant seated in the McLean House, Union soldiers sharing rations with hungry Confederates, and by the earliest symbols of reconciliation and reunion, associated with the famous salute shared by major generals John B. Gordon and Joshua Chamberlain during the surrender ceremony itself. Grant’s own lenient terms of surrender, which allowed soldiers to keep their horses and gave permission “to pass through the lines of the Union armies” and utilize “Government transportation and Military rail-roads,” contribute to our continued emphasis on the theme of reconciliation.¹²

While acts of benevolence and peaceful interactions between one-time enemies no doubt occurred at Appomattox, these attractive stories tend to lead to a superficial understanding of the war’s end, and certainly fail to acknowledge the strong feelings of bitterness that pervaded Confederate ranks. Even before the army’s surrender, retreating Confederates expressed horror at the news that Richmond and Petersburg had fallen. “Words cannot fathom the depth and breadth of my soul’s anguish at this unexpected news,” wrote William L. Wilson of the Twelfth Virginia Cavalry. The experience of formally surrendering arms was no less painful; a second lieutenant in the Nineteenth Virginia Battalion, Crutchfield’s Artillery Brigade, described the scene as “the saddest day of my life.” This same officer held out hope even after parole papers were distributed that “there is life in the old land yet—and I cannot believe that the southern people are subjugated.” James Whitehorne admitted that “all of us are fleeing Appomattox as if we could run away from the horrible memories of the place.” Even years after the war, former Rockbridge Artillery officer William Thomas Poague admitted that “there has never been a day since, when I could dwell on that last scene without experiencing emotions of deepest grief and sorrow.”¹³ For Confederate soldiers, Appomattox was a scene of defeat and humiliation, not of reconciliation and reunion.

For the most diehard Confederates, an unwillingness to surrender and admit defeat reflected their inability to return to their prewar identity as Americans. These men contemplated the roads that would take them to Gen. Joseph E. Johnston’s army in North Carolina or the Blue Ridge Mountains to fight another day; some considered destinations as far away as Texas and Brazil rather than face the humiliation of defeat and Republican rule. Henry McNeill, who served in the Seventh Virginia Cavalry, McNeill’s Partisan Rangers, continued to hold out hope for “foreign intervention” when he informed his mother on April 24 that he would wait in the mountains and

woods “until we can learn the fate of the Confecy more fully.” Even after learning of the fall of Richmond and the anticipation of Lee’s surrender, John Dooley felt “honour bound to follow the fortunes” of the escaped Confederate government, “until its cause is hopeless or its hopes of success revive.”¹⁴ Dooley traveled as far as Charlotte, North Carolina, before deciding to return to his home in Richmond.

The members of what Peter Carmichael has dubbed the “Last Generation”—those soldiers who served as junior-grade officers in Lee’s army and proved to be some of the most aggressive on the battlefield—remained steadfast and confident of victory even late in the war. Their commitment to the South’s ruling class and to the maintenance of slavery, together with their strong sense of Confederate nationalism, reinforced their unwavering faith that God would not abandon their righteous cause. Defeat demanded acceptance of a new order, which was more than some could bear. Young Virginians of the slaveholding class who had matured throughout the most politically divisive years of the 1850s were especially defiant. Ham Chamberlayne refused to take part in the “funeral at Appomattox C. H.” and instead made plans to fight with Johnston in North Carolina or move on to Texas: “I am not conquered by any means & shall not be while alive—My life is of no further value—Farewell to my beloved Virginia.”¹⁵ Such decisions attest to the difficulty some of Lee’s men had imagining themselves adjusting to and living peacefully with freed slaves and their enemies.

The vast majority of the men in the Army of Northern Virginia chose to return home to rebuild their lives and communities. The time it took to walk home depended on the number of miles to be traversed as well as unanticipated obstacles experienced along the way. The most serious challenge was the logistical nightmare of having to secure supplies from civilians who, in many cases, were overwhelmed by the demand. William B. Grove’s journey home took less than two weeks. While his diary entry of April 7 indicates that he was “determined with the help of God to resist to . . . the last,” by April 28 he was working his plow and considering planting watermelon seeds for his next crop.¹⁶ Samuel Howard’s diary entries no doubt reflect the experiences of many. On his journey home he depended to a great extent on the hospitality of those encountered along the way in procuring food and other supplies. On April 12, Howard and his small party arrived at the home of Phil Withers, where they met “with a cold reception.” Withers agreed to “take us out of the rain” but was unable to feed them, not because he was unwilling to

do so, but because soldiers had "eaten him out." The following morning the group walked eight miles to Pleasant Rosser's farm, where they were once again forced to compete with a large group of soldiers seeking food. From there it was on to William Person, whom Howard found to be a "shrewd and hospitable gentlemen"; there they stayed for two days. Howard reached the Barksdale Ferry Depot on April 20, and there he crossed the Dan River.¹⁷

A few lucky souls took advantage of functioning railroads and steamships. Four years of war had severely taxed Virginia's transportation infrastructure, but many of the lines remained intact, even if their tracks had been worn down for military purposes.¹⁸ Lee's chief of artillery, Brig. Gen. Edward P. Alexander, took advantage of a railroad linking City Point, Petersburg, and Burkeville on what was to be the first stage of a long journey to Brazil, where he intended to join the military in the war against Paraguay. Pvt. Edgar Warfield, who served in the Seventeenth Virginia Infantry, reached Richmond by April 15 and attempted to secure transportation home to Alexandria in northern Virginia. Although the provost marshal was unable to help, Warfield managed to purchase a ticket on the steamship *Kelso* for the final leg of his journey.¹⁹

Crowded country roads, limited supplies, and thousands of men desperate to return to their families as quickly as possible all contributed to a breakdown in discipline and increased tension and violence. This was acknowledged almost immediately after the surrender at Appomattox by a chaplain, who observed "more stealing in camp . . . than I ever knew." Violence on the roads home was sometimes targeted, but often indiscriminate. David Walker of the Otey Battery returned home to Amelia Court House only to find that "all our neighbors had been pillaged and abused . . . by stragglers." While resting at William Person's home, William Grove learned that a soldier had destroyed his host's map, cutting out various states to use for directions home. Though the theft might be considered trivial, Grove described the perpetrator as a "miscreant" who "had degraded the very name of Soldier." Grove also experienced a more serious breakdown in discipline when he witnessed a group of "ragamuffins" break into a government storehouse at News Ferry Depot to steal harnesses and other accoutrements. It is unclear whether the men involved were former soldiers, but such actions were often justified as a means to prevent the items from falling into the hands of Yankees or as compensation for back pay never received.²⁰

The sudden breakdown in authority forced many counties to quickly

organize patrols to deal with deserters, paroled soldiers, and bands of outlaws who stole horses, cattle, and sheep, and preyed on innocent civilians. In Lexington, ex-Confederates assisted with law enforcement and managed to track down thieves who had stolen the Communion service at the Falling Springs Presbyterian Church. The residents of Culpeper worked to repair the county jail in response to an increase in cattle theft and other disturbances attributed to returning soldiers.²¹

More severe lapses in authority could be found in places such as Lynchburg and Danville in the immediate aftermath of Appomattox. Lynchburg's close proximity to Appomattox made it an obvious destination for renegade Confederates and newly paroled soldiers seeking transportation and supplies for their journeys home. The large influx of soldiers taxed the town's infrastructure and economy, which had been in decline throughout the war. Fearful of riots and plundering, local business owners shut their doors and city services were suspended. This led to the looting of Confederate supply stores by both soldiers and destitute white civilians who sought clothing, shoes, and other valuables. A quick decision was made to restore order with the Union army—no doubt an indication that “Yankee rule” was preferable to chaos. Brig. Gen. John W. Turner assumed control of the town and issued an order stating that any Union or Confederate soldier “caught pillaging private houses, or committing any outrageous acts upon the persons of citizens” would be hanged. Instead of securing the city's military stores and businesses, however, Turner decided to hand over all remaining supplies to the town's poor black and white population as well as to convalescing ex-Confederate soldiers. On April 16 Turner's force departed Lynchburg, leaving a city of fearful residents who rarely ventured beyond their front doors in the ensuing weeks.²²

The situation in Danville—a town of roughly 5,000 in 1861—was much worse. Situated on the border with North Carolina, the town served as the last Confederate capital after the abandonment of Richmond on April 2. Danville was chosen because of its location between Lee's army and General Joseph Johnston's army in North Carolina. In addition, the town included a well-stocked quartermaster department, repair shop, and ordnance machinery; most important, it allowed President Davis to maintain the capital within Virginia as well as the public perception that the government continued to function. Between April 2 and April 10 Davis conducted affairs to the best of his ability while the town itself served as a magnet for stragglers from Lee's

retreating army hoping to link with Johnston in North Carolina or attempting to get home. The situation quickly deteriorated after the surrender of the army. On his approach to the town, John Dooley observed that "Danville is in a perfect uproar." Throngs of soldiers and civilians poured into the overcrowded town, while the streets leading out of town were "choked with government wagons trying to force their way out." Rioting and plundering soon followed, halted only when Confederate ordnance was accidentally ignited. On his way out of the city amid rumors that the enemy had cut the Greensboro road, Secretary of the Navy Stephen Mallory recalled "scenes of confusion such as it was never before the fortune of old Danville to witness." Meanwhile, Davis and what was left of the government continued south.²³

Reminders of defeat could be found throughout Virginia, from the burned-down business district of Richmond to the leveled countryside of the Shenandoah Valley and northern Virginia. A *London Times* correspondent reported that "the once fertile fields" between Winchester and Martinsburg "are lying barren, for their owners have lost all their means, their negroes having fled and their horses and money having been carried off." As if the physical destruction were not enough, he went on to note that "graves are scattered by the roadside." The same scenes were witnessed east of the Blue Ridge Mountains in the area between Manassas and Alexandria. The constant movement of armies along with the two major battles near Manassas left miles of entrenchments, scores of naked chimneys, and few trees standing; one observer described the area south of Alexandria along the railroad lines as a "prairie."²⁴ Such scenes of destruction would have exacerbated the anxiety that returning soldiers felt as they anticipated what awaited them at their own homes.

While the physical manifestations of war painted a bleak picture of the immediate future, news of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln on April 14 presented ex-Confederates with the likelihood of more severe retribution from the Federal government as well as immediate repercussions from a saddened and even vengeful Union army. Edgar Warfield learned of Lincoln's assassination while waiting for a steamship in Richmond for the final leg of his journey to Alexandria. As he stood with other ex-Confederates among a large crowd of white and black ("but mostly black") Union soldiers, "a feeling of uneasiness crept over us as we momentarily expected something unpleasant to happen." Edward P. Alexander in Washington, D.C., found that "the passion & excitement of the crowds were so great that anyone on the street recognised merely as a Confederate, would have been instantly

mobbed & lynched.” One eyewitness reported that when news of the assassination arrived in Richmond, Union troops “pounced with the ferocity of wild beasts upon every rebel soldier they could lay hands upon, beating and driving them from the streets, the poor fellows all the while in ignorance of the cause of their bad treatment.”²⁵

News filtered throughout Virginia slowly and was laced with rumor. Not until April 20 did Samuel Howard learn that Lincoln had “been shot & killed his son wounded, and Seward desperately wo[u]nded.” While William Grove’s diary entry includes a note indicating that Lincoln had been shot and “Seward mortally wounded,” as late as April 25 he was also contemplating more recent rumors that both Ulysses S. Grant and Horace Greeley had been assassinated.²⁶ It is almost impossible to find an accurate account of events in Washington among returning soldiers. This is not surprising, given the state of communications in the immediate post-Appomattox period. It is important, however, to understand that Lincoln’s assassination was an ongoing event for these men, the scale of which could not be properly understood. In the most extreme cases, men walked home under the impression that the president, vice president, secretary of state, and highest-ranking general had all fallen victim to John Wilkes Booth’s conspiracy; for these individuals there was no Federal government.

Although many white Southerners agreed that Lincoln’s actions since 1861 were best understood as those of a “tyrant,” they remained ambivalent about his murder. Reactions ranged from public declarations that the South had been properly avenged to genuine sadness—though, as Anne Sarah Rubin asserts, most fell somewhere in between. John Dooley noted in his diary that “people don’t know whether to rejoice or to be sad.” “And the reason,” Dooley went on to state, “appears to be that they are not sure whether it be better for the South that Abraham should be king, or some Successor.” For those with access to more reliable news, the realization that Andrew Johnson would assume the presidency led to additional doubts and questions. Even though Johnson proved to be lenient toward the white South, ten years later George Eggleston recalled that his neighbors in Amelia County believed the new president to be a “renegade Southerner” who “would endeavor to prove his loyalty to the Union by extra severity to the South.”²⁷ It is likely that returning soldiers, along with their civilian counterparts in the Confederate government, expected to be the targets of the Johnson administration’s retribution.

Virginia’s veterans were confronted with more ominous signs of the Confederacy’s demise and with it the undermining of central pillars of the antebellum South. There was no more critical an indicator of this than the abrupt end of slavery, and by 1865 both those who had owned slaves and those who had not understood its significance on a daily basis as they traversed the roads home. Long before Lee’s surrender at Appomattox, Confederate soldiers were forced to confront the threat to their slave society. In 1861 Virginians decided that slavery would be safer outside the Union, as they perceived the Republican president to be a threat to their way of life. By the end of the year, thousands of Virginia slaves had demonstrated the lengths they would go to assert their desire for freedom by running from their masters in areas controlled by the Union army. Their doing so undermined the Confederate war effort in innumerable ways, from depriving the government in Richmond of their services to providing the Union army with intelligence. By 1863 those same slaves had helped to transform a war that had originally been framed around the preservation of the Union into a war to end slavery itself. Beginning with Ulysses S. Grant’s Overland Campaign, and increasingly in the trenches around Petersburg in the summer of 1864, the Army of Northern Virginia was forced to confront United States Colored Troops on the battlefield. This culminated on July 30, when a division of black soldiers took part in a failed Federal offensive outside of Petersburg, dubbed the battle of the Crater. Although the battle was a decisive Confederate victory, the experience of fighting black soldiers in close quarters served to reinforce the close connection between the maintenance of Southern armies and the protection of home, families, and the institution of slavery. The turn toward emancipation, however, meant that only with victory and independence would Confederates’ homes as well as the political and social structures of their communities be maintained.²⁸

While the two armies were camped around Appomattox awaiting the surrender ceremony, Federal authorities made it a point to keep black troops away from Confederate soldiers for fear that contact would exacerbate an already emotional and tenuous situation.²⁹ Once on the road, however, former Confederates were forced to confront both occupying black troops and newly freed slaves who chose to exercise their freedom in ways that often confirmed white Southerners’ antebellum racial notions. Aaron Sheehan-Dean has noted that “from the crisis of secession through the debates over slave soldiers, white Virginians had made protection of the institution of

slavery a central war aim.”³⁰ In Petersburg, white residents and returning soldiers were forced to confront both African American garrison troops and a sizeable free black population. Henry Bird, who had served in the Twelfth Virginia Infantry, observed that “it is both sad and laughable to see the smoked Yankees parading in the streets in all their Sunday finery and then to think of the change that will come over the spirit of their dream in less than six months.” Bird’s hope for a quick return to prewar racial hierarchies would have to wait, but such encounters fueled animosity against both occupying soldiers and former slaves, and ultimately would contribute to white Southerners’ self-identification as victims of “Yankee” Reconstruction.³¹

The former capital of Richmond fared even worse. The fires the Confederates had set in an attempt to prevent Federal forces from claiming large military stockpiles accidentally burned a large section of the business district along the James River. Naked facades presented an ominous sight for Robert E. Lee, who entered the city on April 15, as well as for countless others who had once called Richmond home or who were looking for passage elsewhere. Returning Confederates, such as Kena King Chapman, who were without accurate information surrounding the city’s destruction, “blamed immigrant hordes from the North and slaves.”³² For ex-Confederates, Richmond did fare better than Petersburg in one respect when Gen. Edward Ord ordered black units stationed in the city to leave.³³

Upon their return home, veterans from slave-owning families experienced the loss on a personal level, as they had to make the shift from toil on fields of battle to labor on fields of corn and other crops—work they had never had to do previously, and which reinforced white bitterness. Samuel Buck recalled “doing as much work as any slave my father ever owned.” Young Carlton McCarthy’s experience on a farm outside Richmond would have been sufficient to drive home the intimate connection between defeat and emancipation for any former veteran. Rather than head directly into Richmond, McCarthy and a companion chose to work on a plantation in exchange for lodging and cash. Such “manual labor,” which had been formerly carried out by slaves, clearly left an indelible imprint on McCarthy’s memory. Writing in 1882, he recalled: “The negro men and women in the neighborhood, now in the full enjoyment of newly-conferred liberty, and consequently having no thought of doing any work, congregated about the garden, leaned on the fence, gazed sleepily at the toiling soldiers, chuckled now and then, and occasionally explained their presence by remarking to

each other, ‘Come here to see dem dar white folks wuckin.’”³⁴ Similar scenes took place throughout Virginia, serving to remind white Southerners that their labor system had been subverted and that their perceptions of blacks as obedient and faithful servants were perhaps misplaced.

Once home, the challenges of postwar adjustment and recognition of Confederate defeat continued as occupying Federal forces regulated the behavior of returning veterans and kept a sharp lookout for any hint of further aggression against the Federal government. Military authorities cautioned veterans to remove the brass buttons from their uniforms or face arrest, and encouraged oaths of allegiance to the United States.³⁵ Isaac Russell, who worked as a hospital steward in Winchester, chose to cover his brass buttons with black cloth after he was forced to appear at the provost’s office, as did Samuel Buck, who described the order as “galling to me.” Edgar Warfield arrived home in Alexandria to find two American flags hanging over his doorstep, which were placed “by the authorities, who anticipated my father’s return and mine, so that we would have to walk under them on entering.” Those same authorities forced Warfield to report to the city’s provost marshal, which he did for two weeks.³⁶ Although these policies were nonviolent, they served to remind Virginia’s veterans of the completeness of their defeat as well as their inability to control their individual and collective destinies. The order for soldiers to remove military buttons from their uniforms served to minimize tangible connections to their former identities as soldiers of a Confederate nation.

The historical record is filled with joyous accounts of reunions for countless numbers of returning soldiers. Further removed from our popular memory of the initial postwar period, however, are the accounts of soldiers who experienced a profound crisis of confidence and depression or were unable to cope with the demands of a post-emancipation world and who fervently believed that defeat was somehow to be explained by a vengeful God. Others missed the predictable rhythms of camp life and the excitement of battle. Many anticipated a dark future. Nineteen-year-old William Selwyn Ball rode home to his family’s estate in Fairfax County only to find it completely destroyed. His brother and cousins, who had also served in Lee’s army, were “sprawled out on the lawn . . . dazed and unable to realize that actually all was lost.” Though his older brother was eventually able to begin a law practice, Ball was unable to regain his confidence and sense of purpose; with the loss of the war, “the world seemed to . . . come to an end,”

leaving him with “no ambition.” Newspapers in Alexandria reported an increase in “houses of entertainment,” and one editorial observed that these “degrading dens of destruction” turned men who four years earlier had been “prominent church members, honored esteemed and loved” into “dancing theatre-going, rum-guzzling mutilated images of manhood.” Farther south in Richmond, newspapers complained that “thousands of our most gifted and promising young men are fast becoming confirmed sots.”³⁷

The reference to “mutilated images of manhood” stretches the conception of the damage wrought by war beyond the physical. The failure on the part of Lee’s men to protect their homes and communities as well as the realities of occupation and emancipation tugged at their own sense of identity and place within a political and social hierarchy based on white supremacy. However, accounts of psychological breakdown or signs of weakness and despair are difficult to judge, given the culture’s emphasis on public displays of strength and the public reputations that white Southern families wished to maintain.³⁸

It would take between fifteen and twenty years for ex-Confederates to arrive at a point where they could begin to put pen to paper and make sense of their war experiences within a postwar world that now included a revival of confidence and a sense of regional identity. With the exception of the four short years of Readjuster Party control, by the mid-1870s white Virginians had successfully rebuilt a social and political hierarchy based on white supremacy. Racial controls hardened in the years after the Supreme Court’s 1896 decision upholding segregation in *Plessy v. Ferguson* and through the Jim Crow era. Confederate memoirs written throughout this period are filled with stories of battlefield heroics, colorful generals, obedient and loving slaves, and other nostalgic episodes. Gone in large part are the stories of war’s devastation, the sense of utter despair, and the strong feelings of humiliation associated with defeat that colored the accounts of Confederates in the weeks after Appomattox. The experiences of these men along the roads and paths leading away from Appomattox served as the foundation from which they proceeded to rebuild their lives and collective identities as white Southerners. More important, the experience of defeat in its various forms provided many with the impetus to eventually challenge occupation forces as well as the steps that Virginia’s ex-slaves had taken to secure their freedom.

Notes

1. Taliaferro enlisted in the Fredericksburg Artillery on November 4, 1861, and on May 1, 1862, was commissioned first lieutenant in the Forty-seventh Virginia.

2. Ida Tarbell, "Disbanding of the Confederate Army," *McClure's*, April 1901, 534–36, reprinted in B. A. Botkin, ed., *A Civil War Treasury of Tales, Legends, and Folklore* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), 558–60.

3. One of the best examples of a recent study that utilizes the theme of reunion and reconciliation is Jay Winik, *April 1865: The Month That Saved America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001). On Reconstruction in Virginia, see Peter Wallenstein, *Cradle of America: Four Centuries of Virginia History* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 213–29.

4. See Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

5. Anne Sarah Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861–1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 117–38.

6. Jason Phillips, *Diehard Rebels: The Confederate Culture of Invincibility* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007), 178.

7. George C. Rable, "Despair, Hope, and Delusion: The Collapse of Confederate Morale Reexamined," in Mark Grimsley and Brooks D. Simpson eds., *The Collapse of the Confederacy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2001).

8. A great deal has been written on Confederate morale in the Army of Northern Virginia during the final year of the war. See Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); J. Tracy Power, *Lee's Miserables: Life in the Army of Northern Virginia from the Wilderness to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Phillips, *Diehard Rebels*.

9. George Cary Eggleston, *A Rebel's Recollections* (1875; repr., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 172.

10. Richard Barksdale Harwell, ed., *A Confederate Diary of the Retreat from Petersburg, April 3–20, 1865* (Atlanta: Emory University Publications Sources and Reprints, 1953), 18.

11. Robert E. Lee, *The Wartime Papers of Robert E. Lee*, ed. Clifford Dowdey (1961; repr., New York: Da Capo, 1987), 934–35.

12. U.S. War Department, *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), series 1, vol. 46, pt. 3, 1394.

13. James Whitehorne and William Wilson references can be found in

Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 12–21. The final Whitehorne reference is located in Chris M. Calkins, *The Final Bivouac: The Surrender Parade at Appomattox and the Disbanding of the Armies, April 10–May 20, 1865* (Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, 1988), 47. William Thomas Poague, *Gunner with Stonewall: Reminiscences of William Thomas Poague*, ed. Monroe F. Cockrell (1957; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 129.

14. Edward B. Williams, ed., *Rebel Brothers: The Civil War Letters of the Truehearts* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1995), 217–18; John Dooley, *John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal*, ed. Joseph T. Durkin (South Bend, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963), 181.

15. Peter S. Carmichael, *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 213–18; Ham Chamberlayne, *Ham Chamberlayne—Virginian: Letters and Papers of an Artillery Officer in the War for Southern Independence, 1861–1865*, ed. C. G. Chamberlayne (1932; repr., Wilmington, N.C.: Broadfoot, 1992), 320–21.

16. Papers Chiefly pertaining to Virginia, 1803–1904, William B. Grove Diary, accession 8995, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville.

17. Harwell, *A Confederate Diary*, 21.

18. Paul F. Paskoff, “Measures of War: A Quantitative Examination of the Civil War’s Destructiveness in the Confederacy,” *Civil War History* 54 (March 2008): 52–54.

19. Edward Porter Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy: The Personal Recollections of General Edward Porter Alexander*, ed. Gary W. Gallagher (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 547–49. Alexander traveled to Washington to meet with the Brazilian foreign minister and then to New York to discuss his plans with the Brazilian consul, but was unable to gain permission. Edgar Warfield, *Manassas to Appomattox: The Civil War Memoirs of Pvt. Edgar Warfield, 17th Virginia Infantry* (1936; repr., Mclean, Va.: EPM, 1996), 175–76.

20. Calkins, *The Final Bivouac*, 54; Harwell, *A Confederate Diary*.

21. Robert J. Driver Jr., *Lexington and Rockbridge County in the Civil War* (Lynchburg, Va.: H. E. Howard, 1989), 99; Daniel E. Sutherland, *Seasons of War: The Ordeal of a Confederate Community, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 376. In addition, see Mark K. Greenough, “Aftermath at Appomattox: Federal Military Occupation of Appomattox County, May–November 1865,” *Civil War History* 31 (March 1985): 5–23.

22. Steven E. Tripp, *Yankee Town, Southern City: Race and Class Relations in Civil War Lynchburg* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 159–61; Calkins, *The Final Bivouac*, 58–61.

23. On the Confederate government’s retreat, see Michael B. Ballard, *A Long Shadow: Jefferson Davis and the Final Days of the Confederacy* (Jackson:

University Press of Mississippi, 1986), 52–73; Dooley, *War Journal*, 179–81; Stephen R. Mallory, "The Last Days of the Confederate Government," in Peter Cozzens, ed., *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 5:675.

24. Richard Duncan, *Beleaguered Winchester: A Virginia Community at War, 1861–1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2007), 251; Nan Netherton, Donald Sweig, Janice Artemel, Patricia Hickin, and Patrick Reed, *Fairfax County, Virginia: A History* (Fairfax, Va.: Fairfax City Board of Supervisors, 1978), 371.

25. Warfield, *Manassas to Appomattox*; Alexander, *Fighting for the Confederacy*, 547; Ernest B. Furgurson, *Ashes of Glory: Richmond at War* (New York: Knopf, 1996), 359.

26. Harwell, *A Confederate Diary*, 21; William B. Grove Diary, April 25, 1865.

27. On reactions to Lincoln's assassination in Virginia, see Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, 126–30; Dooley, *War Journal*, 195; Eggleston, *A Rebel's Recollections*, 184.

28. George S. Burkhardt, *Confederate Rage, Yankee Wrath: No Quarter in the Civil War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), 159–74; Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

29. William Marvel, *Lee's Last Retreat: The Flight to Appomattox* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 185.

30. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, 192.

31. A. Wilson Greene, *Civil War Petersburg: Confederate City in the Crucible of War* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 266–72.

32. Quoted in Phillips, *Diehard Confederates*, 180.

33. On the immediate aftermath of the war in Richmond, see Nelson Lankford, *Richmond Burning: The Last Days of the Confederate Capital* (New York: Viking, 2002).

34. Samuel D. Buck, *With the Old Confeds: Actual Experiences of a Captain in the Line* (Baltimore, Md.: H. E. Houck, 1925), 134; Carlton McCarthy, *Detailed Minutiae of Soldier Life in the Army of Northern Virginia, 1861–1865* (1882; repr., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 178.

35. On the politics of loyalty oaths and pardons in Virginia, see Susanna Michele Lee, "Reconciliation in Reconstruction Virginia," in Edward L. Ayers, Gary W. Gallagher, and Andrew J. Torget, eds., *Crucible of the Civil War: Virginia from Secession to Commemoration* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2006), 189–208.

36. Duncan, *Beleaguered Winchester*, 252; Buck, *With the Old Confeds*, 134; Warfield, *Manassas to Appomattox*, 177.

37. Netherton et al., *Fairfax County, Virginia*, 371–72.

38. Historians are beginning to look more closely at the emotional and psychological consequences of the Civil War in the postwar South. See Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *The Shaping of Southern Culture: Honor, Grace, and War, 1760s–1880s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 255–69; Eric T. Dean Jr., *Shook over Hell: Post-traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

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