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The Destructive War

WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN,
STONEWALL JACKSON, AND THE AMERICANS

CHARLES ROYSTER

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THE DESTRUCTIVE WAR

Charles Royster was born in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1944. He was educated at the University of California, Berkeley. From 1977 until 1979 he was a Fellow of the Institute of Early American History and Culture. Since 1981 he has taught history at Louisiana State University where he is T. Harry Williams Professor of American History. He has previously published *Light-Horse Harry Lee and the Legacy of the American Revolution* (1981) and *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* (1979), which received the Francis Parkman Prize and several other awards.

Also by Charles Royster

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EDITOR

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(1990)

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To

THAD TATE
FRANK SMITH
GALE PAGE

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(Courtesy of the Department of Geography and Anthropology, Louisiana State University)

PREFACE

THIS book deals primarily with one aspect of the Civil War: the scale of destruction to which the participants committed themselves. The lives and property swept away, as well as other forms of harm, far exceeded most early predictions. Americans surprised themselves with the extent of violence they could attain. I have explored some of the ways they reached that condition and the ways they accounted for it. I have given particular attention to the careers and reputations of two officers: William Tecumseh Sherman and Thomas Jonathan Jackson. For large numbers of their contemporaries these men epitomized the waging of successful war by drastic measures justified with claims to righteousness. Many people trying to explain the war did so in part by telling stories of and giving opinions about Jackson and Sherman.

A study of growing destructiveness in the Civil War properly touches on two of the questions most widely discussed by participants and historians: Why was the war fought? Why did the North win? Neither of these questions, however, is the main concern of this book. Nor have I undertaken to write a full survey of the military engagements in which Sherman and Jackson took part. My book is a long essay, touching on many aspects of war experiences and on postwar memories of them, in an effort to understand Americans' ways of making their war destructive.

No one needs to be reminded—and in the course of my research I have not been allowed to forget—that the Civil War generation contained a complex multiplicity of opinions and aspirations. In using the customary imprecise words “Northern” and “Southern” as they applied to people waging war, I have of course meant to refer to the proponents of war that would preserve the union and the proponents of war that would sustain secession. People in both camps often said that they thought of themselves as Americans. Perhaps no public question impressed them more deeply than the efforts to define a nation, to make explicit in public life the bases for banding together as Americans. Obviously, some of the definitions were incompatible, not to mention internally inconsistent. To call oneself an American was to raise more questions than the word answered. The word is not less useful or important on that account, but more so. Millions of self-styled Americans set out to win assent to one or another definition by hurting or killing those who disagreed.

I have arranged the subjects discussed in this book with an intent to look as carefully as I could at the paths by which Americans came to seek more destructive war, the diverse results they anticipated from it, and the ways they understood what they had done. I have examined these topics with more than one approach to representing the versions of experience I found in the Civil War generation's writings. The destructive war grew from small beginnings; yet it was also present or incipient at the start of the fighting. The people who made it surprising to themselves, but the surprise consisted, in part, of getting what they had asked for.

CHAPTER 1

THE DESTRUCTION OF COLUMBIA

BRIGADIER GENERAL BENJAMIN H. GRIERSON, commander of the famous cavalry raid through Mississippi to Baton Rouge, accompanied Ulysses S. Grant to the White House on February 11, 1862. They were calling on the president, whom Grierson had known during the Illinois senatorial campaign of 1858. President Lincoln looked in excellent spirits as he sat with Grierson and talked, while General Grant studied a military map spread on a nearby table. The president said that the Confederacy was nearing its death struggle, and he seemed to be thinking most about the process of reconstruction that would follow the war. But he considerately complimented Grierson on several cavalry operations and approved Grierson's promotion to brevet major general. As usual, the president told a funny story, which amused even the silent General Grant.

Then Grant walked to where Lincoln sat and suggested that they review the military situation. The three men gathered around the map. Grant pointed out the positions of the armies over which he, as lieutenant general, had supreme command. Meade's army, which Grant accompanied and commanded in person, faced the Confederate forces under Lee along a thirty-five-mile entrenched front from Richmond to Petersburg, Virginia. Thomas's army in Tennessee had defeated and scattered the Confederates last December. Canby would soon move against Mobile, Alabama. Terry's capture of Fort Fisher in North Carolina during January had closed the Confederacy's last port. And Sherman's army, having marched easily from Atlanta to Savannah, was moving northward through South Carolina. By breaking railroad lines it would reduce Charleston, isolate the munitions works at Augusta, Georgia, and cut Lee's connection with the lower South.

Grierson noticed the ease with which Grant spoke and the confidence with which he planned the simultaneous correlated movements of large, dispersed armies. Grant expressed only one fear—that Lee would abandon the Virginia trenches to march against Sherman more rapidly than Grant could follow. Grant had promised his friend Sherman that he would try to prevent such a movement. It alone might disrupt the concerted operations for defeating the Confederacy in the coming spring. This was “the only apprehension in the General's mind,” Grierson observed, as Grant “pointed to Columbia, S.C. on the map and stated that General Sherman would be there with his army between the 15th and 20th of February.”

EVEN AS Grant was speaking, part of Sherman's army was approaching Orangeburg, South Carolina. Once the men had waded through the icy cypress swamps enclosing the channels of the north fork of the Edisto River, they could march on firm ground. The roads rolled over the low hills east of the piedmont, past acres of prairie grass, among pine, fir, and magnolia trees. From a rise men could see large fields for cotton and corn with plantation houses

scattered among them. Four long columns of soldiers—60,000 men—followed the weaving roads. The easternmost column, the 17th Army Corps, was usually about thirty miles from the westernmost, the 14th Army Corps. Still farther west the cavalry held to a parallel route northward. The track of the columns was clear at a glance. Fat pillars of dense black smoke rose from many fires that soldiers constantly were starting. Burning cotton bales, corn cribs, gins, barns, houses, fences, crops, and pine woods sent up dark clouds that the upper air currents spread over the countryside. They turned the sun red.

During the second week of February the soldiers, some sooner than others, figured out the army's destination. Of course, they had all known for a month that they would eventually wind up in Virginia and show Grant how to beat Lee. But, for obvious reasons, Sherman did not say what route he would take. At first, the two corps of the right wing seemed to be heading northeast toward Charleston, while the two corps of the left wing seemed to be marching up the Savannah River toward Augusta, to the northwest. Then the right wing turned northwestward, too. After both wings crossed the Edisto and headed north, anyone could see that General Sherman was taking them all to Columbia.

Most of the men were enjoying their march into South Carolina. To go to Columbia would make it even better. After three years of combat, leaving dead men on the ground from Shiloh and Vicksburg to Atlanta, these soldiers had reached two conclusions about the Confederacy: Southerners hated the United States of America, and South Carolinians hated them most—so much that they had started the war. While still in Georgia, the men had talked about South Carolina. They would have been disappointed if their commander had not taken them into the state; the trip would reward their achievements. Men in the left wing threatened: "Carolina may dread us, she brought the war on and shall pay the penalty"; "I hope we may be able to exterminate the whole breed of Carolina, she is too overbearing and should be wiped out from the Earth." A soldier in the right wing said: "I am certain that South Carolina will smoke ... if we march through it for the soldiers have a big grudge against the hot Bed of treason." General Sherman knew their minds. "The truth is," he wrote from Georgia, "the whole army is burning with an insatiable desire to wreak vengeance upon South Carolina. I almost tremble at her fate, but feel that she deserves all that seems in store for her."

To march into South Carolina was one thing; to know where to go was another. Cold rain, swollen rivers, broad swamps, and narrow, muddy roads might have given pause to an invading army. But Sherman, who had roamed these regions before many of his soldiers had been born, always seemed to know what lay ahead. He had proven this gift during the fighting in northwest Georgia, and his men trusted him. Most were in their early twenties and thought of Sherman, who had just turned forty-five, as an old man. They made allowances for his favoritisms. Clearly, he liked the right wing—the 15th and 17th Corps—better than the left, and he favored the 15th Corps, the one he had commanded at Vicksburg, above all. In Tennessee, Mississippi, and Georgia the men of the 15th Corps had shown, as Sherman said, "that they generally do their work up pretty well." They knew that secession had begun in Columbia, and as they marched toward the city many of them sang new words to one of America's unofficial national anthems:

Hail Columbia, happy land;
If we don't burn you, I'll be damned.

The capital of South Carolina lay at the confluence of the Broad River and the Saluda River where they met to form the Congaree River. Travelers praised the city's beauty. True, there were brothels near the river, ramshackle houses and slums, and the dirty quarters of the female operatives who worked at the Saluda Factory, making cloth. But the center of the city, laid out on gentle hills above the Congaree, pleased the eye. Streets 100 feet wide, lined with trees, intersected to form residential blocks, each of which covered four acres. Many homes were surrounded by magnolia and orange trees, as well as flower gardens full of jasmine, oleander, and solfaterre roses. Sidney Park attracted evening promenaders across its sixteen acres; the city itself seemed parklike. Business was largely confined to Main Street, which led from the northwestern precincts, known as Cottontown, to the state capitol and continued to the south. Hotels and the post office were on the parallel street to the west, Assembly Street, in which stood the Market building. The parallel streets to the east of Main, Sumter and Marion, led to most of the churches and, below the capitol, to the grounds of South Carolina College. Columbians took pride in their substantial brick houses, stores, manufacturing establishments, and churches. They had academies for the young, an Ursuline convent school, the state Lunatic Asylum, and the depots of two main railroad lines. Dominating all, in the center of the city, stood the unfinished new state house, which was being built of granite and marble. The old wooden capitol was still in use nearby, but, despite the many memories evoked of eminent South Carolinians who had spoken in its chambers, it was getting dingy.

War had changed Columbia. The city had never been large, numbering about 8,000 people in peacetime; but the war had more than tripled its population. Many Southerners, including the Confederate authorities in Richmond, had concluded that it was one of the safest places in the South. Columbia became the site of the Confederacy's currency printing, an operation employing many young women to sign bills. The government used the city as a depot for military supplies. Professor Joseph LeConte of South Carolina College operated a chemical laboratory for the Niter and Mining Bureau, testing nitrous earth to aid in the production of gunpowder. Manufacture of munitions was one of Columbia's largest industries. Bankers from Charleston and elsewhere had moved their most valuable holdings to Columbia. The city had at least seventeen banks, instead of the three of prewar days. Their vaults contained thousands of silver services, jewels, title deeds, bonds, and other valuables of prosperous South Carolinians. Families near the coast had sent their most prized objects to friends and relatives for safekeeping. Paintings, furniture, other heirlooms, and the best vintages from wine cellars lay stored in Columbia. With all of these came thousands of new residents—refugees, especially women, seeking a safe place. During Sunday, February 12, a new set of fugitives began to enter the city. They were families, bringing livestock and wagons loaded with furniture, running northward away from Sherman's army.

Some people were forced into Columbia: slaveowners moved their human property. The number of black people in Columbia, usually about one-third of the population, swelled with the influx of slaves. Some blacks had escaped during the relocation, had hidden in swamps, and were greeting the approaching Federal soldiers with descriptions of the roads ahead. Blacks in the city felt sure of Sherman's destination sooner than his own men did. On January 29, a white man who heard them noted: "The niggers sing hallelujahs for him every day." Some of the slaves concentrated in Columbia grew restive, and white people reacted harshly. They set up a whipping post near the Market in Assembly Street, where floggings took place.

daily. A black man caught smuggling news to Federal prisoners in the city received 100 lashes and a promise that, if he repeated the offense, he would be killed. Afterward, he told the prisoners: "Dey may kill dis nigger, but dey cain't make him hate de Yankees." The daily whippings aroused bitter resentment among young black men. Some of them called the Market post "Hell" and agreed among themselves to make a hell of the city once the Yankees came.

By Monday, February 13, the Yankees' approach was becoming clear. Federal prisoners of war, confined on the grounds of the Lunatic Asylum, had more practiced ears and detected the distant rumble and thud of Sherman's artillery fire a day earlier than did Columbia citizens. The Federals also had other reports. On Monday an old black man, who delivered the camp's firewood but was not allowed to speak to the prisoners, developed sudden trouble with the rear gate of his wagon as he turned it around in the middle of the camp. He jumped down from the driver's seat to fix the tailgate. Without raising his head as he worked among the white men, he muttered over and over: "Sherman is within thirty miles. He'll be here in a few days."

All 1,200 prisoners of war were officers. Though the Confederacy had much worse prison camps, the men in the Asylum Camp found it bad enough. On two acres they lived in shacks in the open, and in holes in the ground. They ate, irregularly, only cornmeal and sorghum molasses. At a previous camp outside the city they had seen men shot without provocation. On the way to Columbia from Charleston they had watched a lieutenant die after bloodhounds stopped his escape by catching him and tearing him apart. Marching through the city to the Asylum Camp, they had heard hoots and hisses from men, women, and children. One Columbian asked them whether they were "Sherman's wagon-train." Some people called for the guards to let citizens hang the Yankees. The officers knew that the sound of Sherman's guns meant that the Confederates would soon move the prisoners again. Some decided to escape. When guards came to take the men to the railroad depot, fifty or more were missing, hidden in holes and rafters and in the asylum hospital. As soon as these men could safely move, they found friends in Columbia. Ira B. Sampson, William Baird, S. H. M. Byers, and other officers entrusted themselves to blacks' households and waited in the families' attics, hoping that Sherman would not decide to go around Columbia.

Columbians had among them more military experts than usual. Major General Matthew Calbraith Butler had brought his cavalry to help defend his native state; the senior cavalry officer, Major General Wade Hampton, a leading citizen of Columbia, had come from Lee's army with Butler. General P. G. T. Beauregard commanded all Confederate forces in the region. General Joseph E. Johnston, former commander of the Army of Tennessee, had held no command since the previous July but was living in Columbia, meditating on the mistakes that Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee were making. Johnston was accompanied by Major General Mansfield Lovell, who was still in official disgrace for having lost New Orleans in 1862. Lieutenant General Joseph Wheeler was nearby, commanding the Confederate cavalry that skirmished with the fringes of Sherman's army. Before February 12, Beauregard and Hampton said they could keep Sherman from crossing the Congaree. Even so, Beauregard ordered that the many bales of cotton stored in Columbia be stacked in the center of the wide streets, ready to be burned if they seemed likely to fall into Federal hands. Each day, some of the well-mounted generals gathered, rode out to study the perimeter, then adjourned to the

home of James and Mary Chesnut, where they looked at military maps and experts identified the points of Sherman's vulnerability. However, Beauregard had only late detected Sherman's intentions and, before returning to Columbia, could not tell whether Sherman was heading for Charleston or Augusta or some intermediate point; so Confederate forces in those cities remained stationary and useless against Sherman's advance.

Beauregard had at most 800 men in Columbia and 1,500 under Butler, retreating before Sherman. People in Columbia might hope for General Hardee to march from the coast or for General D. H. Hill to come from Augusta. They might admire Beauregard's and Hampton's confidence. Still, they faced the question of what to do. The Columbia newspapers published inspirational editorials. On the 11th, the *Columbia Tri-Weekly South Carolinian* promised a concentration of Confederate strength that would make Sherman tremble. "If he comes forward, a reception awaits him unlike that which he encountered in his career through Georgia." South Carolinians were the boldest Confederates, as an editorial the following day implied: "Long before Columbia falls we look for a battle and a victory" which would prove that God "has vouchsafed to South Carolina the proud privilege of closing as she began the war—in triumph." The streets where these papers were distributed grew busier each day with the traffic of people leaving the city. Wagons, buggies, and other vehicles headed for Laurens Street in the northeastern corner of town, site of the Charlotte & South Carolina Railroad depot. William Johnson, president of the company, took rolling stock from other lines—the South Carolina Railroad and the Greenville & Columbia Railroad—onto the Charlotte track. Thereafter, at all hours, shrill steam whistles told Columbians of departures of loaded trains.

Officials of the Treasury Department with their engraving plates; officers of the Commercial Bank, the Bank of South Carolina, and the Planters and Mechanics Bank with their banks' books and some valuables; wealthy citizens with wagonloads of furniture, huge crates, and household slaves; ladies wearing several layers of dresses, stockings, and undergarments, among which were concealed gold watches, pins, rings, and bracelets; Professor LeConte with his boxes of chemicals—the urgent refugees packed the depot. The press of people near the tracks grew thicker on Monday and Tuesday, still greater on Wednesday. Trains arrived already loaded with families fleeing Charleston. Departing trains were surrounded by screaming, cursing, fighting crowds. Abandoned and broken furniture lay on muddy ground under trees sheathed in sleet. Women and children begged to be taken aboard the cars, which slowly rumbled away from the station on sagging rails, unable to go faster than ten miles per hour. In the afternoon of the 14th and on Wednesday, the 15th, the sound of Sherman's cannons grew louder and nearer. More citizens abandoned their earlier intention to stay in the city. For a while it had seemed plausible to some that Confederate troops would finally come from Charleston or that Sherman would go around Columbia so that the fall of Columbia might be like the occupation of Savannah, controlled and orderly. But the rush to the Charlotte depot, the locomotives' incessant whistles, and the approach of Yankee guns changed people's minds. More Columbians, in a "contagious panic," decided to join the escape. The Confederate government showed what it thought: special cars carried away the young women who worked for the Treasury, and a special train removed the Federal prisoners of war toward North Carolina.

Other departing refugees did not try the railroad. The roads toward Winnsboro and Alston were filled with people on foot and in a mixed collection of vehicles. Lacking the money and

influence needed to board the trains, they still had ways to escape. In their midst, prominent people also took to the highway. Campbell Bryce, who had joined and helped to finance the Congaree Troop of South Carolina Cavalry earlier in the war, and the Reverend Benjamin M. Palmer, a leader of the movement for secession in Louisiana, were induced by their wives who remained in Columbia, to flee from the Yankees' vengeance in a broken-down vehicle. A woman helped them on the road and recalled later: "They were two miserable, unhappy men, accusing themselves of cowardice in leaving their families to the mercy of the vandals."

Artillery fire from the direction of Sherman's army disclosed that the small Confederate force of infantry, with Butler's cavalry, was trying a delaying action against the close Federal troops, General Charles R. Woods's First Division of the 15th Corps. Woods called the fighting "stubborn." Wounded Confederates were sent back to Columbia. Still, the Southerners could not stop even two of Woods's brigades, much less the whole division or corps. To the east, General Frank Blair's 17th Corps had destroyed the railroad to Charleston, burning ties and twisting rails. To the west, the two corps of the left wing had done the same to the railroad to Augusta. By Tuesday, February 14, all four columns were ready to converge on Columbia.

The 15th Corps approached the city from the southwest. All day on Wednesday, under cold rain, Woods's skirmishers exchanged fire with Butler's slowly retreating cavalry. After cautiously advancing in this manner for five miles, Woods saw what the Confederates had waiting for him. At the crossing of Congaree Creek, a tributary of the Congaree River, stood an entrenched bridgehead on the south bank and a well-designed fort on the north bank, manned by artillery and infantry. A body of water on the Confederates' left, a cypress swamp on their right, and level open fields in front, covered with two to four feet of water, presented to Federal soldiers a sight "to appal the stoutest heart." The long causeway bridge crossing the flooded fields lay in the Confederate artillery's field of fire. General Woods, imitating General Sherman on a small scale, turned to flanking. He sent his Third Brigade left through the cypress swamp and his Second Brigade right, downstream, to look for a crossing of the creek. To hold the Confederates' attention in front, he also ordered his skirmishers directly forward. They coolly advanced under fire, waist deep in mud and water. The Third Brigade's crossing of the swamp upstream made the Confederates' bridgehead on the south bank unsafe; they withdrew back across the creek to their fort. Then both flanking brigades reached the north bank of the creek and converged on the fort. During the fighting, General Butler, in the fort, told his aide that he probably would retreat into Columbia and burn the bridge across the Congaree River. In the afternoon he abandoned the position and moved back toward the city. When Woods's division made camp that night, it was three miles from Columbia. The men could hear locomotive whistles from the Charlotte depot.

In the evening the sky cleared and the air became pleasant, but the men of the First Division, and many in the Second, did not sleep well. While a long Confederate army wagon train headed north out of Columbia and Butler's men withdrew into the city, a Confederate battery on the edge of the Congaree River began to throw artillery shells among the soldiers of the 15th Corps. Their campfires made them easy night targets. From midnight until near dawn the shells kept coming, killing several men and wounding many more. The veterans knew what to do: they quickly threw up earthen traverses for shelter; but the shrieking of shot in the darkness had its effect. A soldier in the 53d Ohio Regiment said: "There was more

profanity at the shelling that night than on any previous night of our army history.”

Morning on Thursday brought a temperate, springlike day. Word came that the 20th Corps and the 14th Corps had arrived upriver, just as General Sherman had planned. Advancing from the northwest, the west, and the southwest, the whole army came to Columbia, though the left wing remained several miles out of town. The best view of the city belonged to the 15th Corps. The Confederates had abandoned the previous day's entrenchments. A show march took the Federals to an open plain on an elevation above the right bank of the Congaree. The swollen, rapid river separated them from the city. For the first time the men saw Columbia's church steeples, capitol buildings, white houses, railroad stations, and tree-lined streets. The sight reminded an Illinois soldier of Peoria. The remains of the bridge across the Congaree smoldered; only its supports still stood. On the heights, the 15th Corps announced its arrival to the South Carolinians. It marched onto the open ground in review formation: shredded regimental battle flags waving, shiny fixed bayonets swaying in cadence, brass bands playing—especially “Yankee Doodle.” The First, Second, Fourth, and Third divisions, in that order, with their artillery, ambulances, and supply wagons—a complete Army Corps, 15,000 men, all within sight at one time: even veterans were impressed with themselves. As they looked across the river, along Gervais Street, at the conspicuous South Carolina state house, “the soldiers,” according to an army surgeon, “all were cursing that spot as the cause of our being here.”

No one in Columbia could still hope or fear that Sherman would pass by the city. Most people decided to go. Colonel Ellis paid \$600 for a pair of wheels so that he could take his family and slaves by wagon toward Camden. The trains leaving the Charlotte depot could not keep up with the confused crush of desperate passengers and delayed government goods. General Joseph E. Johnston, who in 1864 had faced the same Federal soldiers and heard the same brass bands from Dalton, Georgia, to Atlanta, put his wife and her sister aboard a train containing 300 women. Johnston, a short, trim man, took pride in his military bearing and self-control. This day, however, his face was pale and his eyes were moist. The train rolled away; he remained behind with the soldiers. Wade Hampton had just learned of his promotion to lieutenant general and of his assignment to command the cavalry in South Carolina. He also knew that the Federals had cut the rail line to Charleston. Since they would not be able to ship cotton out, there would be no need to burn it in the streets. He ordered some of the bales removed. General Hampton remained calm; he showed his impressive physique and easy horsemanship while riding about the city, promising citizens that there would be no fighting in the streets. He could not, however, prevent all disorder. Before dawn and during the day, Wheeler's cavalymen broke into stores along Main Street to plunder Columbia's merchants. White people and black people joined the troopers in stealing. The Confederate government warehouses near the river were thrown open, and a crowd soon gathered, grasping and struggling with each other, mainly for food. Nearby, on the riverbank, boys of the Arsenal Academy were digging hard to throw up earthworks for firing positions to prevent the re-laying of the bridge. They were within easy rifle range of the opposite bank, but the Federals let them dig. Obviously, Confederate soldiers would not be in Columbia long. A black man, after walking downtown and back home, described Hampton's men to the escaped Federal prisoners concealed in his garret: “They stands round on the sidewalks, and they looks mighty sullen. I's bound to b'lieve they's gwine to run away.”

The 15th Corps waited on the heights. Captain Francis DeGress, well known throughout the army as commander of a battery of four accurate Parrott artillery pieces, could not resist the target that the city offered to a marksman. He unlimbered a section of his guns and began to drop shells expertly along Main Street, among the cavalymen and others loaded with loot. The street quickly emptied. While DeGress was firing, General Sherman came up to him. The soldiers knew the general by sight; his idiosyncrasies were famous. He was tall, thin, and small-chested. He moved constantly—walking, shifting, jerking, pointing, glancing, smoking cigars, rubbing his uncombed red hair or his short, wiry red beard. The intricate lines and wrinkles of his face were always moving and changing, partly because he seldom stopped talking for long and partly because his fleeting expressions registered the rapid jumps of his mood and attention. His dark eyes looked sharply at everything, missing little and never resting. He wore a regulation blue uniform that was dirty and rumpled, and a wide-brimmed, round-topped hat which made him look like a sunburnt farmer or a cattle dealer. Sherman ordered DeGress to cease fire.

The captain had just started to enjoy himself. He showed Sherman where looters were carrying bags of cornmeal from the Confederate supplies at the South Carolina Railroad depot—food that the army could use. The general looked through his field glasses, then told DeGress to burst a few shells above the depot. The guns fired; white puffs of smoke suddenly appeared in the air across the river; and the people under them scattered. The sight of the great granite capitol building caused Sherman to relent a little further. Before the war, one day more than four years past, he had been in his office in Louisiana, where he had received his mail with the newspapers that announced the secession of South Carolina. A forty-year-old man, he had cried like a child and talked on and on about a long, bloody war. Sherman ordered DeGress to put a few twenty-pound solid shot into the capitol. Five hit it. DeGress also fired explosive shells, some of which struck nearby houses. Mayor Thomas Jefferson Goodwyn and his family lived across Gervais Street from the capitol grounds; they heard the front steps of their house blow up. Another shell took a corner off the house in which lived the family of John Niernsee, the state architect. There and in other nearby homes women, children, and household slaves ran fearfully to basements. Niernsee's daughter watched her mother, her governess, and the black maids fall to their knees and pray. General Sherman soon left DeGress, and his firing stopped. Later in the day, other batteries of the 15th Corps and the 17th Corps, irritated by the sniping of Confederate sharpshooters, sent more shells into the city. The artillery also fired at the railroad yards, where Confederate officials were trying to remove the armory's most essential machinery. Some Columbians, having stored cotton in their basements as a form of savings or investment, feared that the explosion would start a fire; they moved more cotton out into Main Street with the other bales.

The Federal engineers decided that the Congaree was too wide and swift for their pontoon bridge. Sherman ordered the 15th Corps to move three miles up the Saluda. The engineers could lay their bridge across the Saluda near the Factory; and, if General William B. Hazen and some of his Second Division pushed fast enough, they might get across the neck of land east of the Saluda in time to capture intact the covered bridge across the Broad River. For these men, crossing rivers had become a well-drilled routine. During the afternoon, boatloads of skirmishers and sharpshooters reached the left bank of the Saluda and drove back the Confederate rear guard. As firing continued around the stone factory building, the women

workers rushed among the looms, grabbing as much cloth and yarn as they could carry away. They knew that their employment had ended. General Hazen quickly led a mounted infantry regiment to the Broad, but the Confederates had made the bridge highly flammable with resin and light wood. They set it on fire so hastily that some of their retreating men were burned. From a distance Sherman knew what the fire meant and ordered that extra pontoons be borrowed from the engineers of the left wing and that both rivers be bridged. General Charles Woods set up a ferry to get the Third Brigade of his division across the Broad during the night so that he could move against the city in the morning, while the engineers were still working on the pontoons. During the day, Sherman had issued special orders for the march beyond Columbia toward Fayetteville, North Carolina. Troops of the right wing, Sherman wrote, were to “occupy Columbia, destroy the public buildings, railroad property, manufacturing and machine shops, but will spare libraries and asylums and private dwellings.”

In Columbia, people who could not get out of the city and those who wanted to stay worked hard to conceal food and valuables. Some slaveowners entrusted silver to household servants, in the hope that Yankees would not plunder the blacks whom they were liberating and that the blacks would keep the silver safe. Hams, bacon, cornmeal, clothes, jewels, silver flatware, gold and silver coin went into attics, mattresses, false-bottomed chairs, baby cribs, or homemade money belts. The depot and the northbound roads continued to attract refugees. Departures continued after sunset of Thursday the 16th. In the evening General Hampton conferred with General Beauregard at Hunt’s Hotel near the capitol; they made plans for the departure of their forces from the city. Hampton would command the rear guard. Beauregard told him not to burn the cotton in the streets. Then Beauregard met with Mayor Goodwyn to tell him that the army was leaving and that he would have to surrender the city in the morning. Most of the Confederate troops marched out during the night. Beauregard accompanied the bulk of his small force. The last boxcars leaving the Charlotte depot contained women refugees and gunpowder. Governor Andrew G. Magrath, three weeks before, had begged in vain for Jefferson Davis to send more reinforcements from Virginia; he rode out of the city at 2:00 A.M. with a military escort. At the same hour Sallie Coles Heyward and her family drove away in carriages containing changes of clothing and a trunk of silver. The streets were not quiet. Mayor Goodwyn ordered the Market opened so that people could take the food stored there. A crowd quickly cleared it out. Blacks and whites returned to the government supplies at the South Carolina Railroad depot, where by torchlight they hurried to get as much as they could. The depot also contained a stockpile of gunpowder and ammunition—during the rush the building exploded with a force that shook the ground throughout the city. Twenty or thirty looters died in the blast; others were severely hurt. At dawn the long brick building was a shell, still burning.

Friday morning’s sky was clear; a hard, steady wind blew from the northwest. Near the Congaree, the ruins of the depot warehouse and station sent up smoke. On the right bank of the river men of the 17th Corps watched eagerly for signs that the city had been taken. Upriver, the Saluda had been bridged with pontoons, and engineers were working hard to complete the bridging of the Broad. From a bluff above the river many soldiers watched. One group consisted of the commanding generals. Sherman walked around biting an unlit cigar. He stopped to talk; he sat down to whittle on a stick; he stood up to walk again. General

Oliver Otis Howard, commander of the right wing, read a newspaper, making remarks as he read and answering Sherman's questions. Despite having lost his right arm in 1862, Howard was always ready for action yet remained soft-spoken and even-tempered. General Frank Blair and General John A. Logan, commander of the 15th Corps, were nearby; they bore little resemblance to Howard. Logan stood out with his dark complexion and his black hair and large mustache; his intensity in combat or in speech-making showed that he was a good hater. Blair, a member of a political family, divided the world into loyal friends and bitter enemies. General Hazen, the first to have reached the spot, and the other officers and soldiers saw the canvas-and-plank bridge being slowly extended across the noisy overflowing river. From four o'clock until eight o'clock in the morning, Colonel George A. Stone ferried his brigade, the Third of Woods's division, across the Broad. After capturing some Confederate skirmishers and chasing others, the men entrenched to wait for the next brigade to start to cross.

The streets of Columbia showed the effects of the night's unrest. Confederate soldiers, slaves, and citizens had continued to grab goods and food. Some stores on Main Street stood broken open, their windows smashed and their merchandise scattered. Many of the cotton bales, piled three high in an intermittent row down the street, had been split open. The bagging had broken, and cotton was blowing from them into tree branches and onto the buildings. Fewer white people than usual but a much larger proportion of black people gathered outdoors in the business section of the city. Among the private hoards that the night's activities had brought out were large quantities of whiskey and brandy—barrels of liquor that had run the naval blockade but, like cotton, had suddenly begun to look like a bad investment.

Mayor Goodwyn called some of the aldermen to City Hall on Main Street, two blocks from the capitol, where they discussed the situation soon after dawn. They wanted to run up a white flag on the tower, cross the Congaree by boat, and find Sherman in order to surrender. General Hampton sent an officer to stop the raising of the white flag. Soon, however, he learned that a Federal brigade had reached the left bank of the Broad River north of town. At 8:30, in front of City Hall, the general told the mayor that the Confederate troops were leaving and that the civilians could go surrender the city. Hampton shook hands with Goodwyn and said: "Good-bye and God bless you."

As Hampton and his staff rode out of Columbia to the northeast, the mayor and the aldermen, riding in a carriage and carrying a white sheet, headed up Main Street toward the Yankees. A half mile out of town they met General Joseph Wheeler. His cavalymen were trying to harass the Yankees while running. Colonel Stone's brigade was moving forward from its temporary entrenchments, and Wheeler assured the city officials that, despite the intermittent gunfire they heard, the Confederate cavalry would soon be gone.

While waiting for the surrender of Columbia, a few of the 17th Corps soldiers across the Congaree grew impatient. They decided to jump ahead of the 15th Corps. Not enough men could get over the river to occupy the city, but a few could cross in boats and try to be the first to raise the Stars and Stripes above the citadel of treason, South Carolina's old state house. Twenty-one men of the 13th Iowa Regiment, with their young commander, Lieutenant Colonel J. C. Kennedy, crossed the river and entered the city at the same time that Wheeler's cavalymen were retreating through the streets. They saw blacks and whites drinking and Confederate soldiers pouring turpentine on cotton bales and setting them afire. The men

headed for the old state house. Once inside, they got up through the musty cupola onto the roof, pulled down the Palmetto Flag, and hung out the United States flag. From this height they could see, beyond the northern edge of town, the advancing skirmish line of Stone's brigade.

Having held the mayor's carriage until after ten o'clock, Wheeler allowed it to go on. A patrol of Wheeler's men rode down Main Street telling their fellow troopers in the city to get out. Goodwyn and the aldermen continued along the road toward the Broad River until they met a captain commanding the Federal skirmishers. He sent them with another captain to meet Colonel Stone, who insisted on the unconditional surrender of the city. Stone sent back to Sherman the mayor's request for guards to keep private property secure, and he promised that the Third Brigade would protect the city. After a brief alarm over some unexpected gunfire, the colonel rode into Columbia with the mayor and the aldermen in their carriage, soon followed by his brigade of Iowans.

With a hard wind at their backs blowing up clouds of dirt and debris, the men marched down Main Street. They saw many black people of all ages, as well as white men in button-down jeans, taking goods from the stores. As the soldiers had often experienced before, many slaves greeted them as bringers of freedom and instruments of God's will. Blacks and whites, many already drunk, urged the men to drink. Colonel Stone hurried on to the state house to raise the flag, unaware that other Iowans were already there. During the hour around noon while he was at the capitol, his brigade broke up. The soldiers had gone without much sleep or any food for more than twenty-four hours; liquor gave them a quick jolt. One officer later said: "I saw men who never drank before in their lives, drunk that day." Some broke into stores to show the Columbia novices how experienced men tore a place apart. Others ripped open cotton bales and watched the tufts blow away, covering more of the city with the appearance of a snowfall. Several soldiers headed for homes to begin what they called "foraging," which meant taking not only food, clothing, and guns, but also watches, silver, and jewelry—sometimes at gunpoint. Part of the cotton on Main Street burst into dangerous flame, and fire-alarm bells were rung. Volunteers of the Independent Fire Company wheeled out their engines and, with the help of some soldiers, pumped water onto the bales, reducing the blaze to a less alarming level. A fire in the jail, two blocks west of the Market, was also suppressed, but soldiers stuck bayonets into the fire hoses and quickly made one engine useless. Stone still had some disciplined soldiers. At City Hall he assured the aldermen that private property would be safe. He sent guards to homes in response to requests; he posted sentries at street intersections and ordered all liquor destroyed. His orders were partially carried out; yet he could not present a peaceful city to his superiors—Woods, Logan, Howard, and Sherman—who were coming.

Soon after a detail of Stone's men cleared some of the debris from Main Street at two o'clock, the sound of military bands came from the direction of Broad River. While the leading wing of the army stayed well outside the city and the 17th Corps went around it, the 15th Corps marched through Columbia. General Logan, mounted, led his men; Sherman and Howard rode together behind him. The even ranks looked full; few soldiers wanted to miss the occasion. Battle flags stood out in the whipping wind. One after another, the brigade bands played "Hail Columbia," then varied their tunes with "The Star-Spangled Banner," "The Red, White, and Blue," "Yankee Doodle," and other marches before playing "Hail Columbia."

again. Along the sidewalks and intersections a dense crowd made noise to rival the bands and the wind. In front of the stores, soldiers of Stone's brigade cheered Sherman more loudly than usual, but less coherently. Black people let out their glee in many ways: shaking each other's hands, laughing, dancing to the music, marching alongside in step; some old men took off their hats and bowed. Many people shouted to the soldiers: "God bless you; I'se free now!" "T'ank de Almighty God, Mister Sherman has come at last. We knew it; we prayed for de day and de Lord Jesus heard our prayers." A few of Columbia's white people hung out the Stars and Stripes. In the middle of the street General Sherman was suddenly stopped by a soldier who stepped out from the sidewalk and moved unsteadily in front of Sherman's horse. The man wore a long, figured silk dressing gown with his army gear buckled around it, a shiraz plug hat, and a string of epaulets as a necklace. Carrying his musket at shoulder shift, he stepped up to Sherman, lifted his hat, and said: "I have the honor (hic), General, to present (hic) you with (hic) the freedom of the (hic) City." Sherman turned his head away to hide a grin. The man was quickly taken under guard, and the head of the column moved on to City Hall. Sherman and Howard stayed there while the corps marched through the city to its new camps a mile outside. In camp an Illinois soldier of the First Division deplored the stealing and drunkenness he had seen among Stone's brigade. He wrote in his diary: "I think the city should be burned, but would like to see it done decently."

At City Hall, Sherman met Mayor Goodwyn, asked him for a house to serve as headquarters, and promised him that the city would be safe. Many of the officers who had escaped from the prison camp had gathered there. Sherman greeted them, heard accounts of their treatment, and invited them to visit him at his headquarters. While the rest of the 15th Corps marched along Main Street, Sherman and Howard rode to the smoldering South Carolina Railroad depot, where they saw soldiers salvaging unburnt grain, then continued uptown to look at the arsenal and returned to the Market. Sherman believed that the city was under control, but Colonel Stone soon asked General Woods for reinforcements to patrol the streets. None came.

During the afternoon the wind gusted still harder, steadily making "a weird and gloomy sound." Outside the city, a division of the 17th Corps had to move its camp away from the woods into an open field when a fire in the underbrush quickly grew too big to fight. Even in the field, the air was full of smoke, blowing sand, and flying leaves. In the afternoon and the evening, many soldiers left their camps to go into Columbia. The 15th and 17th corps were near, but men also came from the 14th and 20th corps northwest of town and even from Kilpatrick's cavalry, which was twenty miles away. Private Michael Griffin of the 15th Corps said: "You better believe there was a rush to see the City and get Trophies." Soldiers and blacks moved through the streets in pursuit of private purposes or to no purpose. Some soldiers dispersed among the prosperous-looking houses and gardens, growing whiter from flying bits of cotton, and began to search for food and valuables. About fifty men broke into the Bank of Charleston and the Commercial Bank of Columbia and began to fill bags with silver. Many houses had guards who kept other soldiers out, and officers walked around ready to interfere with a private's fun. Even so, other Columbia homes received a visit, sometimes several, from wandering groups of soldiers. The men said they were looking for food and firearms but snatched whatever caught their fancy. Soldiers did not assault civilians during their afternoon wanderings, yet some did enjoy scaring those whom they blamed for

the war—waving weapons, damning South Carolina, and warning that Columbia was going to suffer after dark. Most, a Columbian noticed, were “civil and pleasant spoken, but there was a marked air of absence from all restraint and control, and the soldiers evidently knew that it was general holiday.” Not long after soldiers found the half block of brothels on Gervais Street, fire broke out in those frame buildings, which burned quickly in the wind. Cotton bales near the center of the city continued to burn inside, throwing out flaming fragments. In the suburbs, the mansions of Wade Hampton and George Trenholm, Confederate secretary of the treasury, went up in smoke that citizens in town could see.

Other stragglers went to the arsenal to look at British cannon captured at Yorktown in 1781 and to bend musket barrels over the old prizes of war. The unfinished new capitol building offered many targets to anyone who hated South Carolina. Hard work went into breaking off the beaks of stone eagles and smashing marble fasces, as well as other decorative devices. A bronze statue of George Washington served as a target for bricks and rocks. As usual, soldiers left graffiti everywhere: their names, numbers and names of their companies and regiments, and some “foul comments.” Close by, in the old state house, men found documents from South Carolina’s attempt to nullify federal law in 1832. Thirty or forty soldiers gathered in the senate chamber and organized themselves as the South Carolina senate. They voted repeal of the ordinance of secession and passed a resolution of censure against John C. Calhoun. Then they bombarded Hiram Powers’s marble bust of Calhoun with inkstands and spittoons. Finally, they sang with great enthusiasm:

John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave
But his soul goes marching on.

The “senate” adjourned to reconvene at Raleigh, North Carolina. Captain John J. Safe walked out of the chamber with the clock, the thermometer, the state surveying instrument and, he said, “several other trophies too numerous to mention.”

At dusk, soldiers were wandering throughout the city, under no control. Several buildings in the center of the business district caught fire. The volunteer firemen brought out the remaining engines and tried to bring the hoses to bear on the flames, but soldiers quickly smashed the machinery with axes. The constant straining wind caused the stores to burn fast. With shouts and cheers men moved through the broken and discarded merchandise in the street, the sober as excited as the drunk. Lieutenant Colonel Jeremiah W. Jenkins, the provost marshal who was supposed to police the city, found the task too great. His “youthful tall lithe and elegant form, in his officers suit and high topped boots” caught the eye of a Columbia woman who sought from him a guard for her house. He walked along the street with her restlessly, rushing into buildings to stamp out small fires. He tried to apologize to her for the disorder, but she denounced the North for making war on women and children after having failed in fair combat. At last Jenkins told her: “The women of the South kept the war alive—and it is only by making them suffer that we can subdue the men.”

Not long after sunset, several rockets shot up above the city, leaving bright trails of color. To the soldiers this was a common sight, since rockets were the usual nighttime signal among the separated columns of Sherman’s army. But citizens of Columbia read a more frightening meaning into the signal. Some of them had heard warnings about a plan among the soldiers to burn the city. Harriott Horry Ravenel suspected that her slave Martha knew

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