

WAR IS A TERRIBLE ENEMY TO TEMPERANCE:
DRINKING, SELF-CONTROL, AND THE MEANING OF LOYALTY IN THE CIVIL WAR
ERA

by

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ABSTRACT

When the American Civil War began in 1861, people on both sides of the conflict believed that the conduct of soldiers and civilians would shape if not determine the war's outcome. In this context, the nation-wide temperance movement began a period of transition. Before the 1860s, interest in temperance was waning nationally; local and state regulatory measures had curbed excessive drinking. Once war broke out, however, alcohol became increasingly threatening. Soldiers and officers drank heavily, lacked discipline, and harassed civilians. Distillers and traffickers wasted grain and profited during a time of scarcity, when most civilians practiced patriotic self-sacrifice. Temperance reformers believed that ridding the nation – either the Union or the Confederacy – of alcohol was the only way to curb immorality, whip the armies into fighting shape, and win the war. Many Americans outside of the temperance movement agreed. Debates over alcohol's manufacture and consumption became essential components for understanding what it meant to be a patriotic citizen during the Civil War. In turn, examining these wartime issues recasts historical understandings of the centrality of temperance to conceptions of nationalism in the post-bellum United States.

This study relies on a variety of sources: military records, legislative journals, temperance and religious publications, personal accounts, and newspapers. It examines soldiers' uses and beliefs about drinking; the supply of alcohol in the armies; regulatory debates on the northern and southern home fronts; and northern and southern temperance reformers' understandings of the war's purposes. It argues that when it came to alcohol northern and southern civilians clashed with military officials. Union and Confederate military officials knew

that whiskey was responsible for chronic indiscipline, but they nevertheless supplied alcohol to soldiers to stave off illness and fatigue. Soldiers drank willingly. Alcohol took the edge off the war. On the home front, however, civilians regarded liquor as an enemy in its own right.

Temperance reformers implored soldiers to put down the bottle. Union and Confederate civilians demanded that military and civil authorities prohibit distilling to restore order and preserve food. In doing so, they laid the foundations for the post-war prohibition movement.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
INTRODUCTION: A REVIVAL OF THE TEMPERANCE CAUSE?	1
1. “THE MEMORY OF HOME”: DRINKING, CAMP DISCIPLINE, AND THE LIMITS OF DOMESTICITY.....	14
2. MORAL AND MARTIAL HEROES: DRINKING AND DUTY AMONG OFFICERS	58
3. “WHISKEY MAKES TROUBLE, THEREFORE SUPPLY IT”: SUPPLYING SPIRITS IN THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES	105
4. “LADIES ARE AFRAID TO GO INTO THE STREETS”: SOLDIERS, CIVILIANS, AND THE REGULATION OF ALCOHOL	142
5. “WILL NOT THE PREVENTION BE WORSE THAN THE DISEASE?”: MEDICINAL ALCOHOL AND ITS THREAT TO TEMPERANCE.....	182
6. “THIS RUM AND SLAVE BENIGHTED COUNTRY”: LOYALTY, SLAVERY, AND LIQUOR	225
EPILOGUE: “LET TEMPERANCE MEN THROUGH THE LAND WAKE UP”	271
REFERENCES	275

Introduction
A Revival of the Temperance Cause?

When Abraham Lincoln won the 1860 presidential election, members of the American Temperance Union rejoiced. “Two thorough temperance men” had been elected to the presidency and vice-presidency.¹ For decades, reformers had been fighting a moral crusade against the demon rum, and now, with Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin at the helm, abstainers believed that their time had come. Campaign season had been distracting, but the “political excitement” of the election had passed, explained The Templars Magazine, and temperance reformers seemed to be under the impression that there was “nothing of general interest to engross the public” in December 1860.² Something had to fill the void, and temperance reformers thought that time was perfect for “a revival of the Temperance Cause.”³ A few decades earlier, the temperance movement had counted more than a million followers among its ranks, but in the 1850s, membership in the American Temperance Union (and similar organizations) was on the decline (in part because Americans were not consuming as much alcohol).⁴ Reformers, though, blamed slavery for distracting Americans from the more dangerous problem

¹ Journal of the American Temperance Union and New-York Prohibitionist (JATU) 23 (December 1860): 184.

² The Templars' Magazine (Cincinnati) quoted in the JATU 23 (December 1860): 188.

³ Quoted in “What Next?,” JATU 23 (December 1860): 184.

⁴ It's difficult to find hard data to determine how many subscribers the JATU had in the 1860s. W. J. Rorabaugh has found that millions of temperance pamphlets, tracts, and periodicals circulated throughout the Northeast in the antebellum decades and that the American Temperance Society and American Temperance Union had more than a million members in their hey-days. See, The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 197-202; Clifford S. Griffin estimates that thousands of Union troops read the JATU while serving in the ranks, see Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970), 247.

of drunkenness.⁵ When the election of 1860 did not settle the slavery controversy, temperance reformers were aghast. Secession and war would not only distract from their crusade, but would also worsen the liquor crisis. Throughout the war, teetotalers would wring their hands over drunken soldiers and speculative distillers, arguing that the consumption and trafficking of alcohol would lead to defeat on the battlefield and bring down divine judgment on the nation. War would kill the temperance movement, they feared.

But even as organized temperance lost members when men went off to war, temperance sentiment, nation-wide, did not abate. If anything, many Americans became more concerned about the threat alcohol posed to national survival. The war might not have revived the temperance cause in the ways that reformers hoped, but the conflict necessitated the growth of the state and encouraged northerners and southerners to conflate sobriety with patriotism and national duty. These factors, when combined, would lay the foundations for the national prohibition movement that emerged in the decades following the war.

The war caught the temperance movement in a state of transition. During the antebellum decades, the crusade had gained steam as middle-class Americans grew increasingly concerned that young urban working men were too drunk to function in an industrial democratic society. Intoxication was incompatible with factory life, in which workers needed to be sober while on the clock. Men who were drunk lost their jobs, went into debt, and left their families to suffer, so the temperance story went. More than being poor workers, though, drunkards were poor voters.

⁵ “Mr. Delavan has forwarded to us the following letter from James Black, Esq., of Pennsylvania, for publication, which we give with pleasure, Lancaster, Pa, 25, July, 1860,” *JATU* 23 (September 1860): 130; Ian R. Tyrrell notes similar complaints from 1850s temperance reformers in *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 306.

In a land of universal manhood suffrage, alcohol threatened social stability.⁶ A drunk would likely vote unqualified men into important offices.

Middle-class men and women flocked to the American Temperance Union and set about reforming the masses of young men arriving in their cities looking for work. Soon, organizations such as the Washingtonians sprang up to not only warn workers about the dangers of alcohol, but also to provide them with a recreational alternative to bawdy houses and concert halls. By 1850, the movement had paid off. States and cities passed license laws to regulate alcohol sales, and consumption plummeted. Some might argue that the temperance movement had been successful.⁷

Members of the American Temperance Union did not see it that way. Since 1836 they had been crusading for total abstinence. As long as moderate drinking persisted, their work was not done. By the 1850s, they were mounting crusades to convince state legislatures to pass legal prohibition. Maine was the first to enact such a measure in 1851. Other states followed, but prohibition was unpopular, and by 1860, many state prohibition measures had been repealed. What remained were license laws, which curbed the worst excesses, and, in the minds of teetotalers, legitimized the liquor trade. Reformers, then, turned their attention to the problem of moderate drinking, which they considered the sin of the middle class. Plenty of respectable –

⁶ Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); Bruce Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); Elaine Frantz Parsons, Manhood Lost: Fallen Drunkards and Redeeming Women in the Nineteenth-Century United States (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Holly Berkeley Fletcher, Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth-Century (New York: Routledge, 2008). Although scholars have mostly regarded temperance as a northern, urban phenomenon, recent studies have argued that temperance organizations also existed in southern cities and towns with prominent middle classes. See, Jonathan Daniel Wells, Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800-1861 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 89-132; Bruce E. Stewart, Moonshiners and Prohibitionists: The Battle over Alcohol in Southern Appalachia (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 9-60; Lee L. Willis, Southern Prohibition: Race, Reform, and Public Life in Middle Florida, 1821-1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 15-66.

⁷ Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers; Jack S. Blocker, Jr., American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 1-60.

white, financially stable, middle-class, professional – Americans supped wine with their communion wafers and at their dinner tables. In the South, as well, wealthy families considered consuming alcohol a marker of social status. Their drinking kept liquor businesses afloat. Temperance reformers were committed to ridding the United States of liquor completely. They believed drinking was a sin, and only by eliminating it entirely could American society progress toward the millennium.⁸

Whether they realized it in 1861 or not, the Civil War would provide temperance reformers the momentum they needed for their prohibition crusade. On the one hand, war appeared to be a huge threat to the principle of temperance – men left their temperance organizations and joined the military, where drunkenness was prevalent; the military sanctioned liquor rations; and profiteers cranked up illicit stills, taking advantage of chaos and wartime shortages to make easy money. On the other hand, the demon rum wreaked so much havoc during the war that Americans who had become complacent about the temperance cause found themselves increasingly exasperated with drunkards and traffickers. Suddenly, drinking behavior mattered because the fate of the nation literally seemed to hang in the balance. Northerners needed to preserve the Union. Confederates wanted national independence. In both cases, sobriety was imperative.

Soldiers and officers became the first targets of reformers. Volunteers joined Union and Confederate armies in droves. Conscripts would follow. All of these new soldiers had to be whipped into fighting shape. They had to be disciplined. They had to be sober. A mob of gun-

⁸ Ian R. Tyrrell argues that even before the specific focus on total abstinence developed in 1836, middle-class temperance reformers were targeting moderate, middle-class drinkers more than impoverished drunks, whom they believed would simply die off. The crusade then, was always, in large part, focused on saving young middle-class men from the slippery slope from moderate wine consumption to a drunken death in the gutter. See, Sobering Up; Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers; Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers: 1815-1860 (Revised Edition) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997) 125-146.

wielding drunks could not win a war. But as important as sober soldiers were to the war effort, Americans were more concerned with the officers responsible for leading them into battle. Officers typically came from middle- and upper- class families – those families where moderate drinking was still acceptable. Military culture reflected this reality. Officers were allowed to drink when enlisted men were not, and they took advantage of the privilege. This horrified temperance reformers and made plenty of Americans nervous. A drunken officer – especially a high-ranking general – could make grave mistakes in battle. Civilians increasingly believed that drinking and soldiering were fundamentally incompatible. To perform their patriotic duty, men had to be disciplined and sober.

The connection between patriotism, sobriety, and masculinity did not only apply to the military. Temperance reformers amped up their campaign against liquor traffickers, and the northern and southern public joined them. Liquor dealers sold alcohol to troops, evaded taxes while civilians paid for the war, distilled scarce grain into whiskey, and took advantages of wartime shortages to speculate. In the minds of many Americans, traffickers were more than simply unpatriotic, they were disloyal. By war's end, so widespread was the notion that liquor was a national enemy that Americans were applying the twin labels of “drunkenness” and “disloyalty” to any group of people that appeared to threaten national goals: secessionists, guerrilla bands, Copperheads, draft dodgers. This had profound implications for recent immigrants – namely those from Ireland and Germany. Alcohol was an integral part of both cultures, and any time immigrant regiments faltered in battle, native-born citizens blamed alcohol. That some recent immigrants opposed the draft did not help. German-American brewers

found themselves lumped in with the demonized liquor-traffickers. If loyalty meant sobriety, many immigrants failed to live up to the mark.⁹

Conveniently for temperance reformers, Americans began conflating sobriety with loyalty at the same time that state and national governments grew much more powerful. Scholars have shown for decades how the federal government ballooned during the war, as Congress flexed its muscles and Abraham Lincoln used the war powers to control the Union population and mobilize it for war. Even the Confederacy, built on the idea of states' rights, centralized authority, albeit with fewer resources.¹⁰ Both governments faced plenty of criticism, but when it came to controlling alcohol, northerners and southerners were surprisingly willing for the state and national governments to regulate – and even prohibit – the trade. Most measures were passed

⁹ My study, in many ways, unites scholarship on moral reform with works on the development of wartime patriotism. Temperance reformers had been trying to define America by its morals for decades. When war broke out, suddenly mainstream, middle-class Unionists and Confederates had similar concerns. For studies of moral reform and national vision, see Robert H. Abzug, Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); James A. Morone, Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). Scholars have argued that the Civil War necessitated the development of new ideas of patriotism and national duty. Regarding northern patriotism, Melinda Lawson argues that northerners embraced new notions of loyalty and patriotism that required individuals to embrace a particular vision of the nation, often rooted in the Declaration of Independence, and act it out through service in increasingly centralized and institutionalized volunteer organizations, see Patriotic Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005); Christian G. Samito argues that the Civil War allowed communities – such as African Americans and Irish immigrants – who had previously been considered outsiders in American political society to claim citizenship through their wartime service and sacrifice. Loyalty was demonstrable through behavior. See, Becoming American under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009). Studies on German, Irish, Jewish, African, and Native Americans have broadened this discussion further. See, Susannah J. Ural, ed., Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

¹⁰ For scholarship on the expansion of the Confederate state and national governments, see Emory M. Thomas, The Confederate Nation: 1861-1865 (New York: Harper and Row, 1979); Emory M. Thomas, The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991); William Blair, Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Stephanie McCurry, Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). For the Union government, see Phillip Shaw Paludan, A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861-1865 (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996); William Quentin Maxwell, Lincoln's Fifth Wheel: The Political History of the United States Sanitary Commission (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1956); Judith Ann Giesberg, Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women's Politics in Transition (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2000). For comparative scholarship, see Richard Franklin Bensel, Yankee Leviathan: The Origins of Central State Authority in America, 1859-1877 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

under the guise of pragmatic necessity, but beneath the surface (barely, in some cases), there existed a moral impetus: the state was acting to protect women and children from dangers caused by alcohol. These wartime experiments with prohibition were only partially successful. But as scholars have shown, moral reformers would re-emerge during Reconstruction, using the newly powerful federal government to enforce morality.¹¹

By looking at wartime temperance sentiment in depth, this study attempts to unite two historiographies that seldom cross paths. Numerous scholars of alcohol's regulation have tracked the temperance movement from its antebellum roots through to its culmination in Prohibition. These studies barely look at the Civil War period and too often characterize it as the nadir of the temperance movement.¹² Weak attendance at local meetings has been equated all too often with a lack of interest in temperance. To be sure, the war disrupted local organizations, even in the North, and temperance presses shut their doors.¹³ But a close look at soldier diaries, mainstream newspapers, military records, and especially Confederate legislation reveals that the temperance movement was not dormant during the war. The mass mobilization merely reframed its focus. In

¹¹ Gaines M. Foster, Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); other scholars have debated how effective the federal government was at policing liquor revenue laws in the post-war decades. Wilbur R. Miller argues that federal tax laws only had limited success in the mountain South and that they opened up avenues for political corruption, see Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcing Federal Liquor Law in the Mountain South, 1865-1900 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).

¹² My study builds on the work of Holly Berkeley Fletcher, whose gendered analysis of nineteenth-century temperance reform provides perhaps the best analysis of the war years. Fletcher argues that the Civil War was a period of transition for the temperance movement in the North and that northern reformers often found themselves at odds with the military and the growing brewing industry as they tried to win a war against alcohol. See, Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth-Century, 58-78; Paul Boyer mentions the New York Draft Riots only in passing in his important study of moral reform in the long nineteenth-century. See, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 69-70, 96-97; Elaine Frantz Parsons touches on the Civil War in passing in her study on alcohol and nineteenth-century manhood by briefly mentioning that liquor was considered an enemy and a form of enslavement worse than southern slavery, see Manhood Lost, 26, 135.

¹³ Frank Luther Mott lists the Journal of the American Temperance Union as the only temperance journal to publish throughout the Civil War, but he does not provide subscriber information for the journal or any other temperance publication, see A History of American Magazines, 1741-1930, vol. 2, 1850-1865 (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1958-1968), 210.

fact, that the movement so quickly gained momentum after the war's end indicates that the national interest in temperance never faded.

Civil War historians, for their part, have given the subject of alcohol only cursory attention. Studies of camp life include chapters on soldier drinking. That drunkenness exacerbated discipline problems in an army of volunteers is evident. Studies of religion and nationalism have included drunkenness among the list of sins with which Americans were concerned. To a certain extent, this lack of attention seems odd, when one considers the amount of time academics and war enthusiasts have devoted to debating whether or not certain generals were intoxicated on days that they lost important battles. Their biographers have done considerable research, but the field has not yet attempted to gain an understanding of how alcohol was used in the armies or how Americans at the time perceived its effects on the war.¹⁴ This study takes a step in that direction.

The work here has also benefitted immensely from the recent scholarly interest in the study of food and drink. It owes much to the recent resurgence in the popularity of craft breweries and bourbon tourism, which have prompted new attention to the place of alcohol in American culture.¹⁵ Recent scholarship that explores how diet is bound up with gender, race, class, and national identities has also proved helpful for framing this study.¹⁶ In many ways,

¹⁴ For scholarship on camp life and troop discipline, see Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Johnny Reb: the Common Soldier of the Confederacy (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943); Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank: the Common Soldier of the Union (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1951); Joseph T. Glatthaar, General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse (New York: Free Press, 2008); Lorien Foote, The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Manhood, Honor, and Violence in the Union Army (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Steven J. Ramold, Baring the Iron Hand: Discipline in the Union Army (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010). For scholarship on religion and the war, see Steven E. Woodworth, While God is Marching On: The Religious World of Civil War Soldiers (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2001); George C. Rable, God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

¹⁵ Maureen Ogle, Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 2006); Michael R. Veach, Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey: An American Heritage (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013).

¹⁶ Historians have long included excellent analyses of body reformers in their studies of the American reform tradition. For example, Walters, American Moral Reformers, 147-173; Abzug, Cosmos Crumbling, 163-182; More

wartime Americans demonstrated their national allegiance and their masculine behavior by what they did – or did not – drink. They likewise judged their neighbors by the contents of their glasses. In this regard, the similarities between temperance reform, vegetarianism, and the body reformers are important, especially as they relate to the health of the soldiers. Scholars have shown that the idea that mindful eating and drinking created a carefully crafted and disciplined human body had been developing in the nineteenth century, and that by the beginning of the twentieth century, American masculinity would become obsessed with virility and athleticism.¹⁷ During the Civil War, temperance-minded civilians and water-cure enthusiasts believed that cold water provided the key to perfect physical health, and they encouraged soldiers to drink only water. Military policy dictated otherwise. Soldiers drank whiskey rations to fight sickness and mitigate the effects of exposure. They also self-medicated to treat the war's physical and psychological pain. If cold water was the drink of the healthy American man in the late-nineteenth century, soldiers and veterans, by opting for alcohol, illustrated how the war left them unable to fulfill contemporary notions about an ideal American manhood.¹⁸

recently, Adam D. Shprintzen's study of vegetarianism has provided an in-depth examination of how physical and moral reform became closely related as the nineteenth century progressed. See, The Vegetarian Crusade: The Rise of An American Reform Movement, 1817-1921 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). Although it focuses on the twentieth century, Helen Zoe Veit's study of the moral significance of food during World War I has shaped my thinking about how diet so thoroughly becomes intertwined with conceptions of loyalty, duty, and national identity. See, Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

¹⁷ Gail Bederman, Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Kristin L. Hoganson, Fighting for American Manhood: How Gender Politics Provoked the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Gerald F. Linderman has argued that the carnage of war isolated soldiers from civilian society and required them to develop alternative conceptions of masculinity, see Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War (New York: The Free Press, 1987); See also, Reid Mitchell, Civil War Soldiers (New York: Viking, 1988). Frances Clarke's recent work on suffering and soldiers illustrates that civilians always expected soldiers and veterans to deal with their war wounds stoically and with manly fortitude. See, War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011). In this way, my study also complements James Marten's analysis of veterans in the late nineteenth century; he argues that veterans found themselves broken physically and mentally because of the war, often dependent on alcohol, and unable to pull themselves up by their bootstraps in Gilded Age fashion. See, Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

The scope of this study has significant limits. Most of the actors are educated or middle-class. Many of them are men. Almost all of them are white and native-born. While enlisted soldiers, enslaved and free people of color, and immigrants appear in the study, they almost always appear as targets of temperance reformers' crusades. What this study reveals is a debate between middle-class temperance reformers, northern and southern politicians, literate citizens, and military authorities on whether or not alcohol was acceptable – in any capacity – in a modern society at war. When the voices of immigrants, women, and African Americans appear, they are responding to a debate whose parameters were set largely by affluent white men. This study also focuses on questions about alcohol and temperance as they related specifically to the war effort. Temperance organizations, especially in the northern communities, were engaged in license and Sunday law campaigns, debates about family drinking, and discussions about drinking on railroads, but these discussions had little to do with the war.

It remains unclear how much alcohol flowed through the armies, whether certain generals were drunk on certain days, or whether alcohol can be blamed for catastrophes on the battlefield. These are not the questions I hope to answer. My observation is that alcohol was ironically somehow scarce yet ubiquitous -- due to varying regulations, irregular supply, and soldiers' uncanny ability to locate spirits. I also have the sense the Union soldiers had greater access to alcohol than Confederates, because whiskey was so scarce in southern states, and the Union armies, in general, were much better supplied.¹⁹ But this dissertation does not attempt to prove this empirically. It also will not answer the question of whether or not General Ulysses S. Grant was an alcoholic, although it will show that Americans have been curious about it since the war

¹⁹ Scott C. Martin has attempted to tackle this topic. He argues that alcohol policies in Union and Confederate armies were inconsistent, that alcohol was available to soldiers, and that it undoubtedly caused serious blunders on the battlefield. See, “‘A Soldier Intoxicated is Far Worse than No Soldier at All’: Intoxication and the American Civil War,” Social History of Alcohol and Drugs 25 (Fall 2011): 66-87.

began. Biographers of Grant have devoted years of research trying to determine the extent to which he drank and whether it affected his career.²⁰ The same holds true for other generals who have been infamous for their supposed drinking or abstinence: Jubal Early, James Ledlie, Irvin McDowell, Joseph Hooker, Robert E. Lee, and Stonewall Jackson. Instead of attempting to figure out when they were drunk and if it mattered, I have examined public debates over their character and drinking habits as it related to their performance on the battlefield. What I have found overwhelmingly is that the American public assumed that unsuccessful generals (such as McDowell) were drunkards while successful ones (such as Grant) were sober. Primary evidence about each general's behavior shows that what Americans thought was not always true: McDowell was a teetotaler; Grant was not. That did not matter. So entrenched was sobriety in American conceptions of masculinity and success that many civilians could not fathom a victorious drunken general. Likewise, they had trouble believing that a sober man could fail. This study, then, is one of perception. It looks at how ideas about drunkenness shaped Americans' understanding of the war and how, in turn, ideas about war and national duty shaped definitions of masculinity and drunkenness.

To get a sense of these ideas, this study relies on the blending of a variety of sources. To untangle military policies regarding supply and liquor regulation the Official Records of the War of the Rebellion proved invaluable. Likewise, legislative journals of state and national governments reveal a great deal about taxation, licensing, and prohibition. Temperance periodicals, such as the Spirit of the Age and the Journal of the American Temperance Union, as

²⁰ For scholarship on Grant and his drinking, see Bruce Catton, Grant Moves South (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1960); Bruce Catton, Grant Takes Command (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Company, 1968); Brooks D. Simpson, Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph over Adversity, 1822-1865 (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000); Joan Waugh, U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

well as tracts and minutes from temperance and church meetings shed light on the wartime opinions of the reform community. But this dissertation also relies heavily on the observations of soldiers and officers caught in the midst of war. These shed light on how alcohol was consumed in camps and during battles, as well as how soldiers understood their drinking. The combination of soldiers' accounts, when blended with newspaper reports and government records, illuminates the debates over discipline and the meaning of alcohol for different groups of Americans. These sources indicate that northerners and southerners had surprisingly similar opinions about alcohol and drunkenness, and this study, therefore, does not attempt to systematically compare and contrast Union and Confederate accounts. Rather, it weaves together their similar experiences.

The chapters are arranged topically, rather than chronologically. Chapter 1 examines how civilian and military authorities attempted to establish the boundaries and discipline of middle-class domesticity among enlisted soldiers. Chapter 2 focuses on officers' behavior in an atmosphere where civilians increasingly conflated sobriety with victory and good soldiering while the men themselves believed that alcohol and even drunkenness were perfectly acceptable ways to deal with life in the field. Chapter 3 examines how alcohol was supplied to soldiers through military and private channels and reveals that through myriad regulations officers had more access to alcohol than enlisted men. Chapter 4 argues that the need to control soldiers and resources led many people who were not temperance reformers to call on the state for legal regulation and prohibition, especially in the Confederacy. Chapter 5 explores how alcohol figured into the military's developing medical understanding, which was caught between traditional remedies and science. Chapter 6 examines the notion of loyalty as it related to drinking and argues that northern and southern temperance reformers believed that the sin of

drunkenness (rather than slavery) was the most serious problem facing America. Thus those who drank could often be considered disloyal.

Chapter 1
“The Memory of Home”:
Drinking, Camp Discipline, and the Limits of Domesticity

“War is ever a terrible enemy to temperance,” cried the New York-based Journal of the American Temperance Union in May 1861. North Carolina’s The Spirit of the Age agreed wholeheartedly, reprinting these comments a few weeks later. Soon after Abraham Lincoln’s call for 75,000 volunteers and the secession of the Upper South states, temperance reformers – North and South – issued a call to the Cold Water Army. Thousands of young men were leaving home for the first time, and although many had been brought up with the religious principles of self-control and temperance, reformers feared that they would be overcome by the temptations of military camps. In an effort to assert their manliness – to “appeal to sociability, to honor and bravery” – these young men might well “drink to their ruin.”¹ Continuing its lament throughout the spring of 1861, the Journal of the American Temperance Union stressed that the young men, living together “away from their homes” while being subjected to “great excitements” would be in “constant danger of being drawn into habits of drunkenness from which they will never escape.” Both abstainers and drinkers alike would be ruined by whiskey after spending time in the army, where fatigue rations would be thrust upon them. Men had to take it upon themselves to “seek their own safety and welfare” by pledging themselves to total abstinence.² Temptation

¹ “Bellum, Horridum Bellum,” Journal of the American Temperance Union and New York Prohibitionist 24 (May 1861): 65; “Editorial Pride,” JATU 24 (June 1861): 93; “Bellum, Horridum Bellum,” The Spirit of the Age 12 (15 May 1861): 2.

² “Temperance in the Army,” JATU 24 (June 1861): 89.

lurked everywhere, but both Union and Confederate reformers hoped that self-restraint and the “memory of home” would keep soldiers from becoming ensnared by alcohol.³

This notion of “home” about which temperance reformers wrote was a reference to a specific urban middle-class ideal that many Americans believed promoted self-control and sobriety. Since industrialization began in the early decades of the nineteenth century, middle-class Americans – especially urban northerners – had developed social aspirations that balanced a public masculine world of work, politics, and vice with a private domestic realm of feminine virtue. Men worked in factories and participated in business and political life during the day and returned to their homes at night, where their wives had established a moral atmosphere. With the outbreak of war young men, who were most susceptible to the sinful temptations of the public world, were isolated from their families – wives and mothers – and lacked those important domestic influences. Temperance reformers and families scrambled to find a solution: to recreate some sense of “home” to keep their men sober. When they failed, commanding officers compelled soldiers to behave through corporal punishment. Restoring the moral balance was imperative because an army of drunken soldiers would lose the war.

The belief that young men were particularly prone to sin when left to their own devices had existed for decades among middle-class Americans. With industrialization, urban populations had swelled with young men eager to find work in factories and middle management. Not yet married, these men spent their free time and their earnings in houses of public amusement, watching plays, gambling, drinking, and whoring. To make matters worse, many of these men came from the working class; they were farmers’ sons, immigrants, and the children of mill workers. Middle-class reformers had taken it upon themselves to instill values of

³ “Bellum, Horridum Bellum,” *JATU* 24 (May 1861): 65; “Editorial Pride,” *JATU* 24 (June 1861): 93.

hard work and self-discipline in these young men, and they argued that sobriety was an essential masculine trait that fostered economic success and moral uplift. Sober men worked to support their households, and in turn, their homes provided the moral influences to promote abstinence. Drunkenness upset this balance by leading to personal and economic failure and, ultimately, the collapse of the domestic realm.⁴

The war exacerbated these concerns in two ways that prompted civilians and commanding officers to take the problem of drunkenness seriously. First, it removed men far from the influence of parents and neighbors and placed them in an environment filled with temptation. Second, their behavior suddenly had national implications. If soldiers were not disciplined, the war would be lost. From the first wave of enlistments, reformers and families tried to recreate domestic influences in camp. When it came to drunkenness, specifically, many soldiers were encouraged to enlist in temperance regiments or take pledges before they left home. Concerned families continued to keep tabs on their behavior through letters. But the camps were filled with vice, and both temperance reformers and military authorities looked for ways to sober up soldiers. Tracts, papers, and temperance clubs convinced some men to take pledges for the duration of the war, but their effect was limited. When drunkenness persisted among soldiers, the military stepped in, using its authority to arrest and discipline. In this way,

⁴ Elaine Frantz Parsons, Manhood Lost: Fallen Drunkards and Redeeming Women in the Nineteenth-Century United States (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Ted Ownby, Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860 (Revised Edition) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997); Holly Berkley Fletcher, Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century (New York: Routledge, 2008); Bruce Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); Bruce E. Stewart, Moonshiners and Prohibitionists: The Battle over Alcohol in Southern Appalachia (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 9-60; Lee L. Willis, Southern Prohibition: Race, Reform, and Public Life in Middle Florida, 1821-1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 15-66.

the state attempted to replace families and moral reformers as the primary enforcers of proper masculine behavior. Many men resisted efforts by both their communities and the state.

Preserving Domestic Ties

When soldiers began to enlist in 1861, temperance reformers, family members, and concerned communities encouraged them to take action against temptation before leaving home. Temperance regiments formed in both northern and southern states, and some reform organizations encouraged new volunteers to sign pledges. Once the soldiers left, however, their families had to hope that contact through letters would keep their sons and husbands and brothers away from the bottle. Most Civil War regiments were organized by community, and men enlisted and fought alongside cousins and neighbors. If a soldier developed immoral habits, somehow word of his downfall would reach home. Men's desire to preserve their reputations as sober Christians would keep them away from whiskey, reformers hoped.

Plenty of young men set out to follow the narrow path by joining temperance units and signing pledges. In the Confederacy, the "Oxford Grays," who encamped near Raleigh, North Carolina, all signed pledges to abstain from alcohol during the course of the war. Wishing "to go at it *cool*," the men determined to "give old Abe and his man Scott a *warm* salutation." Another Georgia regiment commanded by a minister believed that by signing the temperance pledge they would invoke the favor of God so that they could never be conquered.⁵ Northerners were no different. The state of Maine reportedly sent a regiment comprised entirely of "Maine Law men." Another regiment of abstainers brought cheers from New York's temperance community when they camped in Central Park.⁶ In Wisconsin, the Madison Lodge of the Independent Order of

⁵ "Patriotism and Temperance," The Spirit of the Age, 12 (8 May 1861): 2.

⁶ JATU 24 (June 1861): 95.

Good Templars marked with little flags those soldiers who took the pledge before leaving for war. More than half of the lodge's new male members in 1861 and 1862 were soldiers attempting to guard their morals before heading into the fray.⁷ The Grand Division of the Sons of Temperance of Virginia reported that more than two-thirds of its members had volunteered to fight.⁸ Simply taking the pledge, however, would not guarantee safety and salvation, seasoned temperance reformers knew, and they encouraged abstainers to remain vigilant. It was easy to avoid liquor at home, but life in camp would make matters much more difficult. Reformers in Raleigh urged North Carolina troops to avoid all temptations so that when the war ended it could be said of them "There goes one, who in all that terrible conflict, never violated his pledge; never brought disgrace upon his profession."⁹ Keeping the pledge required support from others.

The support often came in the form of letters from mothers and wives, who reminded men that indulging in spirituous beverages was unacceptable manly behavior. Correspondence indicates that plenty of men paid heed to what these women had to say.¹⁰ Shortly after joining the Union army in the summer of 1861, Charles Harvey Brewster assured his mother that the camps had not even "one tenth of the temptations...that there are in civil life." Liquor and gambling were both prohibited so Brewster's mother need not worry that life in the army would ruin her son's character.¹¹ Brewster may have been exaggerating the orderliness of camp life to set his

⁷ "Capital Lodge 1: Minutes of Meetings, 1864, April 28-1875, May 22," Volume 1, Box 2, Register of the Independent Order of Good Templars: Madison Lodge Records, 1864-1923, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI. In 1861, 61 (45%) of the new members have flags (out of 115 male and 19 female new members). In 1862, 80 (58%) of the new members have flags (out of 124 male and 14 female new members).

⁸ "Sons of Temperance," Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 13, 1862.

⁹ "Temperance in War," The Spirit of the Age 12 (15 May 1861): 2.

¹⁰ Nina Silber has argued that women lost domestic authority over men after the men became soldiers. I would posit that in many cases, when women had authority before the war, they kept it. See Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 96-98.

¹¹ Charles Harvey Brewster, When This Cruel War is Over: The Civil War Letters of Charles Harvey Brewster, Edited by David W. Blight (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 31.

mother at ease, and other women certainly checked up on their husbands and sweethearts. One Minnesota soldier sobered up after his sweetheart let him know she had “heard of his being drunk in Hastings.”¹² Harriet Jane Thompson pleaded with her husband not to “get in the habit” of drinking while he was away from home. Her requests may have fallen on deaf ears, however, as her letter indicates that she and her husband had had plenty of disagreements about his drinking before the war ever began.¹³ Thompson’s moral influence over her husband may have been precarious, but Palmetto Sharpshooter Bobby Hubbard’s wife had “laid the law down.” When his friends became “corned on lively drinking,” Hubbard remained sober. None of his comrades questioned it. Hubbard did not drink because his wife forbade it.¹⁴ Iowa Captain Jacob Ritner kept his wife’s picture with him at all times. When pressured to drink, he showed it to his comrades. He often thought of his wife “and our children” any time he was “tempted to do anything mean or bad,” and he openly questioned how other men with families could justify their drinking and carousing.¹⁵

Ritner and others stayed sober to please their wives and mothers, but soldiers also worried that their reputations might be compromised if word reached their communities that they had become drunks. One soldier in a Jeffersonville, Indiana, hospital, nearly went to pieces when he found out that a nurse had mistakenly reported him drunk. “There must be a mistake somewhere,” he wrote to the matron on a note. He simply could not believe anyone would make such a “cruel” accusation about a man who had a “lovely wife” whose “future happiness

¹² Andrea R. Foroughi, ed., Go If You Think It Your Duty: A Minnesota Couple’s Civil War Letters (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008), 157. For an additional example, see 232.

¹³ Harriet Jane Thompson, “Civil War Wife: The Letters of Harriet Jane Thompson, Part I,” Edited by Glenda Riley, Annals of Iowa 44 (Winter 1978): 222.

¹⁴ William and James McFall, Civil War Correspondence: Letters of William and James McFall of the South Carolina Palmetto Sharpshooters, Edited by F. Lawrence McFall, Jr. (Danville, VA: n.p, 2000), 31.

¹⁵ Charles F. Larimer, ed., Love and Valor: The Intimate Civil War Letters between Captain Jacob and Emeline Ritner (Western Springs, IL: Signourney Press, 2000), 216, 83, 209.

depend[ed] on the character of her husband.” He needed his friends and family to know he was sober.¹⁶ Soon after Alabamian William McClellan enlisted, his family heard that a number of the soldiers from their hometown “got drunk at Decatur,” and so they became “anxious to hear” from the young soldier.¹⁷ Although Seth James Wells had “seen more vice and drunkenness than I ever supposed existed” while traveling over four thousand miles, he hoped that he was “morally no worse than when surrounded by kind relatives and friends.”¹⁸ Simon Cummins credited the discipline of army life with keeping him “straight as a candle.” By avoiding “devilry” while in the army, Cummins hoped to earn the respect of friends and relatives when he returned home. But Cummins also believed that drinking would tarnish his patriotic reputation, stating that he “would be ashamed to come back a poor drunken rowdy.” In April 1865, he rejoiced that he had heeded his father’s advice to remain sober and had survived the war without ever adopting “degrading habits” while he had “worn the blue uniform.”¹⁹ These men conflated their self-disciplined manhood with their patriotism, and they guarded it carefully. Observers lauded Confederate troops at Vicksburg who were sober, confident, disciplined, patriotic, competent, and brave.²⁰ “Whiskey, bluster, and profanity, and rowdyism” had no place among disciplined Confederate troops serving under D. H. Hill.²¹

¹⁶ Elvira J. Powers, Hospital Pencillings: Being a Diary while in Jefferson General Hospital, Jeffersonville, Indiana, and Others at Nashville, Tennessee, as Matron and Visitor (Boston, MA: E. L. Mitchell, 1866), 124.

¹⁷ John C. Carter, ed., Welcome to the Hour of Conflict: William Cowan McClellan and the 9th Alabama (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2007), 21.

¹⁸ Seth James Wells, The Siege of Vicksburg, From the Diary of Seth J. Wells, Including Weeks of Preparation and of Occupation after the Surrender (Detroit, MI: William H. Rowe, 1915), 25.

¹⁹ Simon Burdick Cummins, Give God the Glory: Memoirs of a Civil War Soldier, Edited by Melvin Jones (Melvin Jones, 1979), 27, 64, 122.

²⁰ Sir Arthur James Lyon Fremantle, Coldstream Guards, Three Months in the Southern States: April, June, 1863 (Mobile, AL: S. H. Goetzl, 1864), 63.

²¹ The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (70 vols. in 128; Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. 11, Pt. 3, 646.

As much as some young men sought to guard their reputations and make their communities proud, others worried that brothers and friends prone to heavy drinking would find their habits worsened by life in the army. Hoosier soldier Elijah Cavins assured his wife that he did “not drink near as much here as he did at home,” but his brother Ben Cavins did not fare as well. By September 1861, Elijah Cavins had worked successfully to get Ben discharged from the army. He was simply “not able to perform the duties of a private soldier in this country” and Elijah’s letter to their father indicates that the cold and damp conditions had left Ben seeking solace in the bottle. Oddly, Elijah thought Ben might be able to remain sober if promoted to Second Lieutenant, but he pointed out that farm labor might be the best way to “recuperate his constitution.”²² Undoubtedly, Ben Cavins’s poor health contributed to his drinking problems, but passing references to town drunks indicated that a fair number of men did not find army life to be as sobering as Elijah Cavins had.²³ While accompanying the 187th Pennsylvania, Eugene Harrison Freeman ran in to “Thorpe,” a man he knew from Philadelphia “who used to work at the saw-factory.” Freeman told his parents that Thorpe was “just about as drunk as usual.” It seemed the Freemans needed no additional explanation about what that entailed.²⁴ For Minnesota native William Govette, it took serious illness to free him “from the effects of liquor.” His buddy Madison Bowler confided to their concerned friends at home that, for the first time ever, he had observed Govette’s “naturally warm free-hearted disposition.” Bowler was optimistic that the newly sober Govette would “not drink again,” even when his health returned.²⁵

²² Elijah Henry Clay Cavins, The Civil War Letters of Col. Elijah H. C. Cavins, 14th Indiana, Compiled by Barbara A. Smith (Owensboro, KY: Cook-McDowell, 1981), 8.

²³ *Ibid*, 123.

²⁴ Eugene Harrison Freeman, Letters from Two Brothers Serving in the War for the Union to Their Family at Home in West Cambridge, Mass. (Cambridge, MA: H.O. Houghton and Co., 1871), 118.

²⁵ Foroughi, Andrea R., editor, Go If You Think It Your Duty, 232.

The Temptations of Camp

That soldiers felt a sense of triumph when they made it through the war without violating their pledges and, at the same time, expressed serious concern about brothers and friends with worsening drinking habits suggests strongly that life in camps was often incompatible with sobriety. Military camps in no way resembled idealized domestic havens, despite the care soldiers took to try to make their temporary quarters more homelike. What many men found was that alcohol provided the warmth, comfort, and relief from boredom they were missing while living away from home. More than that, plenty of men in the army had no such notion of sober self-discipline before the war ever began. The mix of working men, recent immigrants, and farm boys created a chaotic atmosphere where soldiers spent holidays in drunken stupors, drank their way through marches, and got into all sorts of trouble.

Men from teetotaling families who ended up in hard-drinking regiments were often shocked by the prevalence of drinking when they arrived in camp. Seymour Dexter lamented that in the 23rd New York Volunteers he had “seen more drunkenness and swearing” than ever before. A graduate of Alfred University in New York, Dexter commented that he and the other alumni of the institution remained sober, not willing to abandon their principles and tarnish their alma mater's reputation. Before the war, school had provided a domestic haven for the boys, but moving from the academy to camp at Elmira Heights proved jarring for Dexter and his comrades.²⁶ Reporting on the 44th Massachusetts Volunteer Regiment, which was composed largely of young men of the professional classes, Zenas T. Haines commented matter-of-factly to

²⁶ Seymour Dexter. Seymour Dexter, Union Army: Journal and Letters of Civil War Service in Company K, 23rd New York Volunteer Regiment of Elmira. Edited by Carl A. Morrell (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1996), 11-12; Antebellum colleges, especially in New England, noted that young men were particularly susceptible to drinking, and faculty formed clubs to promote temperance among students, see David R. Huehner, “‘Water is Indeed Best’: Temperance and the Pre-Civil War New England College,” in Alcohol, Reform and Society: The Liquor Issue in Social Context, ed. Jack S. Blocker, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), 69-100.

the Boston Herald that approximately half of the men were drinkers.²⁷ Conditions in Haines's regiment may have been better than others. The Richmond Enquirer complained that many Confederate soldiers were "slaves to a low appetite."²⁸ These early reports confirmed families' and temperance reformers' worst fear – away from home and school, young men faced a host of vices threatening their manly resolve.

But the problem was not simply that soldiers forgot the moral lessons of their youth as soon as they entered the army; instead, they had to transform rough military accommodations into "homes" that would keep them comfortable. Plenty of men drank simply to cope with the boredom of camp life. The long winter nights became especially tedious, and soldiers went to great lengths to make life more bearable. Many times, though, their evening activities more closely resembled activities of a concert hall than a family parlor. Soldiers filled long evenings with games and snacks.²⁹ For better or worse, drinking typically livened things up; for soldiers who passed the hours playing cards and backgammon in their tents – sometimes gambling, sometimes not – nothing, it seemed, spiced up a game of whist like cakes, wine, or an occasional toddy.³⁰ Others engaged in livelier games like "Whiskey Poker" or spent their evenings enjoying James River oysters, which, apparently, tasted best with "a couple of bottles of good Scotch."³¹ In the "dull" camps, where "mails come by chance & there is nothing to be had save meal, eggs

²⁷ Zenas T. Haines, In the Country of the Enemy: The Civil War Reports of a Massachusetts Corporal. Edited by William C. Harris. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999), 58-59.

²⁸ Quoted, "Intemperance in the Camp," The Spirit of the Age 12 (26 June 1861): 2.

²⁹ Joseph T. Glatthaar, General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse (New York: Free Press, 2008), 220-241; Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank: the Common Soldier of the Union (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1951), 152-91; Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Johnny Reb: the Common Soldier of the Confederacy (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1943.), 59-67; 151-73.

³⁰ Charles S. Wainwright, A Diary of Battle: The Personal Journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, 1861-1866. Edited by Allan Nevins (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), 172; Elijah P. Petty, Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Elijah P. Petty, Walker's Texas Division, C.S.A., Edited by Norman D. Brown (San Antonio: University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, 1982), 257-58.

³¹ Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms: The Diary of Lieutenant D. Ayling, 29th Massachusetts Volunteers, Edited by Charles F. Herberger (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 210; Charles S. Wainwright, A Diary of Battle, 473.

& whiskey,” ardent spirits provided a break in the monotony.³² Those who avoided such foolishness were often in the minority.

Long evenings passed slowly, but winter weather also increased the desire to imbibe. Men from both the North and South came out of a tradition of rambunctious pastimes involving alcohol and the great outdoors.³³ After being cooped up in their cabins, a fresh blanket of snow beckoned soldiers in both Union and Confederate armies to engage in snow ball fights.³⁴ And “boys on a drunk” tended to enjoy the winter weather more freely than their sober comrades. One group of drunken Wisconsin soldiers stationed in Richmond, Minnesota, took to the river to skate, even though it was “not quite safe on the rapids.”³⁵ When they were not playing in the snow soldiers went to great lengths to keep warm in camp, constructing winter accommodations that kept out the elements as much as possible. Still, plenty of Confederate and Union soldiers kept whiskey near their beds for the cold nights in camp.³⁶ A cold day called for a drink as well, and a soggy soldier, like Edmund DeWitt Patterson of the 9th Alabama, could warm himself with some “Old Peach Brandy” if he managed to acquire it from a “jolly old farmer” on a rainy October day.³⁷

Oyster roasts, drunken skating, card games, and the warming effects of peach brandy provided welcome escape from the drudgery of camp life, and while some relatives (and temperance reformers) may have expressed alarm when word reached home, most soldiers seemed to enjoy these pastimes without worrying if they would ultimately lead to their ruin. Of

³² Charles B. Haydon, For Country, Cause, and Leader: The Civil War Journal of Charles B. Haydon, Edited by Stephen W. Sears (New York: Tichnor and Fields, 1993), 322.

³³ Ted Ownby, Subduing Satan, 21-99.

³⁴ Joseph T. Glatthaar, General Lee’s Army, 221.

³⁵ Chauncey Herbert Cooke, Soldier Boy’s Letters to His Father and Mother, 1861-5 (News-Office, 1915), 15.

³⁶ Spencer Glasgow Welch, A Confederate Surgeon’s Letters to his Wife (Washington: Neale Publishing Company, 1911), 52; Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms, 189.

³⁷ Edmund DeWitt Patterson, Yankee Rebel: The Civil War Journal of Edmund DeWitt Patterson, Edited by John G. Barrett (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 69.

more serious concern to the soldiers, however, were the men who drank from depression. Severe homesickness – known more commonly as “nostalgia” – plagued soldiers in both armies, often causing physical symptoms that accompanied mental distress.³⁸ Soldiers sought many remedies for homesickness, one of which was the bottle.³⁹ In one instance, a discharged Vermont soldier in Baltimore began chasing people through saloons and smashing lamps with a cavalry sabre. Although no one was seriously injured, it took eight soldiers to subdue the man. Augustus Ayling of the 29th Massachusetts Volunteers tried to be understanding. “I pitied the poor fellow....Possibly he went crazy from nostalgia, or homesickness.... The surgeons recognized it as a disease.”⁴⁰

Not all homesick soldiers let loose with a sabre in a saloon, but plenty acknowledged the allure of the jug. “Sometimes I am so low spirited that I am sorely tempted to indulge largely in this favorite pastime [drinking], but I can scarcely think that to be the proper remedy for my ailment,” confided a Pennsylvania Captain to his brother. He wrestled with himself about how much whiskey an unhappy soldier should consume.⁴¹ Confederate surgeon Junius Newport Bragg jokingly warned his wife that he had “a big jug of whiskey and the very first time you do not write me a long letter and one every week, or two or three a week, as you see proper, I shall most certainly imbibe.”⁴² His tone was playful, but there is little doubt that his wife understood that it was her letters that kept her husband from being overwhelmed with homesickness. Home

³⁸ Susan J. Matt argues that the antebellum celebration of family life and homes created difficulties for soldiers who were far away from their families for the first times in their lives. Soldiers were supposed to fight for their homes – their countries – but Matt finds that homesickness had a crippling physical and emotional effect of many young men. See, Homesickness: An American History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 75-101.

³⁹ Kathryn Shively Meier, Nature’s Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 63.

⁴⁰ Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms, 19.

⁴¹ Francis Adams Donaldson, Inside the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Experience of Captain Francis Adams Donaldson, Edited by J. Gregory Acken (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 1998), 196.

⁴² Junius Newport Bragg, Letters of a Confederate Surgeon, 1861-65, Edited by Helen Bragg Gaughan (Camden, AR: The Urley Company, 1960), 149.

(or thoughts of family), then, provided both the motivation to drink as well as to abstain. A lonely soldier might imbibe, but a connection with home in the form of a letter could stave off the temptation and take the edge off his misery.

This misery came not only from missing families but also from the imminence of death. This fear coupled with the anonymity of army life could be a particularly volatile combination. Lieutenant Charles B. Haydon of the Kalamazoo Light Guards lamented that the men in his regiment acted “like devils” when drunk, but added that he and the other officers had “to tolerate some things which you would not at any other time” when dealing with undisciplined soldiers. Knowing that battle and its carnage lurked around the corner, Haydon believed, made everyone – officers and enlisted men alike – want to be drunk, and he perceptively acknowledged that many of his men would not “drink much after they had been out of the army a few days.” Those familiar words “Eat drink & be merry for to morrow you die” resonated with these young men, who knew they might be dead in a month’s time. When men arrived in a city with comrades, “money and opportunity,” indulging in ardent spirits, along with other forms of amusement, could take their minds off the death and destruction that awaited them on the battlefield.⁴³ Soldiers found increasingly that the values with which they had marched off to war did not matter much after the fighting began. Self-control, sobriety, moral courage – it all seemed to get lost in the midst of the horrific carnage.⁴⁴

While the war’s brutality caused some men to re-evaluate the middle-class ideal of sobriety, other men had not come under the influence of abstemious families. Although men typically joined regiments with friends from their hometowns, they arrived in camps with men

⁴³ Charles B. Haydon, *For Country, Cause, and Leader*, 332-33.

⁴⁴ Gerald F. Linderman has argued that soldiers became disillusioned with notions of moral courage and duty and that they found themselves isolated from the civilian population by the horrors they witnessed. See, *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: The Free Press, 1987).

from all over the United States. Regiments of farmers and urban workers found themselves at times near regiments comprised largely of recent immigrants (mostly from Ireland and Germany). Middle- and working-class men crossed paths, and cold-water Baptists shared tents with urban rowdies who had never darkened the doors of a church. When these conflicting values collided, whiskey flowed more freely and gatherings became quite rambunctious. Men celebrated promotions with wine, whiskey, and cigars; the removal of poor officers with “a good drunk;” victory over the enemy with blackberry pies and a keg of beer; and the surrender of a foe with “poor whiskey.”⁴⁵

German and Irish regiments celebrated religious and cultural festivals with booze whenever they could get it. Wilhelm Stangel and other members of the large German-American 9th Ohio Infantry were heartily disappointed when they received orders to march right before a carefully planned festival – complete with speeches and lager beer – was set to commence.⁴⁶ Others had better luck than the Germans in the Army of the Cumberland. Union troops in New Orleans observed St. Patrick’s Day of 1863 with religious services and “a general spree” of drunkenness, horse-racing, and fighting.⁴⁷ The Irish Brigade observed its St. Patrick’s Day 1864 in similar style, with the men and their guests munching on sandwiches and sipping whiskey

⁴⁵ Seymour Dexter, Seymour Dexter, Union Army, 14; Benjamin Franklin Butler, Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, During the Period of the Civil War (Springfield, MA: Plimpton Press, 1917), 5:168; Seth James Wells, The Siege of Vicksburg, 93; Thomas N. Stevens, “Dear Carrie...”: The Civil War Letters of Thomas N. Stevens, Edited by George M. Blackburn (Mount Pleasant, MI: Clark Historical Society, 1984), 316.

⁴⁶ Joseph R. Reinhart, ed. and trans., A German Hurrah!: Civil War Letters of Friedrich Bertsch and Wilhelm Stangel, 9th Ohio Infantry (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2010), 87-88.

⁴⁷ J. Chandler Gregg, Life in the Army of the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, including Observations in New Orleans, with an Account of the Author’s Life and Experience in the Ministry (Philadelphia, PA: Perkinpine and Higgins, 1866), 86-87.

punch while watching horse-races.⁴⁸ Confederate soldier John Edward Dooley passed his more subdued St. Patrick's Day with a church service, wine, and apple brandy.⁴⁹

American patriotic holidays stirred debates among soldiers concerning whether they should be occasions for drunken frivolity or sober reflection. For Alfred Bellard and his comrades, celebrating their patriotic holidays "in proper style" included tapping kegs of beer, getting tight, and "having a free fight, which resulted in black eyes and bloody noses."⁵⁰ Picnicking, fishing, and getting a "little 'boozy'" were the preferred Independence Day pastimes of the 28th Wisconsin Infantry.⁵¹ When members of the 9th Ohio Infantry had "No 'Speech,' no money, no beer, no wine, and even no schnapps, only good fresh spring water" for their Fourth of July celebration, they concluded that the celebration was very "dry" (double-meaning intended) and insinuated that America's Independence Day could be more appropriately enjoyed by incorporating more "German customs."⁵² Rufus Kinsley disagreed, preferring to commemorate the holiday more reflectively (and soberly), especially in 1865. Celebrating emancipation, Kinsley rejoiced that the "for the first time in history... the old Liberty Bell in Independence Hall [spoke] the truth." The "hollow hypocrisy" that had tarnished the holiday in the past had disappeared, and Kinsley spent his day with a small circle of friends, reading Henry Ward Beecher and Redpath's John Brown. The rest of the officers, he noted disapprovingly, opted for "a grand revel."⁵³ John Quincy Adams Campbell was similarly disturbed when the

⁴⁸ D. P. Conyngham, The Irish brigade and its campaigns: with some account of the Corcoran Legion and sketches of the principal officers (New York: William McSorley, 1869), 514.

⁴⁹ John Edward Dooley, John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal, Edited by Joseph T. Durkin (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 173.

⁵⁰ Alfred Bellard, Gone for a Soldier: The Civil War Memoirs of Private Alfred Bellard, Edited by David Herbert Donald (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 1975), 267.

⁵¹ Stevens, Thomas N. "Dear Carrie..." 228-29.

⁵² Joseph R. Reinhart, ed. and trans., A German Hurrah!, 47.

⁵³ Rufus Kinsley, Diary of a Christian Soldier: Rufus Kinsley and the Civil War, Edited by David C. Rankin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 177.

officers of the 5th Iowa Volunteer Infantry indulged in feasting and drinking on George Washington's birthday. "Satan was more honored than Washington by it," grumbled Campbell.⁵⁴ For Kinsley, Campbell, and others, liberty and its heroes deserved loftier (and more thoughtful) recognition than a lusty swig from a keg or jug.

Perhaps no occasion revealed clashing beliefs over alcohol quite like Christmas. The holiday had made pious (and middle-class) Americans nervous for generations because of its potential to devolve into bacchanalian chaos. Historically, Christmas had been a time when the social order was turned on its head and people celebrated with drinking, eating, and demanding gifts from their social betters. In the nineteenth century, American evangelicals attempted to rein in Christmas and bring order through religious reflection and by giving gifts that promoted self-discipline and education.⁵⁵ Within the ranks of the Union and Confederate armies, the limits of the pious middle-class Christmas were evident. Soldiers' tales of Christmas reveal that frivolity, homesickness, and a mix of emotions expressed themselves – sometimes through drunkenness. To a greater extent than most other holidays (the exception being Thanksgiving), life in the army disrupted the familiar domestic traditions, and soldiers went to great lengths to re-create the festivities.⁵⁶ Their make-shift celebrations often involved alcohol.

Ensuring that Christmas was a merry occasion for their men seemed to be a priority for officers, although the amount of alcohol involved varied from place to place. Members of the Irish Brigade passed around a canteen of "wretched 'commissary,'" as they tried to reconstruct celebrations from both New England and Ireland "around the fire, jigs, reels, and doubles."⁵⁷ In

⁵⁴ John Quincy Adams Campbell, The Union Must Stand: The Civil War Diary of John Quincy Adams Campbell, Fifth Iowa Volunteer Infantry (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 79.

⁵⁵ Stephen Nissenbaum, The Battle for Christmas (New York: Vintage, 1996).

⁵⁶ George C. Rable, "Hearth, Home, and Family in the Fredericksburg Campaign," in Joan E. Cashin, ed., The War Was You and Me: Civilians in the American Civil War (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 85-111.

⁵⁷ D. P. Conyngham, The Irish brigade and its campaigns, 514.

1863, officers in the 23rd Indiana Infantry gave “the soldiers beer and *Whiskey* as a Christmas present and that made them all lively.”⁵⁸ For soldiers in the Army of the Potomac camped near Fredericksburg in December 1862, government whiskey flowed freely. At his headquarters, General Joseph Hooker and twenty-five guests celebrated the holiday (and his promotion) with a “grand” dinner and copious toasts. Meanwhile, his men were “getting drunk and keeping up a terrible uproar,” and the privates of the 2nd New Hampshire Volunteers attempted to take a sutler’s tent by “main force” after he refused to sell them whiskey to supplement their government rations.⁵⁹ Not all commanders were as accommodating as General Hooker. Private David Holt noted that “General Lee saw to it that the opportunity [to get drunk] was wholly lacking,” much to the chagrin of his fellow soldiers in the Army of Northern Virginia.⁶⁰

Most men could find their own Christmas spirits, even if the commissary department failed them. A few friends in Walker’s Texas Division pooled their resources to purchase “some whisky at \$40 per gallon to have a frolick” on Christmas Day.⁶¹ Soldiers in the 17th Mississippi paid between \$30 and \$50 per gallon to buy liquor for a “grand camp dance” to celebrate the holiday.⁶² These affairs were not evidence of young men abandoning their moral principles when left to their own devices, but rather they revealed that most soldiers did not come from families that observed Christmas as a pious and sober occasion. Both Confederate and Union soldiers

⁵⁸ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., *Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home*, Translated by Susan Carter Vogel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 263-4.

⁵⁹ George E. Stephens, *A Voice of Thunder: The Civil War Letters of George E. Stephens*, Edited by Donald A. Yacovone (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997) 219. For additional accounts of commissary rations near Fredericksburg, see Alfred Bellard, *Gone for a Soldier*, 189; George C. Rable, *Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg!* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

⁶⁰ David Holt, *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private David Holt*, Edited by Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 221.

⁶¹ Elijah P. Petty, *Journey to Pleasant Hill*, 117.

⁶² Robert A. Moore, *A Life for the Confederacy, as Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A Moore, Co. G, 17th Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Guards, Holly Springs, Mississippi* (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 126.

relied on packages of merriment sent from home. Turkeys, partridges, cakes, rum, and whiskey arrived through express delivery. Men generally combined their gifts in order to make appealing spreads for Christmas dinner.⁶³ The presence of women livened up the holidays as well. Elijah Petty enjoyed “egg nog & cake in abundance” with “some nice young ladies” during Christmas 1861.⁶⁴ Edmund Dewitt Patterson spent his first Christmas of the war in a “house full of ladies with loads of delicacies of all kinds,” but he and his friends kept “a suspicious looking jug stowed away...with plenty of one thing needful in it.” With eggs and sugar close by, the men hoped the women would occupy themselves long enough for them to concoct “a good ‘egg-nog.’”⁶⁵ Union corporal Robert Rossi and his own friends “made punch” as well – on both Christmas Eve and New Years Eve. On the latter holiday, they “had a lot of fun and didn’t get to bed until around 3, all of us dutifully drunk.”⁶⁶

But commissary whiskey, packages from home, and hospitable citizens only took the edge off the Christmas doldrums many soldiers experienced. When no one from home sent packages, two German soldiers and their friends experienced “a melancholy disposition.” After all, “who can put on a jolly social gathering without song and without wine and – even more dreadfully – without beer and without hard liquor?” Far away “from the old familiar circle of friends...and dear families,” soldiers concluded that their Christmas day would be “lonely, sad, and thirsty.”⁶⁷ If spirits had been a part of Christmas traditions at home, their absence in the army could have a gut-wrenching effect. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, lauding the discipline of his regiment of U.S. Colored Troops, the 1st South Carolina Volunteers, noted that he had only heard

⁶³ John Edward Dooley, John Dooley, Confederate Soldier, 82; Francis Adams Donaldson, Inside the Army of the Potomac, 429.

⁶⁴ Elijah P. Petty, Journey to Pleasant Hill, 29.

⁶⁵ Edmund DeWitt Patterson, Yankee Rebel, 10-11.

⁶⁶ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., Germans in the Civil War, 81.

⁶⁷ Joseph R. Reinhart, ed. and trans., A German Hurrah!, 192.

one request for whiskey, on Christmas Day, by a man who “spoke with a hopeless ideal sighing, as one alludes to the Golden Age.”⁶⁸ August Horstmann told his parents that his holidays were so uneventful that he did not “even know when they were. Nothing at all, not the slightest festivity, no joyful shooting in the air, no punch, no beer or wine, and no change in the bill of fare to remind us that these otherwise so richly celebrated days had gone by.”⁶⁹ Irvin Cross Wills wanted nothing more than to enjoy “a cup of egg-nogg [sic]” but “no whiskey could be got. It was the first time in his life he had celebrated Christmas without egg-nog. It was “dull.”⁷⁰

Not that liquor guaranteed a happy holiday. Despite free-flowing egg-nog, whiskey, and weiss-beer, Samuel Wylde Hardinge, Jr.’s Christmas Day in prison was fairly “dismal.” A room decorated with an “everygreen wreath,” the sound of bells tolling in the distance, and “melancholy” Christmas greetings filled Hardinge’s day. And, he wrote to his wife that he had “not smiled to-day, but two or three times my eyes have been filled with tears; for I have been thinking of you...waiting sad and lonely for my return.”⁷¹ When Charles Francis Adams, Jr., complained to his family of his Christmas dinner of “tough beef” and “commissary whiskey” in 1862, they came to his rescue by sending cakes the next December.⁷² Egg-nog, whiskey, and apple brandy could not keep Christmas from being “dull” for many soldiers. Floridian Robert Watson drank a little, but “did not feel marry [sic] as my thoughts were of home.”⁷³

⁶⁸ Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Army Life in a Black Regiment (Boston, MA: Fields, Osgood and Co., 1870), 38.

⁶⁹ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., Germans in the Civil War, 123.

⁷⁰ Edgar Allan Jackson, James Fenton Bryant, and Irvin Cross Wills, Three Rebels Write Home: Including the Letters of Edgar Allen Jackson (September 7, 1860-April 15, 1863), James Fenton Bryant (June 20, 1861-December 30, 1866), Irvin Cross Wills (April 9, 1862-July 29, 1863), and Miscellaneous Items (Franklin, VA: New Pub. Co., 1955), 81.

⁷¹ Samuel Wylde Hardinge, Jr., Belle Boyd in Camp and in Prison (New York: Blelock and Co., 1865), 387-89.

⁷² Worthington Chauncey Ford, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., and Henry Adams, A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865 (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1920), 1:215; Francis Adams Donaldson, Inside the Army of the Potomac, 429.

⁷³ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, 90; Jeff Toalson, ed., Mama, I am Yet Still Alive: A Composite Diary of 1863 in the Confederacy, As seen by the soldiers, farmers, clerks, nurses, sailors, farm girls, merchants, surgeons, riverboatmen, chaplains, and wives (Bloomington, IN: IUniverse, Inc., 2012), 4; Robert Watson,

Unfortunately, whiskey proved a poor substitute for home, and recalling the festivities of past holidays tended to leave some men feeling gloomy.

Christmas in the army was an appalling experience for pious men. Baptist officer William Taylor Stott had a jovial holiday dinner of chicken, cornbread, and coffee, but he was quite “sorry to say that quite a number of our company are drunk.”⁷⁴ Homesick soldier John Baxter Moseley wrote of his wife on Christmas Day 1864, reporting “the drinking men are having a gay time & there are few who don’t indulge.” He was “sorry to see it.”⁷⁵ In Richard Lewis’s camp near Fredericksburg in 1862, there was such a “terrible spree” during Christmas that all the men experienced “a day of reckoning and judgement [sic]” like they had never experienced before.⁷⁶

Patriotic and religious holidays heightened drunkenness, but no holiday achieved quite the level of debauchery as pay-day. Ideally, pay-day occurred once a month, but, in reality, pay was disbursed much less frequently. Because soldiers were paid so irregularly, officers were unable to prevent the utter chaos that arrived when men had money in their pockets.⁷⁷ The drunkenness that generally followed the disbursement of funds was well-documented by officers and men. When General Ulysses S. Grant heard reports of drunkenness among troops in Memphis, General William T. Sherman was quick to assure him that pay-day had been the cause. Sherman also promised to close the liquor shops.⁷⁸ Junior officers generally had their hands full trying to keep order. Pay-day had “its evils,” complained Wilder Dwight, who had the unpleasant

Southern Service on Land and Sea: The Wartime Journal of Robert Watson, Edited by R. Thomas Campbell (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 91.

⁷⁴ William Taylor Stott, For Duty and Destiny: The Life and Civil War Diary of William Taylor Stott, Hoosier Soldier and Educator, Edited by Lloyd A. Hunter (Indianapolis, IN: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2010), 88.

⁷⁵ December 26, 1864, John Baxter Moseley Diary, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

⁷⁶ Richard Lewis, Camp Life of a Confederate Boy, of Bratton’s Brigade, Longstreet’s Corps, C.S.A.: Letters written by Lieut. Richard Lewis, of Walker’s Regiment, to His Mother, during the War, Facts and Inspirations of Camp Life, Marches, &c. (Charleston, SC: The News and Courier Book Presses, 1883), 38.

⁷⁷ Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank, 48-9; Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Johnny Reb, 136.

⁷⁸ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XVII, Pt. 2, 188.

task of tying up drunken men and putting them in a wagon during a march.⁷⁹ Quarreling soldiers often had to be corralled.⁸⁰

The lack of discipline vexed officers, but the more sober soldiers were equally appalled at the amount of money squandered on booze – money that should have been sent to families. Temperance reformers – especially women – had complained for decades drinking men violated their masculine duty to support their families either because they could not hold steady jobs or because they spent their earnings on liquor.⁸¹ A moderate drinker, Charles B. Haydon spent a dollar of his pay to enjoy a bottle of ale, but many of his comrades spent \$20 to \$35 drinking and gambling.⁸² Some men in Henry Warren Howe’s Massachusetts regiment lost up to \$250 after a particularly large pay-day.⁸³ And, the problem was not simply that these benders could leave a soldier strapped for cash. Many soldiers believed that pay-day drinkers shirked their duty – both to the country and their families. Soldiers in the 192nd Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers were cautioned “not to expend [their pay] foolishly, nor to invest any of it in whiskey.”⁸⁴ William Wheeler expressed enormous relief when his “boys behaved much better than could have been expected” after going four months without pay. His men paid off debts and sent money to their homes.⁸⁵ This was not always the case. Georg Bauer complained that all too often men wasted money on “cards and drink, and in a short time, all the money is boozed up... and the family gets

⁷⁹ Wilder Dwight, Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight: Lieut-Col. Second Mass. Inf. Vols. (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Co., 1891), 82.

⁸⁰ Charles B. Haydon, For Country, Cause, and Leader, 96-97; William Wheeler, Letters of William Wheeler of the Class of 1855, Y.C. (privately published, 1875), 359.

⁸¹ Holly Berkley Fletcher, Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century, 7-29.

⁸² Charles B. Haydon, For Country, Cause, and Leader, 96-97.

⁸³ Henry Warren Howe, Passages from the Life of Henry Warren Howe, Consisting of Diary and Letters Written During the Civil War, 1816-1865. A Condensed History of the Thirtieth Massachusetts Regiment and Its Flags, Together with the Genealogies of the Different Branches of the Family (Lowell, MA: Courier-Citizen Co. Printers, 1899), 62.

⁸⁴ John C. Myers, A Daily Journal of the 192d Reg’t, Penn’a Volunteers, Commanded by Col. William B. Thomas; in the Service of the United States for One Hundred Days (Philadelphia, PA: Crissy and Markley, 1864), 15.

⁸⁵ William Wheeler, Letters of William Wheeler of the Class of 1855, 359.

nothing.” Bauer believed that Union soldiers earned enough to support their families, and he accused drunken soldiers of being “foolhardy, shabby father[s].”⁸⁶

At least one Confederate soldier disagreed, and in doing so illustrated how the war broke down traditional economic arrangements for many families. Enlisted men earned little, and although their uniforms and rations were provided, supporting a family could be difficult. Union surgeon Daniel Holt received a candid answer from one Confederate soldier, when he asked how a man could support a family on \$11 per month. “*I get eleven dollars a month and spend it the same day I draw it, for a pint of whisky!*” explained the rebel. There was no reason to send home money. His wife supported their family by running his print shop in Memphis, Tennessee. Moreover, she sent him hundreds of dollars to sustain him while he fought Yankees. In short, his duty was to fight, while her duty was to provide for the family. From his perspective, he was not shirking his patriotic or manly duties by drinking up his pay-check – he was simply putting his meager earnings to the best use. His wife may not have shared his perspective; plenty of northern and southern women certainly faced economic hardship after their husbands enlisted and left them as the primary bread-winners.⁸⁷ Nevertheless, the rebel’s explanation impressed Holt, who concluded that because Confederate scrip was so useless, the soldier, by serving, was sacrificing his life and comfort for “home and fireside.” Rather than being a sign of his lack of moral fiber,

⁸⁶ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., *Germans in the Civil War*, 361.

⁸⁷ Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); George C. Rable, *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); Nina Silber, *Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Judith Giesberg, *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

his pint of whiskey became his reward for serving his country without receiving any meaningful monetary compensation.⁸⁸ The rebel was redefining what it meant to be a man.

The Crusade in the Camps

Raucous holidays and wasted earnings indicated to northern and southern temperance reformers that military camps were all too vice-ridden. Civilians flooded Union and Confederate troops with tracts and temperance papers. Northern volunteers, often working with the United States Christian Commission, established temperance clubs. Chaplains and officers on both sides hosted meetings and encouraged men to take pledges. These clubs appealed to soldiers who were bored and, perhaps, interested in temperance. Some men became teetotalers as a result, but the effects of these efforts were limited.

Weeks after the war began, John Marsh, editor of the Journal of the American Temperance Union, issued a call for donations to send 50,000 tracts to the newly recruited soldiers.⁸⁹ By July, the American Temperance Union had published eight tracts which could be sent in batches of 1000 to any Quartermaster in the Union army free of charge. The goal was that all regiments would receive approximately 6,000 tracts to be distributed among the men.⁹⁰ Chaplains were grateful, expressing their thanks in the pages of the JATU. “There is great need of such material in every regiment,” exclaimed one chaplain, who hoped that the donated tracts would enable him and others to minister more effectively to the “peculiarly needy men.” Another, noting the “considerable leisure” time the men had on their hands, believed it was “an act of mercy to supply them with reading matter.” When a delivery of a thousand tracts

⁸⁸ Daniel M. Holt, A Surgeon’s Civil War: The Letters and Diary of Daniel M. Holt, Edited by James M. Greiner, Janet L. Coryell, and James R. Smither (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994), 98-99.

⁸⁹ JATU 24 (June 1861): 84.

⁹⁰ “Tracts for the Army,” JATU 24 (July 1861): 105; “Tracts for the Army,” JATU 24 (August 1861): 121.

mistakenly arrived at a hospital, the staff pilfered a few -- before sending them on to their intended recipients in the 2nd Massachusetts Regiment.⁹¹ The American Temperance Union continued its fundraising and distribution efforts, raising more than \$18,000 over the course of the war – enough money to send approximately 7.2 million tracts to the Union Army. Donations came from across the North, from temperance reformers and Sunday school classrooms not only in New York and New England but also from the Midwestern states.⁹² Confederate efforts were much less centralized, but various societies worked tirelessly to send tracts to southern soldiers. Tracts published by temperance reformers in Raleigh, North Carolina, could be sent to soldiers at a rate of 1500 per dollar.⁹³ But, perhaps the most prolific publisher was the South Carolina Tract Society. By 1863, the organization had published more than 170 tracts for soldiers, twenty-three of which discussed the dangers of intoxicating drink.⁹⁴

Both Union and Confederate tracts covered a wide range of topics in similar fashion – all of which related to sobriety and army life. Of course, some tracts exploited the imminence of death to implore the young soldiers to avoid the bottle. The war's carnage disrupted Victorian customs of death, leaving men and their families fearful that when young men died on the battlefield or hospital, away from their peaceful and virtuous homes, their souls might be in jeopardy. Families sought reassurance that a military death was honorable, and soldiers tried to

⁹¹ "Tracts for the Army," *JATU* 24 (August 1861): 121.

⁹² The *JATU* published its donation information monthly, from August 1861 – August 1865. The donation lists, which included the name of the donor along with the amount of the donation, typically appeared on the last page of the journal. In 1861, the *JATU* raised approximately \$990; in 1862, \$2,100; in 1863, \$6,500; in 1864, \$6,000; in 1865, \$2,500. The *JATU* reported that it could send a package of 1,000 tracts for \$2.50. Based on this estimate, I have concluded that if the money reportedly raised to send tracts to the army was used for such purposes, the ATU sent more than 7 million tracts to the Union Army.

⁹³ *No. 26: Are You Ready [For the Soldiers]*. (Raleigh, NC: s. n., between 1861 and 1865), 3.

⁹⁴ South Carolina Tract Society, *Descriptive List of Tracts published by the South Carolina Tract Society* (Charleston, SC: Evans and Cogswell, 1863?), 3-17.

greet death bravely and stoically.⁹⁵ The importance of a “good” death was not lost on reformers, and tracts published by North Carolinians urged the men to flee from all sins, and reminded them that swearing led to gambling, which led to intemperance, which led to death. And not just any death, but death followed by eternal torment. Drunkards had no place in heaven, and an intemperate soldier not only risked his own soul, but also brought potential anguish to his family. One tract reminded the young men that mothers, wives, and sisters were “pained not only at your absence, but the uncertainty of seeing you again in this life; and they long to be persuaded that whatever may befall you in this war, they will meet you in heaven.”⁹⁶ Sober South Carolinians reminded their soldiers that the “most elevated and refined circles” considered “unseemly” the use of ardent spirits. Soldiers who wanted to earn the respect of their communities and avoid hell needed to embrace the “true patriotism” of sobriety.⁹⁷ Northern tracts published by the American Temperance Union focused on the same themes, although the organization emphasized a sense of duty to family and friends more than it used the threat of eternal damnation. Intemperance could scar a soldier like the bite of a lobster could scar a fisherman, creatively explained one tract presumably aimed at New Englanders. Brave men who avoided vice (not just drinking, but also swearing and gambling) protected themselves from accidents – from crime and from death. A cowardly drunk brought “home to his friends and county, disgrace and infamy.”⁹⁸

But reformers, north and south, may have guessed that many of their readers might need more pragmatic evidence to encourage sobriety, and multiple tracts reminded soldiers that their

⁹⁵ Drew Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

⁹⁶ No. 26: Are You Ready [For the Soldiers]; No. 87: A Word of Warning for the Sick Soldier (Raleigh, NC: s. n., between 1861 and 1865); No. 44: Advice to Soldiers (Raleigh, NC: s. n., between 1861 and 1865), 5.

⁹⁷ South Carolina Tract Society, No. 84: Appeal to the Youth, and especially to the Soldiers of the Confederate States (Charleston, SC: Evans and Cogwell, n. d.), 3-6.

⁹⁸ “The Lobster Bite: A Tract for the Army by the American Temperance Union,” JATU 26 (April 1863): 51; “Another Tract for the Army,” JATU 25 (January 1862): 1; see also “Another Tract for the Army: The Returned Soldier,” JATU 25 (November 1862): 161-162.

physical well-being depended on temperate habits. Knowing that liquor rations were supplied to soldiers in order to prevent illness, Confederate advocates of cold water used a sketch of British Captain Hedley Vicars who had been killed during the Crimean War to show soldiers that they need not take their “gill of rum” in order to remain healthy.⁹⁹ A northern tract, “The Wounded Soldier,” told of a young soldier with “habits of great self-denial and self-control” who was severely wounded on the battlefield just as he came down with a bout of typhoid fever. Miraculously, the young man recovered from his wounds without an amputation, and after a short furlough was “on the battle-field ready again to do service for his country.” But, according to his surgeon, “If he had been a drinking man, he never would have recovered; at least the limb must have been amputated, and the fever might have terminated his life.”¹⁰⁰ If the threat of eternal damnation or familial scorn did not convince a young man to put down the bottle, surely the prospect of avoiding an amputation might.

Some men truly did appreciate the reading material supplied by the American Temperance Union, the South Carolina Tract Society, and any other publications. Soldiers in both armies enjoying passing the time by reading, and available material ran the gamut from smutty dime novels to literary classics to temperance and religious publications.¹⁰¹ Kentuckian Robert Winn, serving in the 3rd Kentucky Cavalry, spent as much of his leisure time as possible devouring any religious publication he could find. His interests included Baptist and Presbyterian theology, the Great Tribulation, abolition, and temperance. When possible, Winn’s chaplain kept him well supplied with reading material, and the young man forwarded selected issues of favorites such as The Christian Banner and the Good News home to his family in Hancock

⁹⁹ Catherine Marsh, No. 90: A Sketch of the Life of Capt. Hedley Vicars, the Christian Soldier (Raleigh, NC: s. n., 1863).

¹⁰⁰ “The Wounded Soldier: A New Tract for the Army,” JATU 25 (October 1862): 145-146.

¹⁰¹ Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Billy Yank, 153-57; Bell Irvin Wiley, The Life of Johnny Reb, 161-62.

County.¹⁰² Wisconsin native Guy Taylor specifically asked his wife to mail him copies of the Wisconsin Chief. Taylor had been active in his local temperance lodge before leaving for war, and he knew that in camp, temperance articles were scarce. “You don’t hear a word in favor [sic] of temperance hear [sic]. It is all whiskey and it is a killing more men then the balls are.” Once his paper arrived in the mail, Taylor set off to organize his own temperance crusade.¹⁰³

In many regiments, temperance societies appeared, especially during winter quarters, to help soldiers cope with the temptations of camp life while providing them with leisure activities to alleviate boredom. Throughout the Union army, the United States Christian Commission (USCC) facilitated temperance efforts, using volunteers to distribute literature and set up weekly temperance meetings. At its first annual meeting, the USCC estimated that approximately 300,000 temperance documents had been distributed to Union soldiers.¹⁰⁴ And in many places, the chapel was reserved on Wednesday evenings for temperance meetings.¹⁰⁵ Overall, USCC volunteers reported some success. Volunteers who worked out of Camp Distribution near Alexandria, Virginia, served men at Forts Scott, Albany, Richardson, Berry, Barnard, Reynolds, Ward, Battery Garache, and Camp Casey (for U. S. Colored Troops). Because soldiers came and went from these forts in large numbers, volunteers worked with many different men on any given day.¹⁰⁶ Temperance meetings were intended to serve a dual purpose. First, the meetings provided teetotalling soldiers a place of support as they navigated their vice-ridden camps. The meetings

¹⁰² Robert Winn to sister, August 20, 1863; Robert Winn to Sister, March 22, 1864; Robert Winn to sister, January 8, 1863; Robert Winn to sister, January 15, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, 1861-1875 (Transcriptions), Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

¹⁰³ Guy C. Taylor, Letters Home to Sarah: The Civil War Letters of Guy C. Taylor, Thirty-Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers, Edited by Kevin Alderson and Patsy Alderson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 63, 65, 73, 79, 81, 206.

¹⁰⁴ United States Christian Commission, United States Christian Commission, for the Army and Navy. Work and Incidents. First Annual Report (Philadelphia, PA: February 1863), 126.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, 72-73.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 70.

also regularly offered the pledge in order to bring more young men into the ranks of the cold water army. But a volunteer working in Winchester, Virginia, indicated in a letter to his wife that more than temperance was at work – soldiers were simply trying to find a way to pass the time. After assuring his wife that his “health was never better than since I have been here,” the USCC worker explained why: in addition to his work with the soldiers, he took an active role in the community, attending the Methodist church and also going to nightly meetings – temperance meetings, prayer meetings, but also public lectures. He credited his participation in nightly activities and regular exercise for his good health.¹⁰⁷

Christian Commission workers thought their efforts were successful, and many soldiers undoubtedly found the meetings reassuring as they worked to uphold the pledges they signed before they left home. At Camp Distribution, USCC station leader James P. Fisher estimated that more than 3,000 men had pledged to avoid all intoxicating beverages. The official report of the USCC listed a higher number – 3,700 men.¹⁰⁸ Volunteers working at Fort Leavenworth had similar success, reporting that “many hundreds” had signed the pledge and joined the church.¹⁰⁹ Fifty soldiers a week joined the temperance crusade in Washington.¹¹⁰ One Iowa officer’s testimony at a USCC meeting in Helena, Arkansas, illustrates how temperance meetings worked to replace the customary community bonds. Before leaving for war, the Iowan, like many men, had promised his wife that he would “maintain” his “Christian character unsullied.” But military life had taken its toll. Irregular church services, coupled with coarse company, had led to swearing, drinking, and gambling. Thinking of his wife at home only compounded the problem.

¹⁰⁷ Letter, March 24, 1865 (unknown soldier), Personal Papers Collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

¹⁰⁸ United States Christian Commission, United States Christian Commission, for the Army and Navy. Work and Incidents. First Annual Report, 63, 73.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 42.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 178.

And the soldier, disappointed in himself, “drowned” his “thoughts in the morning with liquor.” Reading between the lines of his letters, his wife had figured out that her husband was no longer walking the straight and narrow path, and she had reminded him that death awaited him, and if he did not change his behavior, hell might await him as well. Shaken by his own behavior and his wife’s warnings, the soldier confessed his vices to the attendees of the temperance meetings and vowed publically “to stand up for Christ as valiantly as for my country.” Volunteers with the Peoria Committee noted aptly that war had disrupted family influences and that this once “strong man” had been “broken down” by isolation, which led to intemperance.¹¹¹ Domestic influences could only carry a soldier so far, and many men needed additional support from camp-supported temperance organizations to keep them sober after years of fighting and camp life began to take a toll.

Beyond the realm of the USCC, chaplains in both the Union and the Confederacy worked to establish temperance societies. Among Union troops, the Sons of Temperance was popular. Organized in the decades before the Civil War, the Sons of Temperance, much like the Washingtonian Societies it replaced, catered to working-class men, and unlike the more middle-class American Temperance Union, sought to reform drunkards by providing an alternative fraternal culture.¹¹² Enlisted men (and some officers) found joining the Sons to be an enjoyable way of counteracting the rampant drunkenness of the camps. Recognizing the need to provide recreation in its camps that did not include alcohol, the Grand Division of Massachusetts authorized the formation of the 16th Massachusetts Regiment Division. Chaplain Richard Fuller thought the organization provided “wholesome recreation and intellectual and moral stimulus in

¹¹¹ Ibid, 216.

¹¹² Ian R. Tyrrell, Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Bruce Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women, 124-131.

army, deprived as we are of those enjoyed at home.” Fuller knew that “the old-fashioned, total-abstinence society” would not flourish in an army camp, and with his Division, he created a club where his soldiers had the opportunity to share literary creations and recite essays they had written. The soldiers would be sober, of course, but Fuller’s organization was designed “to be of great intellectual and moral value.”¹¹³ The Sons of Temperance may have provided literary entertainment in an alcohol-free environment, but some soldiers, like Seymour Dexter were skeptical of the organization’s ability to reform with simple pledge any man who recently had been willing “to wallow in the slough of intemperance.”¹¹⁴ Men undoubtedly attended merely to pass the time.

Effective or not, worried chaplains worked tirelessly to promote temperance societies. Chaplain Louis N. Beaudry began preaching temperance sermons in the 5th New York Cavalry within months of taking his post in the spring of 1863. He initially noted with some frustration that a drunken soldier had disrupted his religious meetings with “his discordant singing and offensive breath.” Some men attended temperance meetings with no intention (at least initially) of signing a pledge. By the winter of 1864, Beaudry experienced a change of heart and realized that these intoxicated soldiers deserved attention rather than disdain.¹¹⁵ After forming the “Fifth New York Cavalry Temperance Club,” Beaudry set out to find a few officers to sign the pledge. He had no luck for three weeks. In the meantime, the meetings drew crowds. The chapel “was completely jammed,” as men sat for hours on end, listening to lectures on the risks of intemperance to their physical and moral health. Less than ten days after the club had been

¹¹³ Richard F. Fuller, Chaplain Fuller: Being a Life Sketch of a New England Clergyman and Army Chaplain (Boston, MA: Walker, Wise, and Company, 1863), 193-94.

¹¹⁴ Seymour Dexter, Seymour Dexter, Union Army, 63.

¹¹⁵ Louis N. Beaudry, War Journal of Louis N. Beaudry, Fifth New York Cavalry: The Diary of a Union Chaplain, Commencing February 16, 1863, Edited by Richard E. Beaudry (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1996), 26, 31.

formed, more than ninety soldiers had signed the pledge, and the club's popularity had spread to an Ohio regiment encamped nearby. Planning the lectures consumed most of Beaudry's energies, but hope for achieving a "complete victory over this great evil" spurred him on. "Men are now signing the pledge whom we had given up for desperate cases," he noted in early March. Harboring none of the skepticism of Seymour Dexter, Beaudry believed that soldiers were reclaiming their lives "of sobriety and honesty which we possessed in our former quiet homes." Even officers began joining the society, although Beaudry noted that they had initially shrugged off his suggestions to sober up. First a lone lieutenant – "as hard a drinking man as we have in the regiment" – signed up. The next day, five more officers followed. By the end of April, the officers had begun "to feel considerable interest in the matter" and merely two months after first organizing his club, Beaudry had convinced more than 200 soldiers to sign the pledge.

Beaudry may have been delighted at this seeming success, but it seems that many of the men continued to be drawn to the meetings because they provided relief from boredom. Along with lectures, Beaudry's meetings included discussions of religion and "family devotions."¹¹⁶ Like the temperance meetings organized by the USCC and the Sons of Temperance, Beaudry's temperance club not only provided men with information but, more importantly, allowed men to interact with other members as "family," recreating as best they could the environment of accountability and moral support they had left behind in their hometowns.

Without groups such as the USCC to organize temperance clubs, Confederate chaplains had to act largely on their own. The Sons of Temperance, however, had a presence in the South, and even after separating from the national organization in 1861, the Sons continued to operate

¹¹⁶ Louis N. Beaudry, *War Journal of Louis N. Beaudry*, 93-110. For additional reports of flourishing temperance societies within the Union army, see *The Civil War Letters of General Robert McAllister*, Edited by James I. Robertson, Jr. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1965). McAllister reported that in the winter of 1864, the Temperance Society had more than seventy members and was gaining in popularity. See, 385-390.

in southern cities.¹¹⁷ In early 1862, the Richland Rifles, along with other companies in the 1st Virginia Regiment, organized a Division at Camp Huger, similar to the Massachusetts Division formed in the Union army.¹¹⁸ A few weeks later, the Springfield Division in Virginia initiated ten soldiers, including members of the nearby Texas Invincible.¹¹⁹ As in the Union camps, temperance meetings in the Confederate Army served to build community. One Roman Catholic chaplain, James Sheeran, serving with the 14th Louisiana, tackled the problem of drunkenness differently than his Protestant colleagues, but the results were no less significant. He did not organize a temperance society, but after one of his visits, “two notorious drunkards” reformed themselves, began “giving an edifying example to their companions,” and credited the priest with their transformation. For his part, Sheeran acknowledged that the “graces of the sacraments” had more to do with the change in habits.¹²⁰ Regardless of the method, the results were the same. Chaplains’ sincere efforts had a sobering influence on the men who trusted them for guidance.

What the Sheeran example perfectly illustrated is that efforts to bring about temperance reform worked because soldiers themselves were invested in their own sobriety and often decided that abstaining was in their best interest. Taking matters of morality into their own hands, the enlisted men of the 14th Massachusetts at Fort Tillinghast in Virginia organized their own weekly temperance meetings. They hoped their chaplain would make an appearance to lend his support, but that hardly mattered to these highly motivated soldiers.¹²¹ Other soldiers found

¹¹⁷ See “Correspondence of the Richmond Dispatch, affairs in Lynchburg,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 8, 1861; Richmond Daily Dispatch, May 25, 1861; Richmond Daily Dispatch, December 27, 1861.

¹¹⁸ “From Norfolk,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 27, 1862.

¹¹⁹ “Temperance,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 19, 1862.

¹²⁰ James B. Sheeran, Confederate Chaplain: A War Journal of Rev. James B. Sheeran, c.ss.r, 14th Louisiana, C.S.A., Edited by Joseph T. Durkin (Milwaukee, WI: Bruce Publishing, 1960), 57.

¹²¹ Robert to Priscilla, November 11, 1863, Letters of Robert, an unidentified soldier in the 14th Massachusetts, Heavy Artillery of Lynn, Mass., to his wife Priscilla, MSS 1242, Small Special Collections, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA.

that giving up alcohol was only the first step toward becoming more disciplined. A Union cavalryman in Kentucky was at first annoyed that his chaplain included tobacco, along with alcohol, in the unit's temperance pledge. Before he knew it, though, he had "laid Tobacco bye." After three weeks, he was ready to join an Anti-Tobacco Society as well as attend temperance meetings.¹²² His friend experienced a similar phenomenon – once he quit drinking "entirely" – he joined the church and the Christian Association, and then he "quit swearing."¹²³ Of course, some soldiers found the pledges a bit confusing, and becoming caught up in the moment, sometimes signed up for the cold water army without fully understanding what awaited them. Young Chauncey Herbert Cooke thought his pledge permitted him to drink cider, and assumed that beer was allowed as well. He assured his mother that he was deceived about the nature of his pledge, but that she need not worry about him, as he had never "touched a drop of whiskey." Furthermore, he "felt as guilty as a thief" after drinking the beer.¹²⁴ Undoubtedly, Cooke's mother rested a bit easier knowing that her son had signed his pledge. And Cooke, despite some confusion about the meaning of "cold water," seemed to have taken his oath to heart.

Temperance pledges distinguished between those who signed for "life" and those who signed for the duration of the war. Plenty of soldiers decided that serving in the army necessitated sobriety, even if they hesitated to swear off ardent spirits thereafter. For friends Robert Winn and Matthew Cook, the decision to abstain was in large part pragmatic. Robert pointed out that a drink of whiskey had "knocked down a sober man...because he had not become a proficient in the noble! art of self-defence."¹²⁵ Matthew agreed that whiskey could lead

¹²² Robert Winn to sister, January 27, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, 1861-1875 (Transcriptions), Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

¹²³ Matthew Cook to Martha Winn, September 28, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, 1861-1875 (Transcriptions), Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

¹²⁴ Chauncey Herbert Cooke, *Soldier Boy's Letters to His Father and Mother*, 35.

¹²⁵ Robert Winn to Martha Winn, March 25, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, 1861-1875 (Transcriptions), Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

to all kinds of trouble. “We are all Teetotalers here by compulsion,” he assured Robert’s sister, Martha. A soldier had “plenty else to think about,” and drinking muddled a man’s head unnecessarily.¹²⁶ Whiskey could weaken a man physically and mentally, soldiers knew, and avoiding the beverage kept them stronger and on their guard. But some men hoped their commitment to sobriety would stick even after they returned home. Wisconsin soldier Wilhelm Franchsen stopped drinking at first simply because he wanted to save his paycheck. Then, he stopped drinking his whiskey rations. Finally, he thought that by the time he returned home, he would have “conquered my old fondness of liquor.”¹²⁷

Mishaps and Punishments

Camp temperance clubs certainly made a difference, but moral reform had significant limits. Many soldiers continued to drink, some heavily, causing serious problems for regimental commanders. Drunken soldiers created nighttime disturbances, picked fights, committed murders, and even caused mutinies. Intoxication added to the nightmare already confronting both Union and Confederate commanders trying to turn thousands of volunteer citizens into massive, well-disciplined armies overnight. Military authorities had to enforce sobriety in order to prepare their men for battle. Thus, when the efforts of chaplains and Christian Commission volunteers failed to dissuade men from drinking to excess, the state stepped in, punishing drunken soldiers to whip the army into shape.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Letter, Matthew Cook to Martha Winn, December 31, 1861, Winn-Cook Family Papers, 1861-1875 (Transcriptions), Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

¹²⁷ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., Germans in the Civil War, 139.

¹²⁸ Discipline was a chronic problem in both armies, and drunkenness complicated disorder and unruly volunteers and conscripts. For scholarship, see Steven J. Ramold, Baring the Iron Hand; Joseph T. Glatthaar, General Lee’s Army, 174-185; Lorien Foote, The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Violence, Honor, and Manhood in the Union Army (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

Drunkenness often created nighttime disturbances. John Daeuble complained that he “could not get a half hour’s sleep the whole night because of a continuous noise” coming from intoxicated soldiers. Another night when he was on picket duty, his entire regiment was awakened by a drunken soldier who decided to steal the regimental flag and run noisily through the lines. Daeuble and his exhausted comrades conked the drunk on the head to quiet him down.¹²⁹ Chaplain Louis Beaudry could not hide his amusement when an adjutant returned from “a jollification time,” tried to “make use of one of the deep-dug sinks, [and] accidentally tumbled headlong into it, spoiling his entire suit of clothes.” The man became the butt of camp jokes, and Beaudry hypothesized that a drunken nose-dive into the latrines might actually save many soldiers from the “more awful” pit of hell.¹³⁰ Confederate soldiers were just as apt to take drunken tumbles. When one group decided to run the blockade near Goose Creek, South Carolina, one night in search of whiskey, they were caught by pickets on their way back to camp. One soldier was so drunk that he fell into the creek and ended up in the guardhouse; another fell into the same stream a short time later and drowned.¹³¹

More irritating than these minor scrapes were the drunken soldiers who wandered off – both accidentally and purposefully. One intoxicated soldier became lost, causing his comrades to have to run quickly to catch up to their company. They expressed anger with his “stupidity.” In different instance, two Kentuckians stumbled into Confederate lines where they were captured.¹³² A more serious problem was the drunken deserters. Confederate Colonel Augustus

¹²⁹ Reinhart, Joseph R., ed. and trans., Two Germans in the Civil War: The Diary of John Daeuble and the Letters of of Gottfried Rentschler, 6th Kentucky Volunteers (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 24, 20-1.

¹³⁰ Louis N. Beaudry, War Journal of Louis N. Beaudry, 80.

¹³¹ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, 79, 85.

¹³² Robert Goldthwaite Carter, Four Brothers in Blue or Sunshine and Shadows of the War of the Rebellion: A Story of the Great Civil War from Bull Run to Appomattox (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 217; Matthew Cook to Martha Winn, August 24, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, 1861-1875 (Transcriptions), Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

Buchel complained that Mexican immigrants recruited to fight in Texas would desert as soon as they got a “few dollars and a little whisky.”¹³³ Similarly, Union General Robert McAllister refused to commute the death sentence of one habitual deserter. Ira Smith – who had “always been addicted [sic] to intemperance” – deserted and re-enlisted in multiple regiments to collect bounties. When he was in the army, he avoided battles by “always guarding cattle.”¹³⁴ Whether they deserted or absent-mindedly strolled into enemy territory, these drunken men were a nuisance to officers attempting to keep soldiers disciplined in camp and prepared for battle.

More common and problematic than deserters were brawlers. Not coincidentally, every form of camp recreation that involved alcohol had the potential to devolve into violence. Jenkin Lloyd Jones and his comrades spent one evening playing music on a banjo, fiddle, clarinet, bones, and tambourine. Everything was enjoyable until the quartermaster passed around “some bottled whiskey.” The music “broke up in a drunken row.”¹³⁵ After a dose of “bust head, tangle foot whiskey” was issued among Alabama soldiers in April 1865, men of the 6th Alabama challenged a company of men from the 5th Alabama to a brawl.¹³⁶ A “snowy day” in camp brought not only boozy snow ball fights but “bloody heads” when men became so intoxicated they fought over whiskey stashes.¹³⁷ Elsewhere, St. Patrick’s Day ended with “fist-fights,” and pay-day brought “black eyes,” “noses skinned & bloody,” and “hard knocks to the bowels” after men used their money to purchase more than a dozen bottles of spirits.¹³⁸ Charles Haydon witnessed a “melee” that also resulted in “everything in the old tent” being “turned bottom side

¹³³ OR, Ser. I, Vol. IV, 153.

¹³⁴ Robert McAllister, The Civil War Letters of General Robert McAllister, 382.

¹³⁵ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, An Artilleryman’s Diary (Wisconsin History Commission, 1914), 29.

¹³⁶ G. Ward Hubbs, ed., Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 365.

¹³⁷ James Cooper Nisbet, Four Years on the Firing Line, Edited by Bell Irvin Wiley (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1963), 26.

¹³⁸ J. Chandler Gregg, Life in the Army in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, 86-87; Charles B. Haydon, For Country, Cause, and Leader, 96-97.

up” and despite not being involved “laughed...nearly to death but got very little sleep.”¹³⁹ But what seemed like reckless fun to Haydon and other rabble-rousers also threatened camp discipline, and the injuries sustained in fights served as evidence that drunkenness was a troublesome – if standard – form of camp recreation.

Some men went so far as to accuse the brawlers of lacking manliness and patriotism. After Confederate soldier John Overton “got drunk...and kicked up the devil” when the guards tried to subdue him, his long-time friend Robert Patrick recalled that Overton used to be “considered a respectable man and mingled in good society.” Now he was a drunk and “scarcely tolerated.”¹⁴⁰ In a camp near Culpeper, Virginia, John Gardner Perry blamed the “drunken rows and disturbances” that occurred “almost every night” on the “substitutes and conscripts.”¹⁴¹ Men responsible for the constant ruckus were not those motivated to enlist by patriotism but by money or threat of force.

Fights sometimes escalated into shootings and murders. Liquor and weapons were a volatile combination, and men who became intoxicated often “got to fooling with their arms.”¹⁴² One “semi-drunken” Texas soldier wildly fired six shots at a drayman, dropping his horse with the final bullet. Other soldiers laughed at his being “a *disgraceful bad shot*.”¹⁴³ Men attacked comrades and officers in the midst of drunken fury. Stephen Minot Weld wrote almost off-handedly in his diary that he was “troubled” both by “bed-bugs” and a drunken corporal who “wanted to run me through.”¹⁴⁴ Joseph Herring of the 7th Illinois cavalry was shot in the arm by a

¹³⁹ Charles B. Haydon, For Country, Cause, and Leader, 96-97.

¹⁴⁰ Robert Patrick, Reluctant Rebel: The Secret Diary of Robert Patrick, 1861-1865, Edited by F. Jay Taylor (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 51.

¹⁴¹ John Gardner Perry, Letters from a Surgeon of the Civil War, Compiled by Martha Derby Perry (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1906), 100.

¹⁴² Thomas N. Stevens, “Dear Carrie...”, 187.

¹⁴³ Sir Arthur James Lyon Fremantle, Three Months in the Southern States, 67.

¹⁴⁴ Stephen Minot Weld, Stephen Minot Weld, War Diary and Letters of Stephen Minot Weld, 1861-1865 (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1912), 362.

drunken soldier and only survived because of his “suspender buckle” that knocked the ball off its course.¹⁴⁵ Major Joseph D. Bullen of the 28th Maine was killed after being shot by a drunken fellow.¹⁴⁶ Enlisted men also murdered each other. One soldier in the Excelsior Brigade “deliberately shot a member of the same company for no cause whatsoever” while “under the influence of liquor.”¹⁴⁷ Other soldiers became murder victims themselves when they became too drunk to know their whereabouts – killed by comrades, thieves, and guerrillas.¹⁴⁸

Murders certainly upset order, but perhaps the most serious threats to camp discipline came from whiskey-induced mutinies. In August 1861, after initial three-month enlistments expired for many volunteers, members of the 79th New York Volunteers, who had enlisted for three years, misunderstood the terms of their contracts and panicked when they were not allowed to return home despite experiencing fierce fighting at Bull Run. They at first refused to strike their tents, but soon men began to drink and “the wildest confusion took place.” William Thompson Lusk and other officers were terrified – caught between Colonel Isaac Ingalls Stevens’s orders and their drunken men’s cocked weapons. It was only after the mutineers passed out from drunken exhaustion that officers were able to reassert their authority.¹⁴⁹

Rebellions of much smaller scale occurred throughout Union and Confederate armies when men

¹⁴⁵ Charles Wright Wills, Army Life of an Illinois Soldier: Including a Day by Day Record of Sherman’s March to the Sea: Letters and Diary of the Late Charles W. Wills, Private and Sergeant 8th Illinois Infantry, Lieutenant and Battalion Adjutant 7th Illinois Cavalry, Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel 103rd Illinois Infantry, Compiled by Mary E. Kellogg (Globe Print Co., 1906), 87; Wills also writes of that his court-martial duty included “occasionally a shooting or cutting affair among some drunken men,” see, 224.

¹⁴⁶ George Gilbert Smith, Leaves from a Soldier’s Diary, the Personal Record of Lieutenant George G. Smith, Co C., 1st Louisiana Regiment Infantry Volunteers (White) during the War of the Rebellion (Putnam, CT: G. G. Smith, 1906), 85.

¹⁴⁷ Joseph Hopkins Twichell, The Civil War Letters of Joseph Hopkins Twichell: A Chaplain’s Story, Edited by Peter Messent and Steven Courtney (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 93.

¹⁴⁸ Richard Ramsey Hancock, Hancock’s Diary: or, A History of the Second Tennessee Confederate Cavalry, with Sketches of First and Seventh Battalions (Nashville, TN: Brandon Print Co., 1867), 131; Stephen Minot Weld, War Diary and Letters of Stephen Minot Weld, 265; Charles S. Wainwright, A Diary of Battle, 490.

¹⁴⁹ William Thompson Lusk, War Letters of William Thompson Lusk: Captain, Assistant Adjutant-general, United States Volunteers, 1861-1863, afterward M.D. LL. D. (New York: W. C. Lusk, 1911), 72-76.

drank too much and collectively shunned military discipline.¹⁵⁰ When Pennsylvania reserves grew mutinous after the second Battle of Bull Run, Levi Bird Duff lamented that the disobedient fellows were “about to prove a great disgrace to the state.”¹⁵¹

Rebellious men not only disgraced their families and their states, but compromised the authority of commanding officers so seriously that Union and Confederate militaries took severe action to punish drunkenness and disorder. Captain Raphael Semmes of the CSS Alabama made it clear that not only would drunkenness not be allowed as an excuse for offenses committed aboard ship, but “that intoxication was a crime in itself.”¹⁵² On land, camp commanders tried to emphasize this as well. By late spring 1861, soldiers in the 17th Mississippi and the 25th Iowa were well aware that whiskey drinkers risked serious punishment.¹⁵³ In December 1861, David Day reported that his evening dress parade in his training camp usually included a list of “unlucky wight[s]” being punished for being “too drunk to perform the duties of a soldier.”¹⁵⁴ With public humiliation and threat of punishment, commanding officers hoped to halt drunken amusements before they ever had a chance to devolve into violent disorder.

Punishments included revoked privileges, fines, and demotions. In October 1861, the 13th Massachusetts descended into a “perfect Pandemonium” when they became drunk on a stormy march. The men fought, one soldier shot another, and still another “broke the head of a fourth with the butt of his musket.” Though General Nathaniel Banks had detailed the regiment “to go

¹⁵⁰ George Thornton Fleming, ed., Life and Letters of Alexander Hays, Brevet Colonel United States Army, Brigadier General and Brevet Major General United States Volunteers, Compiled by Gilbert Adams Hays (Pittsburgh, PA: Privately published, 1919), 129, 261; George Townley Fullam, Our Cruise in the Confederate State’s War Steamer Alabama: the Private Journal of an Officer (Cape Town, Western Cape Province: South African Advertiser and Mail, 1863), 23.

¹⁵¹ Levi Bird Duff, To Petersburg with the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Letters of Levi Bird Duff, 105th Pennsylvania Volunteers, Edited by Jonathan E. Helmreich (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2009), 51-52.

¹⁵² George Townley Fullam, Our Cruise in the Confederate State’s War Steamer Alabama, 63.

¹⁵³ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, 28; Charles F. Larimer, ed., Love and Valor, 20.

¹⁵⁴ David L. Day, My Diary of Rambles with the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Milford, MA: King and Billings Printers, 1884), 14.

to Williamsport on special duty,” he sent them back to camp and decided to “send off another [regiment] with more discipline and less whiskey.”¹⁵⁵ In other regiments, commanding officers worked to instill this sense of duty through extra guard duty.¹⁵⁶ When individual soldiers continued to be habitually drunk commanding officers tried punishments such as reducing them in rank or cancelling furlough applications.¹⁵⁷ Other men were sent home. Two Georgians were “discharged and left in Atlanta for getting drunk.” A Union soldier was drummed out for getting drunk and stealing a horse.¹⁵⁸

Most drunken soldiers faced arrest and punishment. Men serving on guard duty regularly reported arresting soldiers for intoxication; at times, the men behaved colorfully. Mississippian Ed Lockard became so intoxicated that he “cursed the officer of the day,” earning himself some time “under guard & came very near getting some bayonets run in him” because of his unruly behavior.¹⁵⁹ A Confederate made such noise after being arrested that he had to be gagged until he sobered up.¹⁶⁰ Some drunks slept it off under guard, but others were subjected to additional punishments. By 1865, officers in both the 177th Ohio and 200th Pennsylvania made intoxicated soldiers march back and forth for hours with boards strapped to their backs on which

¹⁵⁵ Wilder Dwight, Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight, 113.

¹⁵⁶ John W. Chase, Yours for the Union: The Civil War Letters of John W. Chase, First Massachusetts Light Artillery, Edited by John S. Collier and Bonnie B. Collier (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 13; Charles Wright Wills, Army Life of an Illinois Soldier, 220.

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Minot Weld, War Diary and Letters of Stephen Minot Weld, 352; Lewis Bissell, The Civil War Letters of Lewis Bissell, Edited by Mark Olcott (Washington: Field School Educational Foundation Press, 1981), 219.

¹⁵⁸ Clement Anselm Evans, Intrepid Warrior: Clement Anselm Evans, Confederate General from Georgia, Life, Letters, and Diaries of the War Years, Edited by Robert Frier Stephens, Jr. (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1992), 56; Luman Harris Tenney, War Diary, 1861-1865, Edited by Frances Andrews Tenney (Cleveland, OH: Evangelical Pub. House, 1914), 88.

¹⁵⁹ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, 36.

¹⁶⁰ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, 76; in another instance, Moore reports that he had two men arrested, 66; Jon C. Myers reported ten men under guard for theft and drunkenness, see John C. Myers, A Daily Journal of the 192d Reg't, Penn'a Volunteers, Commanded by Col. William B. Thomas, in the Service of the United States for One Hundred Days (Philadelphia, PA: Crissy and Markley, 1864), 77; Henry Warren Howe had twenty-two soldiers to look after who were confined either for drunkenness or being absent without leave, see Passages from the Life of Henry Warren Howe, 66; “Several members” of the 21st Virginia were arrested for drunkenness, see December 28, 1864, John Baxter Moseley Diary, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

“DRUNKARD” was painted. The Ohioans also carried a “large stick of wood on the shoulder” while they marched.¹⁶¹

Many officers opted for corporal punishment. Augustus Cleveland Brown ordered one private “thrice[d]...up by his thumbs.”¹⁶² Pay-day drunks in the 3rd Kentucky Cavalry were “dipped” into the “very cold” river to sober them up.¹⁶³ Tying miscreants to wagons and trees was fairly common punishment, but some officers became creative.¹⁶⁴ One Union captain liked to have his intoxicated soldiers alternate between being tied up and digging and filling holes in the frozen ground.¹⁶⁵ Officers in the 2nd Connecticut punished soldiers returning to camp from a night of drinking by making them “carry a heavy stick of timber or be tied up to the wheel” for hours at a time for several days. Two especially unfortunate men had to hold up a wheel to which they were both tied.¹⁶⁶ These public and physically harsh punishments were intended to deter other men considering a drunken spree. But instead of promoting discipline, especially harsh punishments could backfire if the men in the ranks believed they were unfair. After a drunken soldier in the 2nd Massachusetts was tied to a tree for several days, his comrades began yelling for him to be cut down. Extra guards had to help the officers restore orders and the man had to be punished out of his comrades' sight.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶¹ Elvira J. Powers, Hospital Pencillings, 168; Hallock Armstrong, Letters from a Pennsylvania Chaplain at the Siege of Petersburg, 1865 (Privately published by Mary M. Brown Armstrong, 1961), 12.

¹⁶² Augustus Cleveland Brown, The Diary of a Line Officer (Privately published, 1906), 87.

¹⁶³ Robert Winn to sister, March 22, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, 1861-1875 (Transcriptions), Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

¹⁶⁴ Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms, 126; Wilder Dwight, Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight, 82. A drunken fellow in the 13th Connecticut was “seized’ up in the rigging” while traveling from New York to Ship Island, Louisiana. See, George Gilbert Smith, Leaves from a Soldier’s Diary, 1.

¹⁶⁵ Frances Peter, A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky: The Diary of Frances Peter, Edited by John David Smith and William Cooper, Jr. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 90-1.

¹⁶⁶ Lewis Bissell, The Civil War Letters of Lewis Bissell, 225.

¹⁶⁷ Wilder Dwight, Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight, 93.

Unit solidarity against excessive punishment is indicative of a problem plaguing military discipline: officers who lacked the capacity to keep troops calm and disciplined also lost control when trying to restore order. Some became abusive. Others accidentally injured or killed men. A colonel in the 4th Iowa Cavalry who “hate[d] a drunken man as bad as a snake,” one Christmas ordered of group of intoxicated soldiers stripped of their uniforms, bound by hand and foot, and left to lie on ground all night. Other officers intervened to prevent the holiday drinkers from freezing to death.¹⁶⁸ Confederate Harry Burns and a few comrades likewise became too intoxicated one Christmas and ended up “in irons and kept on the spare deck for several days and nights in the bitter cold until a doctor prevented the punishment from going further.¹⁶⁹ Other soldiers had their cheeks and heads split open when officers used their guns and swords to subdue them.¹⁷⁰

One of the more severe instances occurred in the 118th Pennsylvania. In October 1863, Captain Francis Adams Donaldson had repeated problems with a Private Shields, a substitute serving in his company, who liked to get “drunk on Jamaica Ginger, drinking a whole bottle at a time.” The private was so often inebriated that Donaldson refused to allow him to leave the camp, warning him that if he went on another spree, the captain “would kill him.” True to form, Shields left camp, became drunk, and “secured a musket and had intimidated the guard.” Donaldson reacted quickly and, after a fight ensued, slammed his “musket down upon [the private’s] head and felled him to the ground.” Shield’s skull was fractured, and although Major Charles Herring assured Donaldson that he had acted in the best interest of his men, Donaldson seemed haunted by earning the reputation as a “man killer” among the regiments encamped

¹⁶⁸ “Civil War Journal of S. O. Bereman,” Garth Hagerman Photo/Graphics, accessed August 31, 2012, <http://garthagerman.com/fambly/bereman.php>.

¹⁶⁹ Robert Watson, *Southern Service on Land and Sea*, 106.

¹⁷⁰ Charles Wright Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier*, 27; Alfred Bellard, *Gone for a Soldier*, 33-34.

nearby.¹⁷¹ So unregulated and reckless were the armies' responses to drunkenness that enlisted men tended to resist attempts of officers to instill discipline and often assumed that commanders like Donaldson were abusive, even when they were not.

Conclusion

Problems of drunkenness persisted throughout the war. Even after the surrender, one Pennsylvania chaplain remarked that his boys were “very much demoralized by whiskey, Beer, and the idea of soon getting home... Very few seem to have any thought of religious things.”¹⁷² The chaplain was under the impression that he was of little use. Bored and tormented by homesickness, the men around him had determined simply to plod along in a drunken stupor until they got to go home. In short, attempts by both civilians and the military to put an end to soldiers' drunkenness had failed. Although the state had instituted punishments for drunkenness, attempting to fill the void left when men marched away from families and supportive communities, the policies were never successful. Their shortcomings, at least in part, were due to the soldiers' finding them inconsistent and needlessly harsh.

But the chaplain's observations, coupled with the opinions of Union soldier James Kendall Hosmer, indicate that most soldiers did not view sobriety as a masculine trait worth adopting. War, to Hosmer, necessitated a broader, different, conception of manhood and morality. Noting that pre-war values of patience, honesty, and temperance were sorely lacking among many men and officers in camp, he learned to “put as much confidence in men as ever, to believe in intrinsic goodness of the human heart.” For the first time, Hosmer had formed relationships with “rough men” – coarse and lacking religion. Yet, he observed that they “would

¹⁷¹ Francis Adams Donaldson, Inside the Army of the Potomac, 365-67.

¹⁷² Hallock Armstrong, Letters from a Pennsylvania Chaplain at the Siege of Petersburg, 35.

help others generously; they would bear privation cheerfully;” and they faithfully attended to sick and dying comrades. Finding his preconceived notions of respectability turned upside down by the war, Hosmer concluded that unselfishness was a manly trait of the highest value.¹⁷³ As historians have already noted, soldiers re-evaluated masculine and patriotic values on the battlefield.¹⁷⁴ Men in the armies sometimes favored solidarity and camaraderie over pious self-control, and by making room for “roughness” and drunkenness, they redefined masculinity for themselves. Officers, also coping with the harshness of war, would do likewise.

¹⁷³ James Kendall Hosmer, The Color-Guard: Being a Corporal's Notes of Military Service in the Nineteenth Army Corps (Boston, MA: Walker Wise and Co., 1864), 240-41.

¹⁷⁴ Gerald Linderman, Embattled Courage.

Chapter 2
Martial and Moral Heroes:
Duty and Drinking among Army Officers

On May 24, 1861, Elmer Ellsworth, Colonel of the 11th New York Volunteers, crossed the Potomac River with his Zouaves to take down a Confederate flag that had been hoisted in Alexandria, Virginia, and could be seen from the White House. After capturing the flag, Ellsworth was shot, immediately becoming a hero for the Union. The first casualty of the Civil War, Ellsworth became a rallying cry. Northern men enlisted to honor his memory. And, northern temperance reformers lauded Ellsworth as “a perfect model” of a sober soldier and officer. Despite the Zouaves’ reputation for disorderly behavior, Ellsworth’s soldiers – rugged firefighters from New York – were prohibited from drinking, smoking, or visiting grog shops. Ellsworth never drank, reformers pointed out, and as a result had “remarkable health of body,” “vigor,” and “controlling power of mind” – traits that would benefit all Union troops.¹ His death, they assured themselves, would not end his influence, but his legacy of “manly effort” and “virtuous self-denial” would encourage other young men to act bravely and responsibly in the face of war.² With the fate of the nation hanging in the balance, temperance reformers quickly drafted pledges to honor Ellsworth’s memory and encouraged young officers and enlistees to sign as they went off to war. Only sober officers and soldiers could rescue the country from the unprincipled secessionists. In the eyes of many Americans, especially temperance reformers,

¹ “Ellsworth and his Zouaves: The Temperance Home Guard on the Death of Col. Ellsworth,” Journal of the American Temperance Union and New York Prohibitionist 24 (June 1861): 96.

² Memor (Worcester, June 20), “Honor to Col. Ellsworth,” JATU 24 (July 1861): 102.

Ellsworth became a symbol of the ideal patriot and manly leader – he was sober, disciplined, and courageous.

The worship of Ellsworth’s self-denial was largely a northern phenomenon – in fact, Confederates perceived Ellsworth’s Zouaves as cut-throats who ruthlessly invaded Virginia’s soil – but southern temperance reformers nevertheless believed that winning the war required the same traits of self-discipline and sobriety as their northern counterparts.³ The South Carolina Tract Society assured its young readers that “strict temperance” would directly influence “*the health and vigor of both mind and body*” and cited Martin Luther and Isaac Newton as examples of great temperate minds. As men marched off to fight the enemy, they were reminded that Samson’s strength rested with his sobriety. Even with such historical examples, reformers worried that the soldiers would drink at least moderately. Teetotaling Confederates knew that consuming ardent spirits was often a marker of privilege in southern communities. To try to dissuade young officers from becoming carried away with the privileges their military rank afforded them, reformers reminded the men that most kings and princes, men in the highest positions of leadership, avoided “strong drink;” furthermore, they added, liquor had become increasingly “disparaged in the most moral and intelligent circles.” These young “gentleman” would become “martial heroes” when they went off to battle, but whether they became “moral heroes” was yet to be determined, for “moral heroism” required “fortitude and self-denial.” The Confederacy required moral, not just martial, heroes “not to sully or sink her cause by surrendering [themselves] to so ignoble a foe as Whiskey.”⁴

³ “News from the Seat of War,” *Spirit of the Age* 12 (June 5, 1861): 2.

⁴ South Carolina Tract Society, *No. 84: Appeal to the Youth, and especially to the Soldiers of the Confederate States* (Charleston, SC: Evans and Cogswell, n.d.), 2, 3, 11, 15.

Although Union and Confederate temperance reformers believed that winning the war required military leadership from morally disciplined officers, their ideas clashed with the officers' own habits and ideas about their behavior; these debates between civilians and officers amplified competing visions of American manliness and respectability. Sober-minded northerners and southerners knew that an army led by teetotalers would certainly win the war by instilling discipline in the ranks and allowing for wise decision-making in the heat of battle. But Union and Confederate officers knew total abstinence was impractical. By and large, officers embraced the privilege of drinking that their rank afforded them, thereby violating civilian models of moral patriots from the beginning. Officers drank, but men in both armies disagreed about how much an officer could imbibe before he became a nuisance to his men and a hindrance to the cause. While both soldiers and civilians agreed that drunkards were dangerously unpatriotic, officers made allowances for comrades who used alcohol to cope with illness and exhaustion brought on by years of hard fighting. Likewise, military officials refused to conflate an officer's manliness with his rate of success in battle, despite the overwhelming perception among northerners and southerners that men of moral character emerge victorious. By allowing for sickness and battlefield failure, officers created an alternative definition of manliness that would continue to exist decades after the war.

The link between sobriety and success had its roots in antebellum middle-class society. As the industrial revolution swept through the United States, temperance reformers, especially in the North, had urged men to put down the bottle entirely. Middle-class men believed that values of self-control and frugality in all areas of life led to success, and so pervasive was the belief that hard work and moral fortitude begot achievements that men who fell short in their professional endeavors were labeled failures by society. Sobriety, then, was a precursor to success. Although

some Americans considered moderate consumption of alcohol to be morally acceptable, reformers advocated teetotalism and argued that nearly any amount of alcohol threatened to bring about the downfall of industrial society. Young, single men flooded cities in search of factory jobs, and middle-class men had a duty to practice self-restraint and pass along their values to urban working classes. But many middle-class and affluent Americans were not interested in taking a pledge of total abstinence. Government regulations, such as license laws, curbed excesses, and as the nineteenth century moved along, Americans increasingly considered moderate drinking to be a marker of respectability. Nothing indicated affluence and refinement quite like wine at a dinner party.⁵ In the South, in particular, white men considered drinking to be an integral part of recreational culture, and rural culture placed fewer prohibitions on drinking. Even so, in regions of the South where industrialization gained a foothold temperance organizations sprung up as newly-formed middle classes went about the business of civilizing their country-dwelling counterparts.⁶ Temperance reform existed to varying degrees in the northern and southern states, to be certain, but when it came to debates over drunkenness among officers, northern and southern teetotalers differed little in their definitions of manly patriotism: officers needed to be sober and capable of self-control and denial.

⁵ Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860 (Revised Edition) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997); Ian R. Tyrrell, Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America, 1800-1860 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979); Robert H. Abzug, Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 81-104; Scott A. Sandage, Born Losers: A History of Failure in America (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); Edward J. Balleisen, Navigating Failure: Bankruptcy and Commercial Society in Antebellum America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Bruce Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002); Elaine Frantz Parsons, Manhood Lost: Fallen Drunkards and Redeeming Women in the Nineteenth-Century United States (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Catherine Gilbert Murdock, Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

⁶ Ted Ownby, Subduing Satan: Religion, Recreation, and Manhood in the Rural South, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990); Lee L. Willis, Southern Prohibition: Race, Reform, and Public Life in Middle Florida, 1821-1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 1-66; Bruce E. Stewart, Moonshiners and Prohibitionists: The Battle over Alcohol in Southern Appalachia (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 9-60.

Instead of breaking along regional lines, clashes over definitions of manliness pitted military culture against civilian culture. The United States Army had always perpetuated its own culture of masculinity that functioned differently than its middle-class civilian counterpart. Many men, especially officers, considered drinking a necessary part of life in the antebellum army. During the Civil War, many officers still held this view. But in a society steeped in the mores of self-discipline, the possibility of hard-drinking officers caused considerable uneasiness. Like industrial factories, a modern army worked much like a machine, which could only operate smoothly if everyone were sober, alert, and disciplined. Yet Union and Confederate armies were anything but disciplined. The massive mobilization of volunteers who prided themselves on their status as citizen-soldiers, coupled later with the massive influx of conscripts, created large armies full of men who came and went as they pleased and often obeyed orders only on their own terms. Along these lines, the rank and file of both armies valued democracy, and they were reluctant to recognize military rank as a marker of superiority. Officers, then, had to earn the respect of the soldiers who served under them by proving that they were brave and patriotic citizens themselves. Because of this, military authorities knew that the civilian middle-class values of discipline and self-restraint carried significant weight, and temperance reformers, civilians, and many officers concurred that sobriety should be among their virtues. A drunken officer could not instill discipline in his men, and could also through poor behavior lose their respect.⁷

Most Americans agreed that a habitually drunken officer was a hazard, but when it came to assessing the morality of drinking, soldiers and civilians often found themselves at odds.

Reformers and concerned citizens believed that morality was essential to victory. The only way

⁷ Stephen J. Ramold, Baring the Iron Hand: Discipline in the Union Army (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Lorien Foote, The Gentlemen and the Roughs: Manhood, Honor, and Violence in the Union Army (New York: New York University Press, 2010); Joseph T. Glatthaar, General Lee's Army: From Victory to Collapse (New York: Free Press, 2008), 186-199.

the violence of the war could be justified was to know that the cause and the men who fought for it were virtuous and patriotic.⁸ In both the Union and the Confederacy, many people believed that sober military leadership provided the key to victory not simply because it facilitated discipline but because it sanctified the war. Armies full of Christian soldiers who did not drink, swear, or gamble would receive God's blessings (presumably in the form of military victories). Therefore, turning the bloody war into a righteous crusade helped civilians to make sense of the violence. For officers who dealt with the horror and stress of warfare day in and day out, the definitions of moral manliness were not so clear cut, and for many men drinking became an essential tool in staving off the physical and mental side-effects of a brutal war. When men drank to preserve their health, fellow officers seldom considered it immoral. As a result, many officers found themselves defending their behavior against the widespread public perception that military victory and high moral character went hand in hand, while defeat served as an indicator of immorality. Officers who lost often found themselves accused of drunkenness, and many fought against these charges in order to reclaim their virtue and their manhood in the wake of military defeat.

Drinking Officers

Almost immediately after war broke out, officers began redefining acceptable forms of manly behavior with their attitudes toward strong drink. As products of the burgeoning middle and upper classes, these young men had been raised to adhere to principles of self-control and sobriety. Some newly minted officers espoused temperate values before the war began, but they

⁸ Frances M. Clarke, War Stories: Suffering and Sacrifice in the Civil War North (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011); George C. Rable, God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

were in the minority. Plenty of officers drank, and as the war went on and became increasingly brutal, they found little reason to join the ranks of the cold water army. The availability of alcohol was simply too enticing. An officer's rank allowed him the luxury of drinking and set him apart from enlisted men who lacked such privileges. Once alcohol had been supplied, officers found that imbibing took the edge off of the war's brutality.

A few officers did choose to abstain. General Robert McAllister of the Army of the Potomac epitomized self-control and other virtues. The man, with a "soft and calm" voice that never swore and a "closely shaven" face, had "the air of simplicity and modesty." The officer "never touches liquor for any kind, not even beer," but fellow Union officer Regis de Trobriand noted that he stopped short of requiring those around him to embrace abstinence. By "preach[ing] by example only," McAllister found favor with his men. Yet de Trobriand further pointed out that his troops regarded him as a mother, an indication that teetotalism was more associated with femininity than masculinity among soldiers, and "when the day of battle came the mother led on her children as a lioness her cubs." Lest his feminine simile cause confusion, he clarified that as a lioness, McAllister "was a most exemplary man," and it was "because" of this – not despite it -- that he was a "most energetic soldier."⁹ To be an effective leader in battle, an officer had to embody characteristics of temperance and self-control in order to mold and protect the young soldiers in his command.

McAllister and other teetotaling regimental commanders took the lead when it came to circulating pledges and encouraging abstinence, and reformers on the home front praised them for it. If officers joined temperance clubs, the rank and file would follow their example. When the 11th Massachusetts organized its club, the commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Porter D.

⁹ Regis de Trobriand, Four Years with the Army of the Potomac, translated by George K. Dauchy (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Co., 1889), 707-8.

Tripp joined first. Seventy soldiers followed him.¹⁰ Colonel Samuel N. Black of the 62nd Pennsylvania and thirty-four of his officers also signed pledges, which they ‘kept with unswerving fidelity.’ When Black was shot in the chest while leading his men, that he died sober and “without a groan” earned “special mention” in his New York Herald obituary. His personal habits were admired as much as his military and political careers.¹¹ When most of the officers in the 25th Iowa went on a drunken spree near Bridgeport, Alabama, Captain Jake Ritner expressed gratitude that the officers of Company B remained “all right and minding their own business.”¹²

Soldiers and civilians lauded officers who promoted temperance habits by example, but sources indicate that officers willing to take pledges and abide by them were few and far between. At least two-thirds of the officers in Ritner’s regiment were drunks.¹³ Likewise, when McAllister organized a temperance club in the 1st Massachusetts, he noted that only one line officer – Captain Samuel T. Sleeper – signed the pledge.¹⁴ Even when officers did attach their names, plenty of soldiers doubted their sincerity. Connecticut non-commissioned officer Lewis Bissell noted that his colonel and most of the officers in his regiment signed a temperance pledge at Fort Worth, Virginia, around Christmas 1863 and expressed frustration that the lieutenant-colonel appeared determined not to add his name to the list. Bissell suspected their convictions were not true and decided to wait and see if the officers would abide by their pledges before adding his own name.¹⁵

¹⁰ Robert McAllister, The Civil War Letters of General Robert McAllister, Edited by James I. Robertson, Jr. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1965), 389.

¹¹ “HIGH IMPORTANT EVENTS,” New York Herald, July 1, 1862.

¹² Charles F. Larimer, ed., Love and Valor: The Intimate Civil War Letters between Captain Jacob and Emeline Ritner (Western Springs, IL: Sigourney Press, 2000), 243.

¹³ *Ibid*, 243.

¹⁴ McAllister, The Civil War Letters of General Robert McAllister, 388.

¹⁵ Lewis Bissell, The Civil War Letters of Lewis Bissell, Edited by Mark Olcott (Washington: Field School Educational Foundation Press, 1981), 202-3.

A goodly number of Union and Confederate officers ignored pledges because in a wartime environment they found the burdens of their responsibility incompatible with sobriety. As temperance reformers had feared when the war began, plenty of sober-minded men found the stress of wartime leadership too great. Shortly after the Union capture of Vicksburg Jenkin Lloyd Jones, a Wisconsin private remarked the “whiskey is used by our officers more freely than water” even though these “men left home with great pretensions of temperance.”¹⁶ Even men who “were not habitual drunkards,” he explained, could lose “their discretion” after a close brush with danger. “Prompted by the devil or some other demon,” officers consumed barrels of whiskey, and “men working in sober earnestness” were transformed into “raving maniacs.” Wives and mothers would have been horrified to see their husbands, sons, and fathers of their children “staggering through our camp in this condition.” Churches and temperance lodges felt themselves “disgraced” by the conduct. Jones was so appalled that he questioned his “faith in human nature.”¹⁷ The middle-class values of self-restraint and sobriety proved impractical for men who experienced the distress of war.

If war could trouble the soul of a temperance man, it could wreak havoc with those less committed to the virtues of sobriety. In many cases, soldiers elected company officers with no regard to their drinking habits, much to the consternation of the sober-minded. When Elliott H. Fletcher and other men of Mississippi County, Arkansas, were mustered at Osceola in June 1861, they “unanimously elected” a captain who showed up drunk to their mustering.¹⁸ Throughout the Confederacy, tales of similar shenanigans popped up. Confederate nurse Kate Cumming heard rumors that often skills at electioneering, rather than “any personal merit,” secured a man an

¹⁶ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, *An Artilleryman's Diary* (Wisconsin History Commission, 1914), 79.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 348.

¹⁸ Elliot H. Fletcher, *The Civil War Letters of Captain Elliot H. Fletcher of Mill Bayou, Mississippi County, Arkansas, July to December 1861* (Pulaski County Historical Society, AR, 1963), 36.

officer's commission.¹⁹ Drunkards were just as likely to become officers in the Union Army. Hoosier soldier William Taylor Stott barely managed to win an election for captain after his liquor-drinking opponent tried to buy votes by getting "some of our men drunk."²⁰ Sobriety triumphed over drunkenness in the 18th Indiana, but elsewhere in the Union Army and Navy, officers noticed that drunkards seemed to have a special knack for moving swiftly up the chain of command. Admiral David Dixon Porter asserted that "rum sucking, good for nothing" retirees were "being placed in such good commands and positions." It was bad enough when incidental drunkenness occurred among the officers on a ship, but appointing "a chronic drunk" to a position of power created a new type of problem – "not having seen them sober you cant [sic] prove whether they were drunk or not."²¹ Even General Benjamin Butler, who was reputed not to "tolerate" such problems, had trouble with drunken officers throughout the war, despite taking measures to cut the flow of ardent spirits through the Department of Virginia.²² In December 1863, Butler implored Secretary of War Stanton to stop promoting officers to positions in the U.S. Colored Troops without first requesting information about their conduct. It seemed that an order for a promotion had just arrived for a man sitting in the guardhouse charged with desertion and drunkenness. He "desires me to let him out for the purpose of taking his commission, with the promise that he will not do so again," explained Butler in exasperation.²³

¹⁹ Kate Cumming, Kate: The Journal of a Confederate Nurse, ed. by Richard Barksdale Harwell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 201-2; Joseph T. Glatthaar indicates that in the Army of Northern Virginia, sobriety triumphed over drunkenness more than soldiers thought. He finds that about 1/3 of officers who were incompetent lost their positions, see General Lee's Army, 86.

²⁰ William Taylor Stott, For Duty and Destiny: The Life and Civil War Diary of William Taylor Stott, Hoosier Soldier and Educator, Edited by Lloyd A. Hunter (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2010), 188.

²¹ Robert Means Thompson and Richard Wainwright, eds., Confidential Correspondence of Gustavus Vasa Fox: Assistant Secretary of the Navy: 1861-1865 (New York: De Vinne Press, 1920), 2:78.

²² Benjamin Franklin Butler, Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, During the Period of the Civil War (Norwood, MA: Plimpton Press, 1917), 1:184.

²³ Benjamin Franklin Butler, Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, 3:181.

Complaints about the selection of drunkards for commissions indicate that military officials believed intoxication was incompatible with an officer's duties, but in spite of this, plenty of sober officers maintained that taking an officer's oath turned temperate men into drunks overnight. One young man "became so elated" after being sworn in as first lieutenant, "that he got drunk, and has not been heard of since."²⁴ The sober-minded Rufus Kinsley of Company D of the 8th Vermont explained this phenomenon more thoroughly. "Many men who never drank at home, and who had no difficulty in resisting the temptation while *in the ranks* of the army, no sooner pocket their Commission, than they become drunken" because the pressure to drink socially mounted immediately. Young officers had to imbibe when liquor was offered by those who outranked them. It would not do "to reproach other officers by refusing to drink with them."²⁵ Even when superior officers were not supplying the booze, men found that drinking was a privilege of rank, and the parties along with greater access to rations and private stores removed almost all barriers between officers and liquor.

That officers considered drinking a privilege became clear as soon as camp-life doldrums set in. While enlisted men might enjoy a round of whiskey and poker on a cold winter night, their officers had the financial means to enjoy dinner parties and balls where ardent spirits flowed freely. As he traveled through the Confederacy in 1861, British observer William Howard Russell noticed immediately the copious hospitality of the naval officers stationed at every battery. Officers welcomed their British guest with bourbon. In New Orleans, young Zouaves "full of life and spirits" invited Russell to a "very comfortable dinner, with abundance of champagne, claret, beer, and ice," courtesy, it seems, of the local quartermaster.²⁶ A few months

²⁴ William Wheeler, Letters of William Wheeler of the Class of 1855, Y.C. (privately published, 1875), 293.

²⁵ Rufus Kinsley, Diary of a Christian Soldier: Rufus Kinsley and the Civil War, Edited by David C. Rankin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 140-41.

²⁶ William Howard Russell, My Diary North and South (T.O.H.P Burnham, 1863), 206, 214.

later, when Russell visited the 6th United States Cavalry, encamped near Richmond, he found the dinner tables similarly spread with “whiskey, champagne, hot terrapin soup, and many luxuries.”²⁷ To be sure, both events were held to impress Russell, but officers’ accounts indicate that the Englishman’s brief experience was hardly unique. New York volunteer Don Redro Quarendo Reminisco repeatedly noted Union officers’ penchant for “drinking copious libations of their good old champagne wine.”²⁸ Private Dietrich Gerstein echoed Reminisco’s observations, while making clear the mockery officers made of middle-class values. The officers of the Union Army, Gerstein thought, were in “a better category” of men. They were not a part of the “crude masses,” who rashly ran into battle after becoming drunk on beer and liquor. Instead, he noted sarcastically, the Union officers had finer tastes – they clouded their minds with champagne.²⁹

The champagne, wine, and liquor flowed because, quite simply, officers could afford to get their hands on it, and at times, the frivolity spun out of control. Near the camp of the 118th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers in May 1863, Captain Dendy Sharwood decided to host a shindig for his fellow officers, a task for which he was well-suited, having been the owner of a hotel before the war. Sharwood’s guests were treated to a generous supply of gin cocktail, fish house punch, claret punch, and ale, and “to satisfy the craving of the appetite of Gin Cocktail was sure to produce” the officers also found “enormous tubs” of cold beef, boiled ham, chicken salad, and ham sandwiches. The drinks and sandwiches led to “song and ribald jest,” and not surprisingly, Sharwood’s tent was quickly “filled with a writhing mass of drunken men.” The

²⁷ Ibid, 568.

²⁸ Don Pedro Quarendo Reminisco, Life in the Union Army: or Notings and Reminiscences of a Two Years’ Volunteer (New York: H. Dexter, 1863), 60; see also 16, 72.

²⁹ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home, translated by Susan Carter Vogel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 281-82.

officers exchanged pledges of love and friendship, and one young man giddily climbed a spruce hedge repeatedly, much to his comrades' amusement. The next morning, sober Captain Francis Adams Donaldson alone reported for duty while all of his friends lay "asleep on the floors, under the tables, and on the ground surrounding" Sharwood's tent.³⁰ Donaldson and his pals may have enjoyed themselves, but enlisted men did not always find their officers' drunken antics so amusing. Regis de Trobriand knew of a regiment in the Army of the Potomac where "the soldiers were often disturbed in their sleep by the obscene refrains and drunken cries from the tent of the commanding officer." The behavior had a "deplorable effect."³¹

Captain Sharwood used his business connections to buy booze and sandwiches, but other officers relied on their wives to fortify them. Wishing to relieve the "monotonous routine" of life in Cantonment Hicks near Frederick, Maryland, Charles Fressenden Morse worked with his wife to plan a feast for seven officer friends. Turkey, grouse, pie, and pudding arrived in packages from home, and with Sherry and Madeira, the guests, who were "hungry as bears," washed down their "splendid" dinner.³² Union Colonel Charles S. Wainwright was so accustomed to having his wine, that he expressed great consternation when he ran out of claret and could not get to Washington to restock. Likewise, when the camp sutler only stocked the "poorest Jersey brand" of champagne, Wainwright found it undrinkable. Luckily, he had "a bottle of common Madeira" in his private stores.³³ Even access to ice could provide officers with more opportunity to drink than their enlisted counterparts. While aboard the Massachusetts off the coast of Port Royal, South Carolina, Rear Admiral Charles Steedman reacted with mixed emotion to the generous

³⁰ Francis Adams Donaldson, Inside the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Experience of Captain Francis Adams Donaldson, Edited by J. Gregory Acken (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 1998), 268-70.

³¹ Regis de Trobriand, Four Years with the Army of the Potomac, 398-401.

³² Charles Fessenden Morse, Letters Written during the Civil War, 1861-1865 (privately published, 1898), 35-36.

³³ Charles S. Wainwright, A Diary of Battle: The Personal Journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, 1861-1866, Edited by Allan Nevins (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), 271; 433.

supply of ice. In Steedman's opinion, tepid whiskey was avoidable, but when ice was available, the luxury made the whiskey taste better and "induces one to take cool drinks."³⁴

Sutlers and (unsuspecting) families of enlisted men provided officers with ardent spirits when they could not find it elsewhere. Sutlers who followed the soldiers could sell alcohol to officers, although they were often prohibited from selling to enlisted men, especially privates. Officers took full advantage, in some instances using sutlers' stores to remain in a perpetual stupor.³⁵ A keg of beer purchased from the sutler could certainly make a long evening more enjoyable.³⁶ But when sutlers' supplies ran short, officers in both armies had a knack for intercepting packages bound for soldiers. Reminisco sarcastically noted that packages from home were searched by officers for evidence of "a liquor brand or stamp." Cheap "contraband" was "emptied on the ground," but finer liquors were sent to the hospital under "pretence of discipline in camp." Then, doctors, colonels, and other officers enjoyed "the spoils" and "indulged in them like Lucifer."³⁷ While assigned to the C.S.S. Savannah late in the war, Floridian Robert Watson noticed a similar problem among Confederate officers near Wilmington. The Confederate army allowed enlisted men one gill of whiskey per day, but "the balance of the men get none," because officers drank the lion's share themselves and spent their time "fiddling, dancing, and drinking whiskey all day and nearly all night."³⁸ So engrained into their minds was the notion that

³⁴ Charles Steedman, Memoir and Correspondence of Charles Steedman, Rear Admiral, United States Navy, with His Autobiography and Private Journals, 1811-1890, Edited by Amos Lawrence Mason (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1912), 312.

³⁵ D. P. Conyngham, The Irish brigade and its campaigns: with some account of the Corcoran Legion and sketches of the principal officers (New York: William McSorley, 1869), 234.

³⁶ Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms: The Diary of Lieutenant Augustus D. Ayling, 29th Massachusetts Volunteers, Edited by Charles F. Herberger (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 124.

³⁷ Don Pedro Quarendo Reminisco, Life in the Union Army, 98.

³⁸ Robert Watson, Southern Service on Land and Sea: The Wartime Journal of Robert Watson, Edited by R. Thomas Campbell (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2002), 152-53.

imbibing was a privilege of rank, that plenty of officers seemingly had no remorse when it came to filching alcohol from their own troops.

Consequences of Officers' Drinking

What men discovered when they became officers was the tacit approval to drink. Their finances provided them the means to guzzle wine and toast each other with champagne. Once the toasts began, the men egged each other on. As they slaked their thirst, drunken officers wreaked havoc on discipline. Men on a bender neglected their duties, caused disturbances in camp, enticed others to drink, and often abused their troops horribly or made rash decisions. So immense were the problems, that the Confederate Army punished drunken officers by cashiering, public reprimand, and suspension from the service.³⁹ But regulations prohibiting drunkenness did not stop intoxication from becoming a chronic problem. Both enlisted men and military officials complained at length about the damage drunken officers inflicted, often arguing that such men compromised the war effort. Consuming alcohol was certainly an officer's privilege, but enlisted men critiqued drunkards severely, arguing that officers should adhere to the manly principles of discipline and self-control in order to be reliable and moral leaders under whom their men could serve. Drunken officers were not only poor examples of manliness, they were unpatriotic because they misused military resources and did not perform their duties properly.

The notion that high-ranking tipplers caused military blunders echoed throughout the Union and Confederate armies. Union Generals Darius N. Couch and Assistant Adjutant General Seth Williams expressed their utter exasperation with their comrades' drinking. When

³⁹ Confederate States of America, A Digest of Military and Naval Laws of the Confederate States, From the Commencement of the Provisional Congress to the End of the First Congress Under the Permanent Constitution (Columbia, SC: Evans and Cogswell, 1864), 111-12.

intelligence took more than a day to wind its way through the Army of the Potomac's 2nd Corps, Couch complained that the "stupid" delay was caused by the many officers throughout the Union army who believed their duties consisted of reading books, playing cards with politicians, "drinking whiskey, and grumbling."⁴⁰ Other officers and enlisted men shared these concerns and became irritated that too many officers spent time fooling around drunk, seemingly oblivious to their military duties. Complaining to his wife about the lack of discipline in the Army of the Potomac, Levi Bird Duff remarked that only half of the officers and enlisted men fit for duty actually showed up to drill. The problem, he thought, stemmed from the officers in the 105th Pennsylvania Volunteers, who disappeared on drunken sprees "for several days & when they are present they never look after the interest or the comfort of the men." Appalled by such scenes, Duff began to question General George B. McClellan's leadership. The idea that McClellan was occupied with too many other tasks to notice the drunkards in his army carried no weight with Duff. "They stare him in the face every day," he remarked to his wife, and "unless he is blindfolded he must see them."⁴¹

A man would have indeed have to have been blindfolded not to notice the antics of some drunken officers. While encamped at Forsyth, Missouri, Colonel William Weer of the 10th Kansas, for example, decided one night to defend the honor of his men (who had been charged with cowardice) with a speech at a dress parade. Unfortunately, Weer, whose penchant for the bottle was well-known, struggled, his speech morphing into nothing more than the "freaks of a drunken man" who "held on the pummil of his saddle as if there was danger of his falling off."⁴²

⁴⁰ The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (70 vols. in 128; Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. XXV, Pt. 2, 93.

⁴¹ Levi Bird Duff, To Petersburg with the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Letters of Levi Bird Duff, 105th Pennsylvania Volunteers, Edited by Jonathan E. Helmreich (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2009), 27-28.

⁴² Benjamin F. McIntyre, Federals on the Frontier: The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre, 1862-1864, Edited by Nannie M. Tilley (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1963), 136; See also, Jay Monaghan, Civil War on the Western Border, 1854-1865 (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1955), 252-60.

Confederates suffered similarly. When Texan Ludwig Lehmann and his comrades found their colonel, James B. Likens, “lying in a *Mudhole*” as they marched through South Carolina, they left him there – “dead drunk and out cold” – and expressed satisfaction when the good colonel finally strolled into Columbia and was arrested.⁴³

Enlisted men knew that officers too drunk to stay in their saddles could not competently wage war, and they expressed their frustration and powerlessness repeatedly. Illinois soldier Frederick Hess became so enraged with his officers, who cared more about “their Whiskey” than whether their men had “anything to eat or not,” that he hoped that “about a dozen of them would get a ball put through them.”⁴⁴ Confederate soldier Robert Patrick found that working under a tipsy officer in the 4th Louisiana Infantry’s Commissary and Quartermaster Departments was similarly unbearable. Major Woolfork sold off the soldiers’ supplies, leaving the rebels barefooted and blanketed, while keeping their officers well-stocked with rot-gut whiskey.⁴⁵ In Patrick’s eyes, the “*damned fool*” knew “nothing about business” and prevented him from completing his tasks properly. Even if Woolfork “had the capacity his unsteady habits would render him entirely unfit for business,” grumbled Patrick. He decided that describing Woolfolk as “unsteady” did not really capture the situation: “He is the most regular man in his habit that I ever saw. *He gets drunk every day regularly*. Nothing could be more systematic than his drunkenness.”⁴⁶ His habitual intoxication made him “the poorest apology for a quarter-master, or as I may say, for a man that I ever saw.”⁴⁷

⁴³ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., *Germans in the Civil War*, 458.

⁴⁴ Frederick Hess, *Letters to Tobitha: A Personal History of the Civil War*, Letters by Frederick Hess, Edited by David Primrose (New York: iUniverse, 2006), 222.

⁴⁵ Robert Patrick, *Reluctant Rebel: The Secret Diary of Robert Patrick, 1861-1865*, Edited by F. Jay Taylor (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 151-52.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 152, 159-160.

⁴⁷ Robert Patrick, *Reluctant Rebel*, 166; For other accounts of soldiers left hungry while under the command of drunken officers, see Robert A. Moore, *A Life for the Confederacy, as Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert*

With their criticism of their drunken superiors, these enlisted men presented clearly their definitions of what a proper officer – and a proper man – should be. It was a definition that middle-class temperance reformers would have recognized. For decades, temperance reformers had argued that drunken men were not merely a danger to themselves but also a threat to the people – namely women and children – who depended on them for shelter and food. In many ways, enlisted men were similarly dependent on their officers to keep them well-supplied and healthy so that they would be prepared to fight. When officers neglected these duties because of drunkenness, their men offered scathing condemnations of their manhood. Patrick knew that Major Woolfork’s perpetual intoxication made him a poor excuse for a man because it left the Confederate soldiers who depended on him hungry and nearly naked. Likewise, when a lieutenant colonel in the Union army was found to be “beastly” drunk and “unable to attend to his command” for three days, Colonel Nathan W. Daniels threatened to court martial him. In his view, a drunken man was no use as a commander; the soldiers would not “rely upon him in any event of emergency.”⁴⁸

Drunken officers undermined the war effort by depriving soldiers of supplies and neglecting their units’ security, but drunken officers caused an additional problem: their bad behavior was contagious and the young men serving in the ranks were impressionable. After intoxicated officers turned the Confederate army in Arkansas into a disorganized mob that ravaged the countryside, a disgusted Colonel Cyrus Franklin went so far as to inform President Jefferson Davis that he refused to subject his men to “any drunken officer.” As Franklin saw it, dangerous raids put troops into harm’s way because the whiskey drinking trickled down to affect

A. Moore, Co. G. 17th Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Guards, Holly Springs, Mississippi (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 68.

⁴⁸ Nathan W. Daniels, Thank God My Regiment an African One: The Civil War Diary of Colonel Nathan W. Daniels, Edited by C. P. Weaver (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 121.

the soldiers.⁴⁹ Jenkin Lloyd Jones noted that in the Union army, the officers who used whiskey “more freely than water” caused additional headaches by serving whiskey, rather than water, to their men.⁵⁰ To be certain, soldiers often appreciated when their commanding officers supplied some whiskey after a long march or a hard fought battle. And they could respond with “a thundering cheer” to thanks.⁵¹ The disorder that generally followed left soldiers such as Jenkin Jones wondering if the whiskey was indeed a perk.

If men enjoyed whiskey-supplying officers momentarily, they frequently became angry at the shenanigans of their drunken officers when it led to abuse and compromised the soldiers’ ability to be good fighters. While squads of the 77th Illinois Infantry were out trying to capture rebels and sheep one night while encamped near Falmouth, Virginia, in October 1862, William Wiley reported that the Captain Robert Erwin of Company I “got on a big drunk” and had his men “out in line at all hours of the night.”⁵² At Vicksburg in July 1863, Wiley reported that the men “marched hard all day” because the officers “rushed us through as if we were on a forced march.” With no enemy in the vicinity, Wiley and others wondered why they were “being run” back to camp like “greyhounds.” It turned out that a few of the “head officers had got too much Mississippi rum...to know what they were doing.” Wiley and the other men objected to grueling march by setting “up the most unearthly howling like a pack of hounds” any time General Thomas Kilby Smith came within earshot.⁵³ Other soldiers wrote of being constantly subjected to “double-quicks” and extra drilling for the pleasure of drunken officers.⁵⁴ Men believed these useless exercises wasted energy and manpower and hurt the war effort. Confederate soldier

⁴⁹ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. XXII, Pt. 2, 1058-60.

⁵⁰ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, *An Artilleryman’s Diary*, 79.

⁵¹ D. P. Conyngham, *The Irish brigade and its campaigns*, 110.

⁵² William Wiley, *The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier: William Wiley of the 77th Illinois Infantry*, Edited by Terrence J. Winschel (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 17.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 69-70.

⁵⁴ Robert A. Moore, *A Life for the Confederacy*, 67.

Robert Watson became so “heartily sick of it” that he supposed that if the needless drilling and abuse “continue much longer” he would “certainly desert and go to some other command.”⁵⁵ The matter-of-fact-ness with which Watson had made up his mind is telling. The Floridian had no intention of abandoning his duty to fight, but as he saw it, he and his fellow soldiers were being misused, wasted even, at a time -- January 1865 -- when Confederate manpower was limited. The officers’ behavior was so appalling that only by deserting to join another outfit could Watson escape abuse and fulfill his patriotic obligations.

Enlisted men watched and judged officers constantly, but proving one’s leadership skills in battle was the ultimate test of an officer’s manhood, and it was under fire that they earned or lost the respect of the men who served under them. Men overwhelmingly condemned habitual drunkards, but when it came to fighting, soldiers were divided in their opinions about whether or not liquor helped or hurt. Some soldiers thought that sobriety and bravery had little to do with each other. One Massachusetts soldier assured his mother that she need not “make a great fuss at home” over the issue of drunken officers. He reminded her that in times of peace, plenty of men spent “thier [sic] time in getting drunk and getting over it.” Officers were no different. A man who might spend his evenings in a stupor was just as likely to be “perfectly sober rushing up to the Cannons mouth amid a storm of lead and iron, and amid such sights and sounds as would alone kill the race of disabled men who have crept out of the draft on the strength of a corn on the toes or a scratch on the fingers.”⁵⁶ When it came to performing one’s patriotic duty, what mattered to many soldiers was that a man served willingly on the battlefield. What he kept in his canteens was immaterial, as long as he did not shirk. Some officers certainly decided that taking

⁵⁵ Robert Watson, *Southern Service on Land and Sea*, 152.

⁵⁶ Charles Harvey Brewster, *When This Cruel War is Over: The Civil War Letters of Charles Harvey Brewster*, Edited by David W. Blight (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 267.

a few swigs of whiskey was the only way they and their men could make it through the bloody ordeals. Fighting sickness, Colonel Mason Whiting Tyler “lived on whiskey” in order to withstand a day with his regiment on a skirmish line.⁵⁷ Tyler implied that the whiskey gave him the needed staying power to provide leadership to his men, who were counting on him, by fortifying him physically (as the army intended whiskey rations to do) and by taking his mind off the misery of illness. For better or worse, whiskey transformed men and sometimes helped them endure combat. After the capture of Union City, Tennessee, a war correspondent described rebel soldiers as “valiant haters of Yankees” – “frantic” and “whiskey-brave” soldiers whose performance in battle was “superhuman.” Whiskey had not compromised their performance, but instead had enhanced it.⁵⁸

Bottled bravery may have coaxed men into battle, but it also led to recklessness and disaster. When, in December 1861, the Army of the Potomac debated whether or not to storm the batteries at Manassas, Levi Bird Duff attempted to reckon with the army’s lack of discipline and productivity. Writing to his wife from Camp Pierpont in Fairfax County, Virginia, Duff complained that the administration had no “excuse for the lack of vigor that has been shown in weeding out incompetent officers.” The excuse that the army could not advance toward Manassas until the men were well-disciplined was folly, Duff believed. “If they would exhibit a little more energy in organizing the army I would be satisfied. I think that our generals in command are not doing their duty when they will permit a drunken incompetent officer to exercise authority for a single day.” The army was making no progress because the troops were

⁵⁷ Mason Whiting Tyler, Recollections of the Civil War: with Many Original Diary Entries and Letters Written from the Seat of War, and with Annotated References, Edited by William S. Tyler (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 270.

⁵⁸ “Document 104: Capture of Union City, TN, Correspondent, March 31, 1862,” The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc. Edited by Frank Moore, vol 4 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), Doc 346.

not disciplined, and the troops were not disciplined because there were “thousands” of officers more interested in drinking than leading troops. Without sober officers there would be no way “to compete in equal numbers with the rebels.” Duff concluded dramatically that more disasters and “humiliation will have to be endured” before the Army of the Potomac could reform its officers.⁵⁹ Efforts to avoid the disasters and humiliation that Duff feared led some commanding officers to keep themselves and their men as sober as possible when preparing for battle.

When drunken superior officers did cause disaster, sober junior officers who felt their services were being abused sometimes risked charges of insubordination to report such incidents and absolve themselves of wrong-doing. After the 2nd U. S. Colored Troops endured a “disgraceful rout” on October 27, 1864, at Boydton Plank Road near Petersburg, Virginia, the captains wished to place the blame for the defeat “where it properly belongs” – at the feet of Colonel Joseph B. Kiddoo. They thought it was “rather asking too much of thinking men to risk their lives, which are valuable, if not to themselves to the country in its present hour of need, to carry out the sublime views and plans of a whisky-crazed brain.” Colonel Kiddoo was wasting national resources with his reckless behavior and the other officers of the 22nd USCT implored the commander of the Army of the James to investigate the colonel to prevent “the recurrence of such a disgraceful affair.”⁶⁰

Blaming defeat on drunken officers seemed logical, but incidents in the 127th Pennsylvania proved that deciding whether to abstain or not was always complicated, regardless of the principles the man held in peacetime. Commanding the regiment were Colonel William W. Jennings and Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. Alleman, two men known for their exemplary character. Alleman abstained entirely from liquor and often required his men to do likewise.

⁵⁹ Levi Bird Duff, To Petersburg with the Army of the Potomac, 30-31.

⁶⁰ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLII, Pt. 3, 442.

During the Battle of Chancellorsville, however, Alleman needed a group of 300 volunteers to build a bridge across the Rappahannock near Fredericksburg. Knowing the conditions would be dangerous, Alleman, despite being a teetotaler, vowed to provide his volunteers with “as much whiskey as you can drink—or at least as much as is good for you!” His comrades considered this “sacrifice of moral principle” an act of mercy, as the men were volunteering for a job where they could not defend themselves. After Alleman broke open the barrels of whiskey, the men obeyed his orders to imbibe “with amusing alacrity.”⁶¹ This proved to be a one-time dispensation, and shortly after Chancellorsville, Alleman refused to distribute whiskey rations, violating an order that his men should be regularly supplied with liquor. Despite being threatened with the loss of his sword for disobeying orders, Alleman stood “firm as a rock.” He did not allow his men “to be poisoned with their abominable ‘whisky rations.’” Fellow teetotaler J. Chandler Gregg observed the incident and lauded Alleman and Colonel Jennings for their “uncompromising opposition to this curse of humanity.” Alleman and others concluded that officers who drank were “unfit to command our brave patriotic men” in battle, because intemperance repeatedly “wrought disaster, and caused blunders, and mistakes on many a bloody field.” Men too inebriated to “drive a decent mule team” had no business directing “an important campaign.” Sobriety was as essential in commanders as an understanding of military science.⁶² Alleman and his comrades’ moral stance seemed to take into account both circumstance and rank when determining whether or not a soldier could consume alcohol. Troops volunteering for most arduous and dangerous tasks

⁶¹ History of the 127th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers: Familiarly Known as the “Dauphin County Regiment,” Authorized by the Regimental Association and Prepared by its Committee (Lebanon, PA: Report Publishing Company, 1902), 167-69.

⁶² J. Chandler Gregg, Life in the Army in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, including Observations in New Orleans, with an Account of the Author’s Life and Experience in the Ministry (Philadelphia, PA: Perkinpine and Higgins, 1866), 94-96; the story is recounted in the regimental history, although presumably it is based off of Gregg’s memoir, which was published thirty years earlier, see History of the 127th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers, 181.

could use whiskey to steady their nerves. But under any other circumstances, liquor compromised men's ability to do their duty and rendered officers useless and detrimental to the cause.

A Martial Hero Must be Moral

Although Americans disagreed about whether officers should consume ardent spirits, both soldiers and civilians shared one belief: success on the battlefield required sober generals. Plenty of evidence linked drunken officers of all ranks to disasters in battle. In the context of war, the pervasive middle-class tendency to conflate professional success with manliness and moral character took on new meaning. So convinced were Americans that sobriety and victory went hand in hand that they used performance on the battlefield to determine if a man were a moral hero or failure. They assumed that victorious officers must be temperate. A general who was unsuccessful on the battlefield might have his reputation further tarnished by rumors that he was drunk. Defeat in battle made civilians testy, and while Confederates sometimes accused failing generals of drunkenness, it was northern temperance reformers who waged the most active press campaigns against generals they considered tipplers. Accusations of drunkenness led Congress and the Army of the Potomac to launch numerous inquiries into its commanders' behavior during battles. Even though soldiers and officers in large part held to the same standards of morality and masculinity as civilians, when it came to defending high-ranking officers against accusations from outside the army, their comrades generally testified to their sobriety and took pains to blame any poor performance on sickness (which some generals had treated with ardent spirits). By doing so, officers redefined manhood to accommodate weakness and failure in the midst of brutal circumstances.

For Confederates, questions about the character of some generals were flying by early 1862. They suspected General George B. Crittenden lacked the traits necessary to command effectively. Crittenden and his men were defeated at the Battle of Mill Springs in Kentucky. What the rebels could not determine, however, was whether he was drunk or disloyal. A correspondent with the Memphis Avalanche suggested that Crittenden had sold out his men to area Unionists, and the Tuscumbia Alabamian thought it possible that the General was “Another Arnold.” The Alabamians hoped, however, that “the deplorable catastrophe” – the battle was a decisive Union victory – “was caused not by treachery but by whisky, which he is said to drink to such excess that he has not drawn a sober breath for months.”⁶³ Although they stopped short of equating Crittenden’s drunkenness with disloyalty, Confederates made it clear that drunkenness led to defeat.

When it came to Confederate generals who fell short of moral perfection, Jubal Early was one of the most notorious. Early was a colorful character – he liked women, strong drink, and strong language. Rumors of heavy drinking dogged him throughout the war: some officers complained about his behavior; soldiers noted his fondness for apple brandy.⁶⁴ By 1864, Early’s habits had caught up with him, and after Confederates under his command were defeated at the third Battle of Winchester, politicians throughout the South began to call for an investigation into the general’s drinking habits. Hard evidence of his drunkenness proved difficult to find, but that did not stop Early from launching an impassioned defense of his character and his skills as a commander.⁶⁵ Early implored his friend, Colonel Alexander R. Boteler, to publish a letter in the

⁶³ From the Tuscumbia Alabamian, January 31, 1862, “Opinions of the Rebel Press: Another Arnold,” quoted in The Rebellion Record, Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 4 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), Doc 48-49.

⁶⁴ Charles C. Osborne, Jubal: The Life and Times of General Jubal A. Early, CSA, Defender of the Lost Cause (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books, 1992), 75; James Cooper Nisbet, Four Years on the Firing Line, Edited by Bell I. Wiley (Jackson, TN: McCowat Mercer Press, 1963), 117-119.

⁶⁵ Charles C. Osborne, Jubal, 349-398; specifically 354, 381, 383.

Richmond Enquirer refuting the charges that his being “very drunk at Winchester” had caused “disaster.” “God only knows,” emphasized Early, “how...faithfully I have labored for success in this campaign.”⁶⁶ The accusation may have shaken the usually hard-living Early. A month later, fellow Confederate General Clement Anselm Evans reported that Early “lately refused to receive a barrel of whiskey as a present!” and that the general had been seen accompanying “a lady to church.” Evans concluded that the changes in Early’s behavior would “humanize” him, and would also allow him to keep his command.⁶⁷ It was too little, too late. With rumors of Early’s drunken defeat swirling through the Virginia countryside, Lee had no choice but to relieve him of his command in March 1865.⁶⁸ The Early hullabaloo illustrates clearly the power of rumor to shape civilian perceptions of generals’ character, perceptions that could wreak havoc – justly or unjustly – with their careers.

In their quest to save the Union, northern temperance reformers kept their rumor mill working around the clock. Reports of drunken incompetence began to circulate shortly after the disastrous Federal performance at Bull Run in July 1861. Commanding general Irvin McDowell insisted the men were too inexperienced to fight, but Lincoln had ordered the advance. Northerners blamed McDowell for the catastrophe and accused him of drunkenness although he had “never tasted anything stronger than a water-melon in all his life,” according to British observer William Howard Russell.⁶⁹ In fact, some soldiers in German regiments even considered him “obnoxious” because he “objected to the barrels of lager and the cases of wines and liquors

⁶⁶ Jubal Early to Alexander R. Boteler, October 19, 1864, Jubal Early (Lt. Gen.) Box, Confederate Military Leaders Collection, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, VA.

⁶⁷ Clement Anselm Evans, Intrepid Warrior: Clement Anselm Evans, Confederate General from Georgia, Life, Letters, and Diaries of the War Years, Edited by Robert Frier Stephens, Jr. (Dayton, OH: Morningside, 1992), 518.

⁶⁸ Charles C. Osborne, Jubal, 390-392.

⁶⁹ William Howard Russell, My Diary North and South, 500.

which increased the wagon trains and delayed movements.”⁷⁰ Nevertheless, this veteran of the Mexican War, despite being a teetotaler, had been accused of drunkenness in the past, mostly due to his clumsy mannerisms and his knack for blushing when he was nervous.⁷¹ After the defeat at Bull Run, northerners needed to blame someone, and so they accused McDowell of drunkenness. There was no truth to the accusation, but northerners seemed unwilling to accept the notion that the rebels had won the battle because of superior military prowess. Instead, the Federals could only have defeated themselves by putting their army under the leadership of a man who they concluded must have been drunk.⁷²

McDowell’s unsuccessful attempt to slow Stonewall Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley in the spring of 1862, followed by his failure at Second Manassas later that summer, caused rumors to fly again. Soldiers blamed him for the losses, calling him a traitor.⁷³ But Colonel R. D. Goodwin revived the old drunkenness allegations. At a court of inquiry convened to investigate McDowell’s conduct, Goodwin vowed to testify that he had often seen the general walking down the street in “a zigzag manner” with “a loose, unsteady appearance; his eyes dull.”⁷⁴ McDowell and his acquaintances fought back, and another witness who had known McDowell since the 1840s came to his rescue, testifying that the general “abstained entirely from the use of any wine or spirituous liquors...even from tea and coffee.” The charge of drunkenness was “absurd.”⁷⁵ Ultimately, the court concluded that the charges were unfounded, and McDowell cleared his name. Yet the controversy revealed the power of suspicion and the assumption that a losing

⁷⁰ Herman Haupt, Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt Giving Hitherto Unpublished Official Orders, Personal Narratives of Important Military Operations, and Interviews with President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton, General-in-Chief Halleck, and with Generals McDowell, McClellan, Meade, Hancock, Burnside, and Others in Command of the Armies in the Field, and His Impressions of These Men (Milwaukee, WI: Wright and Joys Co., 1901), 303.

⁷¹ Edward G. Longacre, “Fortune’s Fool,” Civil War Times Illustrated 18 (May 1979): 22.

⁷² William Howard Russell, My Diary North and South, 500, 506-7.

⁷³ Edward G. Longacre, “Fortune’s Fool,” Civil War Times Illustrated, 22-31.

⁷⁴ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XV, 65-66.

⁷⁵ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XV, 94.

general was likely intoxicated. A man who did not measure up – who did not experience success – could be accused of drunkenness, without any hard evidence, and then the rumor could exist on its own and plague the officer throughout the war.

McDowell was unfairly accused of drunkenness, but anyone looking to blame his battlefield blunders on intoxication did not have to look far down the chain of command to find the culprit. At Bull Run, several persons witnessed deplorable behavior by one of his subordinates, Colonel Dixon S. Miles. After a battlefield altercation with a fellow division commander, Colonel Israel B. Richardson reported him drunk. According to the Baltimore American, twenty-eight people saw him drunk and twenty others thought he was sober on the day of the battle. Although witnesses disagreed about his state, an official court of inquiry decided not to proceed to court-martial after determining that he had been using brandy prescribed by a doctor.⁷⁶

By refusing to condemn the use of alcohol as medication, military officials set themselves at odds with the civilian population, which strongly preferred that commanding officers remain entirely sober. If an officer's spirits were used to treat illness or a wound, then the officer would not be punished. Iowa Senator James W. Grimes found this result perplexing: "It will be interesting to learn how drunk a man may be to justify another in applying that opprobrious epithet to him, and yet not drunk enough to warrant his trial and removal from command." The citizens sending their sons into the army deserved more than "officers who indulge in or wink at such habits." If Miles had been intoxicated enough to appear "drunk," he was too intoxicated to "command the respect and confidence of the country."⁷⁷ Despite the reservations of Grimes and

⁷⁶ The Rebellion Record, Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 11 (D. Van Nostrand, 1868), D 72.

⁷⁷ William Salter, The Life of James W. Grimes: Governor of Iowa, 1854-1858, a senator of the United States, 1859-1869 (New York: D. Appleton, 1876), 160-61.

others, Miles remained in his command and kept to his habits. In September 1862, during the Siege of Harpers Ferry, he was rumored to have been drunk again.⁷⁸

Whatever problems northerners thought they had with McDowell and Miles, they paled in comparison to those that accompanied General Joseph Hooker, whose drinking was well-known and much discussed. After taking command of the Army of the Potomac in December 1862, Hooker issued an order allowing whiskey rations to the soldiers, much to the consternation of chaplains and temperate officers.⁷⁹ More troubling than the whiskey rations were Hooker's own habits. When, in early 1863, rumors of his tipping had spread, Confederates had a field day. The Richmond press suspected that his surname originated from his ability to hook a bottle. So talented a drinker was he that "Temperance Society people once talked of employing him to destroy all the ardent within fifty miles around...Precious little liquor would have been left for any other drunkard after Joe had gotten a swig at the bottles." Others could only preach against the sin, Hooker "would have rendered that sin impossible." This, concluded the Dispatch, was the reason he had been given command of the Army of the Potomac. The Union soldiers, much demoralized by heavy drinking, would be restored to sobriety with Hooker in command. The general would drink "all the whiskey himself."⁸⁰

Northerners were understandably less amused, and after Chancellorsville, rumors spread that Hooker had been too drunk to command effectively. "Nearly all are very bitter on Hooker," wrote artillery officer Charles Wainwright on May 7, 1863, "and many accuse him openly of being drunk." Wainwright, for his part, did not think Hooker had shown any sign of intoxication during the battle, but that did not keep "every tongue in the army" from "wagging its fastest."⁸¹

⁷⁸ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XIX, Pt. 1, 761.

⁷⁹ J. Chandler Gregg, Life in the Army in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, 85.

⁸⁰ "Fighting Joe," Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 14, 1863.

⁸¹ Charles S. Wainwright, A Diary of Battle, 202.

Francis Adams Donaldson thought that, like so many commanders, promotion to general “overcame” Hooker and he “commenced that infernal tipping.” Donaldson swore that he witnessed the general, “during the heat of battle, guzzling (I can call it by no other name) wine instead of attending to his duties.” The Union defeat at Chancellorsville would “be placed among the other thousands of disasters wrought by rum.” More than that, Donaldson reasoned that Hooker was “of no further use to the cause” because the soldiers had lost confidence in his ability to lead them into battle without needlessly risking their lives.⁸² Military physician John Vance Lauderdale agreed. While working at New York’s Bellevue Hospital, Lauderdale heard the news that the army had “been whipped by the Rebels again!” Lauderdale dismissed Hooker as useless because no one could “blame a soldier for deserting a commander who was conducting an attack while his brain was stupefied with liquor.”⁸³ The gossip reached Gideon Welles, who spent weeks after the battle trying to determine whether or not Hooker was drunk during the fight. No one in the War Department could corroborate the stories, but Welles expressed much relief when Hooker was replaced by Meade in June 1863, as he had suspected that “liquor” was the cause “of the sudden paralysis which befell the army” at Chancellorsville.⁸⁴

Hooker’s removal did not squelch suspicion surrounding his character. Americans needed a place to lay blame for the defeat, and prolific temperance reformer Henry Ward Beecher cranked up the rumor mill at a meeting of the National Temperance League in England by accusing Hooker of drunkenness. His comments were subsequently picked up by the New York Independent, and Congress launched an inquiry into the matter. When pressed for more

⁸² Francis Adams Donaldson, Inside the Army of the Potomac, 226-27.

⁸³ John Vance Lauderdale, The Wounded River: The Civil War Letters of John Vance Lauderdale, M.D., Edited by Peter Josyph (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993), 158-59.

⁸⁴ Gideon Welles, Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson, Edited by Howard K. Beale, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), 1:348-49.

information, Beecher became cagey, refusing to reveal his sources, and leaving Congress to question the Union officers about Hooker's frame of mind during the battle. If Hooker had been intoxicated, his fellow generals either did not know it or were not willing to admit it. Daniel Sickles, Alfred Pleasonton, and Daniel Butterfield all testified to his sobriety, although Pleasonton noted that "his whole manner was that of a sick person." Butterfield went further, comparing the allegations that trailed Hooker to those that had plagued McDowell. The accusations had to be based in "malice; upon the general principle that when a man attains a high position people are always found to carp at him and endeavor to pull him down."⁸⁵ Whether the officers were closing ranks or being truthful is impossible to know, but independent accounts by George Meade and Carl Schurz both indicate that Hooker, despite his colorful past, had indeed sobered up before Chancellorsville. In April 1863, Meade assured his wife that he could "bear testimony of the utter falsehood of the charge of drunkenness." Hooker had been sober since Meade had known him.⁸⁶ Schurz thought, though, that Hooker's sobriety was recent, and even blamed that sick look that Pleasonton had noticed on the fact that Hooker's "brain failed to work because he had not given it the stimulus to which it had been habituated."⁸⁷

In the war's early years, when momentum seemed to swing in favor of the Confederacy, blaming commanding generals such as McDowell and Hooker seemed logical, but even after the tide turned in favor of the Union, civilians and soldiers continued to suspect alcohol was at the

⁸⁵ The record of Beecher's comments appear in the text of the congressional investigation published in the Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War, at the Second Session Thirty-Eighth Congress: Army of the Potomac, Battle of Petersburg (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1865), xli-lv, 15, 31, 84. Walter H. Herbert provides a similar account of the rumor surrounding Hooker in his biography, but he credits the Beecher rumor with influencing Welles, when, in fact, Welles's diary entry pre-dates the Beecher gossip by a week and indicates that rumors were already flying before Beecher made his comments. See, Fighting Joe Hooker (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1944), 225.

⁸⁶ George Meade, The Life and Letters of George Gordon Meade, Major General, United States Army (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 1:365.

⁸⁷ Carl Schurz, The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz, vol. 2, 1852-1868 (London: John Murray, 1909), 431.

root of many military mishaps. One of the most infamous failures attributed to drunkenness belonged to Brigadier General James H. Ledlie, who was at least partially responsible for the disaster at the Battle of the Crater near Petersburg. Although Ledlie had already blundered several times in the early years of the war – and had even contributed to Union set-backs on June 17, 1864, at Petersburg – he remained a division commander. Rumors of drunkenness followed him, but on July 30, 1864, Ledlie’s division was selected by General Ambrose Burnside to storm the crater after a Union mine exploded under Confederate lines. Instead of pushing through the lines, Ledlie’s men stalled in the crater, and the Union divisions that followed them piled atop each other while Confederates fired down into the pit of Yankee soldiers. While Ledlie’s men and other Union soldiers were being slaughtered, Ledlie himself was in the rear. He was sick, he claimed. Other soldiers reported that he was drunk.⁸⁸

That the disaster at the Crater not only resulted in slaughter but also prolonged the war frustrated Union officers during the conflict and has fascinated historians since. In the months following the incident, a court of inquiry convened to determine where to place the blame. The testimony provides insight into the Union army’s stance on drunken commanders. In the decades following the war, men who served under Ledlie and observed him would assert that he was in the rear using a bottle of rum to nurse his malaria and a wound during the battle.⁸⁹ But during the court of inquiry, when Ledlie’s aide, Major George M. Randall, was asked why Ledlie remained in the rear, he did not provide an answer, despite blaming the troops’ disorganization on Ledlie’s absence. In fact, it was only Surgeon H. E. Smith who mentioned that he gave Ledlie rum when

⁸⁸ Grady McWhiney and Jack Jay Jenkins, “The Union’s Worst General,” *Civil War Times Illustrated* 14 (June 1975): 30-39; Earl J. Hess, *Into the Crater: The Mine Attack at Petersburg* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2010).

⁸⁹ See Earl J. Hess, *Into the Crater*, 265 (fn 36), 270 (fn 7).

the general asked for “stimulants.”⁹⁰ Ledlie would ultimately be blamed for the disaster and sent home. In January 1865, he finally resigned his commission. But when it came to testifying against him, officers declined to cite drunkenness as the reason for his incompetence. His sickness is documented repeatedly, but his intoxication is only referenced in connection to his illness.⁹¹ Using rum as a medicine was acceptable under military policy, and as such, military officers were not as quick as civilians to specifically equate failure and drunkenness. Instead, military officials removed the inept officer from his post and let him resign quietly.

Perhaps no Union general’s drinking came under so much scrutiny as Ulysses S. Grant’s. Rumors of intoxication dogged his military career, beginning with a supposed bout of drunkenness while he was stationed on the Pacific Coast in the 1850s that was reported to have resulted in his resignation from the U. S. Army under threat of court-martial. Nearly ten years later, when Grant began to move up in the ranks, his suspected drinking would once again become fodder for gossip. Even before the battle of Shiloh, Stephen Minot Weld was distressed to hear that Grant had been promoted to major general. He had heard that the general was “a man of great energy and a laborious worker,” but he also knew from another (unnamed) general that Grant was “just as likely to be drunk in the gutter as to be sober.”⁹² Questions surrounding Grant’s drinking swirled throughout the war. Rumors were spurred, in part, by conflicts with Generals Henry Halleck and John McClelland. Grant also suffered from migraine headaches, and drank to control the pain. When he did drink, he could not hold his liquor well, but his wife Julia and close friend John Rawlins successfully encouraged him to avoid spirits.⁹³ Often during

⁹⁰ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XL, Pt. 1, “Testimony of Major Randall,” 115-16; “Testimony of Surgeon Smith,” 118-119.

⁹¹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XL, Pt. 1, 64, 75.

⁹² Stephen Minot Weld, War Diary and Letters of Stephen Minot Weld, 1861-1865 (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1912), 61.

⁹³ Charles A. Dana, Recollections of the Civil War: With the Leaders at Washington and in the Field in the Sixties (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1913), 72-73; Brooks D. Simpson, Ulysses S. Grant: Triumph over

the war, Julia stayed with him at his headquarters, where she not only nursed him through his headaches but also quieted the rumor mill. Under his wife's domestic influence, civilians believed, the general could not become intoxicated.⁹⁴

Of course, nothing could completely stop people from speculating about his habits. After businessman John Murray Forbes voiced his suspicions of Grant's drunkenness, New York Evening Post editor William Cullen Bryant insisted that Grant was "a temperate man," and that he had in his "drawer a batch of written testimonials to that effect." No one close to the general had seen him drink.⁹⁵ After being sent by Edwin Stanton to monitor Grant's progress with the Army of the Tennessee in 1863, Charles A. Dana concluded, despite the accusations of McClelland, that the general was sober – a claim he would maintain during and after the war.⁹⁶ Whether they were true or not, Dana's observations of Grant carried significant weight. After hearing from Dana in August 1863 "that Grant doesn't drink," diarist George Templeton Strong found himself increasingly convinced of Grant's sobriety. By the end of 1864, Strong and his fellow Sanitary Commission officers, who were stationed near Petersburg, were firmly convinced that Grant had a "singleness of purpose," an "entire devotion to his work," and a remarkable ability to work well with other officers.⁹⁷

Adversity, 1822-1865 (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000); Joan Waugh, U. S. Grant: American Hero, American Myth (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

⁹⁴ John Y. Simon, "A Marriage Tested by War: Ulysses and Julia Grant," in Intimate Strategies of the Civil War: Military Commanders and Their Wives, Edited by Carol K. Bleser and Lesley J. Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 127-29; Chapter 1 deals at length with domesticity and its effects on soldiers' sobriety.

⁹⁵ John Murray Forbes, Letters and Recollections of John Murray Forbes, Edited by Sarah Forbes Hughes (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1900), 1:336.

⁹⁶ Charles Dana's biography of Grant published in 1868 praises the general for his temperance and argues that he was not a drunk, despite sometimes appearing so due to illness and exhaustion. See, Charles A. Dana and James Harrison Wilson, The Life of Ulysses S. Grant, General of the Armies of the United States (Springfield, MA: Gurdon Bill and Company, 1868), 28, 401-405.

⁹⁷ George Templeton Strong, Diary, vol. 3, The Civil War: 1860-1865, Edited by Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas (New York: Macmillan, 1952), 352, 533.

Northern temperance reformers needed convincing as well; they were nervous about Grant. If a patriotic leader had to be sober to achieve victory and national salvation, a drunkard at the head of the army signaled disaster. Grant perplexed them. In 1862, they heard a report that he had authorized his staff to ship in 2,500 barrels of whiskey.⁹⁸ Later, they rejoiced when he forbade the consumption of whiskey on the military railway service.⁹⁹ Mostly, however, they concerned themselves not so much with his policies as with his behavior. When it came to figuring out his drinking habits, reformers relied on eye-witness accounts and battlefield evidence. According to staff member Major E. D. Osborn, whose assessment of Grant's character was printed in the Journal of the American Temperance Union a few months after the capture of Vicksburg, Grant looked "more like a chaplain than a general" when he sat with his wife and children. The general embodied middle-class virtues: he was "brave," "cool to excess," "always hopeful," and "more pure and spotless in his private character than almost any man" Osborn had ever known.¹⁰⁰ Another correspondent offered a similar assessment in August 1864: "Grant does not drink, does not swear, does not tell his plans, and does not have his picture taken!" He was a model patriot, sharing hardship with his men, avoiding vices, possessing many of the "qualifications necessary in a good General."¹⁰¹ If the assurances of those close to Grant did not convince northern teetotalers of Grant's temperance, his military record spoke for itself. Remembering Shiloh, a contributor to the Journal concluded that Grant had not been drunk during the battle "as alleged," because if he had been intoxicated, "he never would have gained a victory." He had also been "assured by one who was present with him all the time" that the general had not allowed "a drop

⁹⁸ "Army Officers in the Traffic," JATU 25 (December 1862): 183.

⁹⁹ "Grant's First General Order," JATU 27 (June 1864): 78.

¹⁰⁰ "Gen. Grant's Character," JATU 26 (October 1863): 156.

¹⁰¹ "Grant neither Drinks nor Swears," JATU 27 (August 1864): 124.

of liquor to pass his lips.”¹⁰² Those assurances were important, to be sure, and set reformers’ minds at ease, but his conclusions about Grant’s character are important. When civilians had doubts about a man’s drinking habits, they looked for proof of morality in victory. Unlike McDowell and Hooker, Grant passed the test by winning battle after battle. Therefore, he had to be sober.

Reformers may have convinced themselves that Grant shunned the bottle, but they had little assurances that other officers followed his example. As they had done with McClellan, reformers pointed out to Grant that he needed sober men to win the war. Citing a “distinguished” but unnamed U.S. Senator, temperance reformers concluded that the Federal army “should long ago have been in Richmond” had it not been “for intemperance in the army.” They acknowledged that “obstacles” had been put in place by an “overruling Providence,” but in the end, it was the “hindrances from human vice, madness, and folly” that had prolonged the war – a problem that “can only excite burning indignation.” Using the argument often made by factory owners in the new industrial age, reformers addressed Grant directly and pointed out that he was tasked with guiding the “vast machine” of the army – a machine more complicated than any of the industrial factories that moved “with perfect regularity,” a machine comprised entirely of “living, intelligent, conscious and voluntary agent[s].” Grant’s job, as commander, was to make the machine work to bring about victory.¹⁰³ In the end, he did.

Civilians Celebrate Sober Heroes

Although officers worked diligently to re-craft definitions of manhood that did not hinge predominantly on battlefield success, the Grant example illustrates that civilians never separated

¹⁰² “Massachusetts Men,” *JATU* 27 (September 1864): 132.

¹⁰³ “Address: To Lieut. Gen. Grant, U.S.A.,” *JATU* 27 (April 1864): 56.

victory from a general's character. Instead, both northerners and southerners sought out generals who vocally supported temperance principles, and civilians then created tales of moral heroism and battlefield victory around these men. So engrained was the notion that morality begot success that civilians needed to celebrate men whose character was never in question. Those men seemed few and far between.

Northern temperance reformers lamented the ruinous effects of whiskey on the war effort, and they praised generals who kept it out of the ranks. While complaining about General McClellan's hypocritical stance on alcohol – the general espoused temperance principles but allowed officers to keep liquor in their private stores – the Journal of the American Temperance Union claimed that drunkards were a worse problem than disloyalty: “treason can be punished with death, while drunkenness secures all the results of treason, and goes unpunished.”¹⁰⁴ Two months later, in December 1862, the editorial staff continued its lament. Drunkenness had worsened the “present national calamity” by creating a group of officers so incompetent that they presided over the “grossest blunders in the management, and the most disheartening and murderous defeats in battle.”¹⁰⁵ The rebels, it seemed, were not the only enemy; the Union army defeated itself with its drinking.¹⁰⁶ Northern temperance reformers celebrated when two men, Generals Neal Dow and Oliver Otis Howard, who had been soldiers in the battle against alcohol for decades, became commanders in the Union Army. Dow and Howard became moral heroes instantly, and temperance reformers overlooked their less than sterling performances on the battlefield.

¹⁰⁴ “General Order, Spirituous Liquors,” JATU 25 (October 1862): 152.

¹⁰⁵ “Ecclesiastical Action,” JATU 25 (December 1862): 179.

¹⁰⁶ C. N. Nichols, “A Solemn Fact,” JATU 25 (November 1862): 163; “A Dangerous and Disgraceful Exception,” JATU 26 (February 1863): 29.

When Neal Dow, the architect of the Maine Law of 1851, was appointed colonel of the 13th Maine in the fall of 1861, he seemed the perfect example of moral manhood. His men of “true temperance principles” would be prompt, efficient, and orderly.¹⁰⁷ Maine reformers even likened the regiment to one of Oliver Cromwell’s – the men had “united *faith and works*” in their noble struggle against “outraged tyranny.”¹⁰⁸ Under Dow’s leadership, these sober soldiers would find success. For his part, Dow became the eyes and ears of the Journal of the American Temperance Union, corresponding regularly with updates on the state of morality among the troops. He applauded their efforts and encouraged them as they worked diligently to rid the Union army of that “terrible enemy to the soldier,” which “kills far more of them than fall on the battlefield.”¹⁰⁹ Temperance reformers were not surprised when Dow was promoted to brigadier general. But when he was relegated to a command at Ship Island, they complained about the lack of opportunity the position offered him, and they concluded that “wine and brandy drinking officers” had colluded to “thrust him into the back ground” (away from major military action) because they hated “his temperance principles.”¹¹⁰ Even after Dow was captured and imprisoned in Richmond, reformers worried, for undoubtedly his imprisonment was “humiliating” and trying – Dow’s “strong anti-slavery principles exposed him to the deep hatred of the rebels; his temperance principles to the cold shoulder of many officers.”¹¹¹ Dow became an invaluable representative for the temperance cause, and he fought two enemies – the rebels and the northern drunkards. Any misfortunes he experienced came from those threatened by his unwavering temperance.

¹⁰⁷ “The Hon. Neal Dow,” JATU 24 (November 1861): 169.

¹⁰⁸ From Maine Journal, “Col. Neal Dow’s Regiment,” JATU 24 (December 1861): 182.

¹⁰⁹ “Letter from Col. Neal Dow,” JATU 25 (February 1862): 29.

¹¹⁰ “Army Items,” JATU 25 (July 1862): 99; “Gen. Neal Dow,” JATU 25 (November 1862): 161.

¹¹¹ “Gen. Neal Dow’s Return,” JATU 27 (April 1864): 57.

Another general from Maine rivaled Dow in popularity among teetotalers. Oliver Otis Howard, commander of the 3rd Maine who eventually took command of the Army of the Tennessee in 1864, hated two things: drunkenness and profanity. Those two vices were “the worst enemies” Union soldiers would encounter. Profanity would “set us as rebels against God, and drunkenness makes us worse than rebels at home.”¹¹² His intolerance for both made him a useful ally of chaplains and reformers in the field. Chaplain J. Chandler Gregg expressed horror when he discovered in spring of 1863 that the brigade commissary “was selling liquor to officers and men, by the canteen full.” Determined to halt this traffic, the chaplain sought help from General Howard, who promptly prohibited the commissary from selling any more of the rum which was “probably” full of “poisonous strychnine.”¹¹³

Howard was not only a friend to abstainers in the ranks, but he also won plaudits from abstainers on the home front. Such principled behavior led temperance reformers to overlook his military shortcomings. Early in the war, Howard gained some notoriety for fighting bravely, first at the Battle of Fair Oaks, where he was seriously wounded, and then at Fredericksburg. Howard earned the confidence of Union officials and replaced Franz Sigel as commander of the 11th Corps shortly before the Battle of Chancellorsville. After the disastrous Union performance, many northerners blamed the German-American soldiers, including division commander General Carl Schurz, for being routed during Stonewall Jackson's famous flank attack at Chancellorsville.¹¹⁴ But temperance reformers took little notice of Howard's involvement with the Chancellorsville disaster. They would criticize General Joseph Hooker, but their only

¹¹² “Gen. O. O. Howard's Address on Temperance,” *JATU* 26 (August 1863): 123.

¹¹³ J. Chandler Gregg, *Life in the Army in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf*, 88.

¹¹⁴ John A. Carpenter, *Sword and Olive Branch: Oliver Otis Howard* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 23-58; Christian B. Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

mention of Howard's role in the battle came near the end of the war when they noted that his name was "brilliantly associated" with Chancellorsville, as well as every other engagement with which he had been involved. Reformers were more enthralled with his "cosummate [sic] bravery and intrepidity upon a field of action," "established integrity," "Christian fortitude," and "natural imperturbation." The general had been stamped "as one of God's own men."¹¹⁵

Just like northerners, Confederates searched for God's own men to lead their armies and wrung their hands at the disasters wrought by drunkenness. After a visit to Atlanta in May 1864, nurse Kate Cumming worried that tipping officers endangered the struggling Confederacy. Rumors of "drunkenness and evil of all kinds" circulated, and Cumming believed that "if one half of the tales are true," the officers were "doing much harm to our cause." She had heard of one intoxicated officer, who had dragged a soldier behind a gun-carriage for twenty miles. Even more unacceptable, from Cumming's perspective this officer "was never sober enough at the time of any of the battles to lead his men." Such scoundrels were seldom brought to justice, and Cumming felt certain that their behavior brought about disastrous consequences.¹¹⁶ As Yankees marched through Virginia in October 1864, the Richmond Enquirer went on its own tirade against drunkenness among the Confederate cavalry. Despite containing "the very flower of the land, dashing, enthusiastic young men, full of ardor and esprit du corps," the cavalry was disorganized and undisciplined and a threat to Confederate security. "We have two enemies to contend with in the valley," reported the paper, "the Federal Army and John Barley Corn." And, for the moment, it seemed that the latter had gained the upper hand. The Shenandoah Valley was "running with apple brandy," and the responsibility for Confederate reverses lay with the "officers of high position" who had been "too drunk to command themselves, much less an

¹¹⁵ From the Times, "Gen. Oliver Otis Howard," JATU 27 (December 1864): 187-88.

¹¹⁶ Kate Cumming, Kate, 201-2.

army, a division, a brigade, or a regiment.” Furthermore, “when officers in high command are in the habit of drinking to *excess*, we may be sure their pernicious example will be followed by those in lower grades.” Most egregious were Confederate cavalymen, who had been “flitting hither and thither along the Potomac and Shenandoah,” terrorizing and robbing women who had already been widowed and demoralized by years of war.¹¹⁷

Confederates looked for moral heroes who would turn the tide of war in their favor, but in the war’s early months, they had to work diligently to transform shady characters into upright officers who fought valiantly for a moral cause. An interesting example of their re-crafting efforts was General John B. Floyd, former Secretary of War under James Buchanan who had been accused of fraud and treason against the United States during the 1850s. Although Floyd might not have fit the bill as a hero in the eyes of most Americans, shortly after the war began, the Richmond Dispatch published a piece lauding his “bravery and military sagacity.” He had “not ma[d]e a single mistake” in fighting at the Battle of Carnifex Ferry; as for his personal habits, Floyd “neither drinks, nor gambles, nor uses profane language.” He treated his soldiers and officers with respect and care, and he did not allow them “to injure any private or public property.” Virginians, the editors believed, should look on Floyd as a “protector” and a patriot who would be successful, in time, “in driving the enemy from their soil.”¹¹⁸ But John Floyd turned out to be a poor choice for a military hero. Less than a year later, in February 1862, Floyd turned tail and ran with several regiments when the Confederate surrender of Fort Donelson was imminent. Had Floyd surrendered, he risked being charged with and hanged for treason for his pre-war antics, so he and General Gideon Pillow left their comrade General Simon Bolivar Buckner to bear the responsibility of surrender while they escaped safely up the Cumberland

¹¹⁷ “Our Cavalry,” Richmond Enquirer, October 18, 1864.

¹¹⁸ “From the West,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, 30 September 1861.

River.¹¹⁹ The Richmond Dispatch continued to laud the bravery of the Confederate soldiers who defended their homes while condemning the savage Yankee murderers. Still, the day after the surrender, the paper reported a Washington news source that let Virginians know that when “the fact of Floyd having ran was announced [in the House of Representatives], it was greeted with applause and laughter.” Virginia’s hero had become a laughing stock.¹²⁰

Floyd fell short of the mark, but Confederates quickly replaced him with better models of military and moral manhood: Generals Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson and Robert E. Lee. To be sure, images of Jackson and Lee have been manipulated by hagiographers since the war’s end, and both generals’ moral characteristics have certainly been amplified by Lost Cause enthusiasts bent on presenting Confederate heroes as unfailingly upright. Nevertheless, both men’s aversion to alcohol has been well-noted by historians, and soldiers and civilians also praised the generals and took pains to follow their examples.¹²¹

Jackson’s fervent Presbyterian faith and strong penchant for cold water – both as a beverage and a curative – were well-known among Confederates. From the time he was a young man at West Point, Jackson had avoided liquor. Partly for health reasons, he followed a bland diet and drank mostly water. According to a few friends, though, Jackson reportedly liked the taste of whiskey but avoided it because he feared he would turn into a drunkard if he imbibed too

¹¹⁹ Earl J. Hess, The Civil War in the West: Victory and Defeat from the Appalachians to the Mississippi (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 37.

¹²⁰ “The Fall of Fort Donelson,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 19, 1862; “Latest from the North. surrender of Fort Donelson. Official reports. Great losses on both sides,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 20, 1862.

¹²¹ For examples of early biographies of Jackson that celebrate his character, see John Esten Cooke, The Life of Stonewall Jackson from Official Papers, Contemporary Narratives, and Personal Acquaintance (Richmond, VA: Ayres and Wade, 1863); John Warwick Daniel, Character of Stonewall Jackson (Lynchburg, VA: Schaffter and Bryant, Printers, 1868); for scholarship on the myth-building surrounding both generals, see Wallace Hettle, Inventing Stonewall Jackson: A Civil War Hero in History and Memory (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2011); Thomas L. Connelly, The Marble Man: Robert E. Lee and His Image in American Society (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1978).

regularly.¹²² Confederates were captivated by his dietary oddities, and rumors circulated. A friend's encounter with Jackson left Charles Minor Blackford, an officer in the Army of Northern Virginia, fascinated. Although the man had offered the general "every variety of strong drink," Jackson accepted only buttermilk. According to Blackford, "his refusing to take something stronger did not lower him in his [friend's] estimation." Instead it "emphasized his admiration."¹²³ Jackson's intolerance for alcohol went beyond his digestive system. He tried to keep ardent spirits out of reach of his troops, at times ordering that wagons be searched and barrels shattered and drained to keep young soldiers from drinking the contents.¹²⁴ After Confederates occupied Harpers Ferry in May 1862, Jackson had the liquor seized and dumped over the bluff into the river (while soldiers waited at the bottom to catch it in buckets).¹²⁵ News of Jackson's crusades against liquor spread throughout the Confederacy. Even before the incident at Harpers Ferry, the prominent Jones family of Georgia lauded Jackson because of his orders to close liquor shops in other towns. Writing to his father, Reverend Charles C. Jones, Lt. Charles Jones stressed that a man could "never trust any soldier who drinks habitually." Jones believed that Jackson's reforms would "rid our armies of the presences of this prime evil" and the "sickness, immorality, neglect of duty, and false courage" that accompanied it. Perhaps the mayor of Savannah, Georgia, would follow Jackson's example and institute similar reforms, the Joneses hoped.¹²⁶

¹²² James I. Robertson, Jr., Stonewall Jackson: The Man, The Soldier, The Legend (New York: Macmillan Publishing USA, 1997), 130, 299, 418.

¹²³ Susan Leigh Blackford, compiler, Letters from Lee's Army, or Memoirs of Life In and Out of the Army of Virginia during the War Between the States, Edited by Charles Minor Blackford III (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1947), 88-89.

¹²⁴ James I. Robertson, Stonewall Jackson, 328.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, 231.

¹²⁶ Robert Manson Myers, ed., The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 857.

Lee avoided the bottle as well. From the time he was a young man, Lee seems to have purposefully set out to avoid some of his father Light Horse Harry Lee's misfortunes. The elder Lee experienced multiple business and personal failures, at times abandoning his family, and his son Robert consciously chose to emulate his mother's evangelical habits rather than his father's reckless ones. But even though he chose a life of self-control, his conversion to teetotalism was more of a gradual evolution. In the decades before the war, Lee, though a non-drinker himself, continued to follow Virginian patterns of hospitality, serving wine and spirits to house guests. Over time, Lee had decided that providing alcohol merely facilitated bad habits, so he stopped.¹²⁷

Lee especially believed that spirituous liquors and military service were a volatile mix. Two years before the war began, Lee stressed the dangers of consuming alcohol to his son, Fitz Lee, who was preparing to depart for military service. The deprivations of army life would increase temptations to drink, at least in part because there would be nothing else to pass the time. He feared that soldiers thought of ardent spirits as "a substitute for every luxury." The elder Lee knew that strong drink would often be offered as a form of hospitality, but urged his son to avoid whiskey altogether because "its temperate use is so difficult."¹²⁸ In this regard, Lee was not unlike Jackson, and their belief that an occasional drink of whiskey would eventually lead a man down the slippery slope to drunken ruin puts them firmly in the camp of other temperance reformers. Many Confederate soldiers listened to Lee and used him for inspiration in their own attempts at self-restraint. On the inside cover of his diary, Confederate soldier John Baxter Moseley fastened a newspaper clipping featuring a quotation from Robert E. Lee: 'Whisky—I

¹²⁷ Elizabeth Brown Pryor, Reading the Man: A Portrait of Robert E. Lee Through His Private Letters (New York: Viking Penguin, 2007), 1-38; Emory M. Thomas, Robert E. Lee: A Biography (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1995), 30-55, 78.

¹²⁸ Robert E. Lee to William Henry Fitzhugh Lee, 30 May 1858, Section 26, George Bolling Lee Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

like it, I always did—and that is the reason I never use it.” Moseley, committed to remaining sober throughout the conflict, seemingly kept the quotation to remind him daily to follow the example of Lee – the great Confederate leader.¹²⁹ Moderation was difficult, many soldiers and civilians agreed. And in the ranks, a soldier could best do his duty if he avoided whiskey altogether. Having high ranking officials to emulate made the goal of abstinence easier to achieve, and an army of teetotaling soldiers led into battle by a sober general would certainly bring victory.

Conclusion

The officers’ behavior and performance along with the attitudes and rumors surrounding their choices about whether to drink or not reveal that during the Civil War definitions of middle-class manliness were in a state of flux. At the same time, both northerners and southerners were reframing how morality – and specifically sobriety – fit within their definitions of national loyalty. On one level, soldiers’ and civilians’ debates about whether or not officers should imbibe illuminates tensions surrounding manliness and social position that had existed before the war and would continue to be redefined in the late nineteenth century. The access to strong drink that accompanied an officer’s rank always competed with the need of a commander to practice self-discipline in order to effectively keep his troops organized and prepared for battle.

Teetotalers in the military and on the home front seemed to reach similar conclusions about the importance of sobriety for military discipline, but in practice officers began to carve out space within their definitions of manliness for sickness and, in certain cases, a lack of self-control. If manliness in civilian society necessitated absolute restraint and self-denial in all

¹²⁹ John Baxter Moseley Diary, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

aspects of a man's life, military officials and high-ranking officers repeatedly hinted that warfare required some flexibility. Even when they did not condone drinking, soldiers and officers observed (often empathetically) that the stress of battle caused men to drink. When northern officers were forced to confront rumors of drunkenness among generals such as Joseph Hooker and James Ledlie, they reasoned that the men were sick and maimed and that their use of alcohol was a consequence of ill health brought on by war. That they hesitated to link drunkenness to failure in specific cases indicates that officers saw themselves as a class of men separate from civilian society. As James Marten has shown in his study of veterans, this trend would continue into the late nineteenth century, when veterans, who were increasingly regarded by civilians as disabled, emasculated men who were not pulling their economic weight, crafted alternative definitions of acceptable masculine behavior that accommodated veterans' need to drink alcohol to dampen the pain of wounds, both physical and psychological, that lingered long after the war ended.¹³⁰

But civilians' perceptions of drunkenness show that even during the war, there was little room in temperance opinion for men's trauma when it came to evaluating behavior that had ramifications for national salvation. Whether officers were charged with bringing about Confederate independence or saving the Union, civilians made it clear the sobriety and victory were inseparable, in their eyes. So convinced were they that officers' duty to their nation required sobriety that they repeatedly equated total abstinence with loyalty and men who drank became not just examples of failed manliness but also traitors. Throughout the war, civilians would apply this formula – equating sobriety with loyalty and drunkenness with treason – broadly, not only to soldiers and officers but also to citizens who drank, or even worse,

¹³⁰ James Marten, Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

participated in the manufacturing, selling, or trafficking of liquor. This conflation of loyalty and temperance would carry the prohibition movement through the war and beyond, helping reformers redefine citizenship as a moral, not just a political, responsibility.¹³¹

¹³¹ Gaines M. Foster, Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

Chapter 3
“Whiskey Makes Trouble, Therefore Supply It”:
Supplying Spirits in the Union and Confederate Armies

Nestled in Virginia’s Hawks-bill Valley on the road leading over the Blue Ridge was Kite’s still-house and apple orchard. During the Valley Campaign in the summer of 1862, Stonewall Jackson’s men had discovered the apple brandy, and in November, as the soldiers marched toward Fredericksburg, the men decided to pay Kite another visit. At a brief rest stop, company commander James Cooper Nisbet of the 21st Georgia Regiment asked Captain A. S. Hamilton if he could send a detail to fill the canteens “for all that wanted” the refreshing apple brandy. After receiving permission from Hamilton, Nisbet and others set off for the orchard, only to be stopped at the entry to the still-house by a cavalry guard who informed them that General Jubal Early (commanding Ewell’s division) had prohibited Kite from selling liquor to the soldiers. After learning of Early’s order, Captain Hamilton took matters into his own hands inquiring whether or not the general had procured any of the spirits for himself. Not surprisingly, he discovered that Early had filled his canteen along with a keg he was hauling behind his ambulance. Hamilton wasted no time disregarding Early’s orders. His men purchased the apple brandy and spent the rest of the afternoon enjoying themselves. The men happily sang “very *risqué* couplets” within earshot of Stonewall Jackson as they headed toward Madison Court House, and at some point along the way, some of Nisbet’s men asked if they could visit some women they had met the previous summer. The men were accused of straggling by Brigadier General William Kirkland, who ordered them back to the road. Still under the effects of apple brandy, one lieutenant challenged Kirkland to a duel. Luckily, Kirkland “enjoyed a hearty laugh”

over the incident and nothing more came of it as the soldiers continued their march to Fredericksburg.¹

Though Nisbet recalled the incident quite humorously, the story illustrates the inconsistent alcohol policies on both sides. Union and Confederate officials sought to curtail drunkenness in the ranks by controlling access to liquor, but both sides made spirit rations available to mitigate the effects of exposure and fatigue. The distribution of these rations was left to the discretion of commanding officers, and ever-evolving policies and fluctuating supplies created a good deal of confusion. Per military regulations, officers had greater access to liquor than enlisted men, but sutlers and civilians eager to generate a bit of extra income made certain that alcohol was often within the reach of both officers and soldiers. The availability of alcohol coupled with poor judgment from officers in charge of its distribution contributed to a lack of discipline. Civilians – especially northern reformers – questioned whether suppliers of liquor endangered the war effort.

The American Temperance Union summed up the armies' policy this way: "Whiskey makes trouble, therefore supply it."² In many ways, reformers' description was quite apt; the problem of controlling the liquor supply seemed to befuddle military commanders. As scholars such as Steven Ramold and Mark A. Vargas have pointed out, whiskey rations had a complicated place in the United States Army. Although drinking culture had always been prevalent, and daily whiskey rations had initially been provided – in line with British military tradition – by the 1820s, the army began taking steps to eliminate the daily ration. The temperance movement that was sweeping the nation clearly had some effect, and by 1832, the daily spirit ration had been

¹ James Cooper Nisbet, Four Years on the Firing Line, Edited by Bell I. Wiley (Jackson, TN: McCowat Mercer Press, 1963), 117-119.

² "Return to the Spirit Ration," Journal of the American Temperance Union and New York Prohibitionist 24 (November 1861): 169.

eliminated, and whiskey was only used in hospitals and on fatigue duty.³ When the war began, both the Union and the Confederacy rooted their policies on alcohol use in this quasi-temperate tradition, but limiting rations and overseeing camp sutlers did not end drunkenness in the ranks. The trouble whiskey brought with it led not only to a breakdown in discipline, but also caused soldiers and civilians alike to debate whether sellers of liquor – be they camp sutlers or country distillers – rendered a patriotic service or hindered the war effort. Temperance reformers in the North would go even further. The flawed attempts at military regulation, in their minds, pointed toward the need for prohibitory measures in the spirit of the Maine Laws of the 1850s.

Supplying the Spirit Ration

When it came to supplying alcohol, both Union and Confederate military officials believed that spirit rations mitigated exposure and extreme fatigue. They made provisions for men to receive daily rations of alcohol when conditions warranted, and they left that determination in the hands of commanding officers. Because of this, rations fluctuated from regiment to regiment because commanders varied in their opinions about what constituted exposure and fatigue. Some soldiers received whiskey only when performing the most arduous tasks. Others received rations before marches, during rainy weather, and even before or during battles. Commanders relied on their own judgment, and their decisions led to haphazard control of alcohol and, at times, disorder and military blunders.

In 1861, Union and Confederate armies developed policies for distributing spirit rations that, on paper, seemed quite clear. Union military regulations of 1861 provided that all soldiers

³ Steven J. Ramold, *Baring the Iron Hand: Discipline in the Union Army* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 126; Mark A. Vargas, “The Progressive Agent of Mischief: The Whiskey Ration and Temperance in the United States Army,” *Historian* 67 (Summer 2005): 199-216.

received a daily ration of one gill of whiskey (about four fluid ounces or half a cup) in cases “of excessive fatigue and exposure.”⁴ In reality, these whiskey rations came intermittently, and they ranged from a tablespoonful to half a gill (2 ounces) in most cases (although the rations were doubled in extreme circumstances).⁵ Confederate military officials adopted similar policies. In May 1861, the Subsistence Department stated that commanding officers would have the authority to distribute whiskey rations in cases of “excessive fatigue and exposure” as long as the amount did not exceed one gill per man. The War Department reissued these guidelines the following year.⁶

What complicated matters was that the distribution of spirit rations was left to the discretion of commanding officers. Some high-ranking generals adopted their own regulations. Other men preferred to pass the authority down the chain of command. At times, regimental and company commanders found that the entire matter had been left to them. This meant that the availability of whiskey depended largely on location and the commanding officer’s drinking habits. In the summer of 1862, Union Generals George McClellan, Benjamin Butler, and Henry Halleck issued orders abolishing liquor rations in their respective departments.⁷ As the war went on, however, such sweeping decrees proved impractical. During the Appomattox Campaign,

⁴ United States War Department, Revised Regulations for the Army of the United States, 1861 (Philadelphia, PA: J. G. L. Brown, Printer, 1861), 244. For comparison, a single shot in the United States is approximately 1.5 fluid ounces. If these men received a full ration of whiskey, they received more than a modern double-shot of alcohol.

⁵ John D. Billings, Hardtack and Coffee: The Unwritten Story of Army Life (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 139-41; The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (70 vols. in 128; Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. XLII, Pt. 2, 70; Alfred Bellard, Gone for a Soldier: The Civil War Memoirs of Private Alfred Bellard, Edited by David Herbert Donald, (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1975), 77; Steven J. Ramold, Baring the Iron Hand, 150-152.

⁶ Regulations for the Subsistence Department of the Confederate States of America (Richmond, VA: n. p., 1861), 45; Regulations for the Subsistence Department of the Confederate States (Richmond, VA: Ritches and Dunnivant, 1862), 13.

⁷ McClellan issued General Order No. 136 on June 19, 1862; Butler issued General Order No. 7 on March 28, 1862; Halleck issued General Orders No. 4, September 25, 1862. The Journal of the American Temperance Union reported when officers passed these orders. See “Spirit Ration Discontinued,” JATU 25 (July 1862): 112; “Gen. Butler’s Order,” JATU 25 (August 1862): 116; “Gen. Halleck’s Army,” JATU 25 (August 1862): 116.

Major General Andrew Humphreys stipulated that whiskey rations would only be distributed among the soldiers of the 2nd Army Corps “where the commanders desire it.”⁸ His decision to leave the question with lower ranking officers seems to have been the general practice. After stopping in Stevenson, Alabama, en route to Chattanooga, the soldiers of the 2nd Minnesota Regiment were told by General William G. Le Duc that they could have a barrel of whiskey from his stores if they obtained permission from their commanding officer, Colonel George. The men wasted no time getting the colonel to agree – his only stipulation being that the men could not become intoxicated – and the Minnesotans “at once had the head knocked out of the barrel.” The men generally held up their end of the agreement by not becoming drunk, and after a brief respite, they continued on their way to Chattanooga.⁹

Once generals delegated the authority to regimental and company commanders, the murkiness of military regulations became more evident as the officers tried to determine what constituted “exposure” and “excessive fatigue.” Limiting the effects of bad weather seemed a straight-forward interpretation of exposure. In September 1861, the Lynchburg Republican reported that a soldier who had been “drenched with rain and chilled with cold, without fire to warm or dry him, is almost obliged to be sick unless he has some stimulant to stir his blood and make it bound freshly through his veins.” Providing troops with “a gill of liquor per day” would be “a better preventive and cure of disease than all the apothecary shops and doctors in Christendom.”¹⁰ Confederate officers agreed with this sentiment. In June 1862, General Robert E. Lee authorized division commanders to issue spirit rations any time their men camped near

⁸ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. 3, 646.

⁹ William Bircher, A Drummer-Boy’s Diary: Comprising Four Years of Service with the Second Regiment Minnesota Veteran Volunteers, 1861 to 1865 (St. Paul, MN: St. Paul Book and Stationery Co., 1889), 111-112.

¹⁰ Lynchburg Republican, n.d. in Richmond Daily Dispatch, September 27, 1861.

swamps or ran into bad weather.¹¹ Confederate officers in South Carolina provided double rations to soldiers working in mud or water.¹²

Union officers likewise issued rations to combat wet weather, but some soldiers' accounts indicate that the distribution of whiskey occurred under a whole range of circumstances. Union Colonel Alfred Hartwell of the 55th Massachusetts (USCT) ordered the distribution of two ounces of whiskey to each of his men after they had marched through a marsh and become covered in mud up to their waists.¹³ Augustus Cleveland Brown of the 4th New York believed the whiskey rations he and his comrades received as they camped near Stevensburg, Virginia, in April 1864 had "beneficial results." The weather had been so nasty and "the term 'mud' scarcely conveys an idea of the condition of the soil."¹⁴ But some officers may have played a bit fast and loose with the rules. Connecticut soldier Phillip Koempel noted in his diary that the weather on May 16, 1864, was "fine." It was so fine, in fact, that he "Went swimming in the James River" before drawing his whiskey ration.¹⁵

Union and Confederate armies sometimes used liquor as a substitute for other provisions. As early as August 1861, northerners became concerned that the soldiers' diet was inadequate. Reporting on the health of the army, the New York Times noted that as the men moved farther away from Washington, the vegetables needed to prevent dysentery became scarcer. While pondering solutions to the problem, the newspaper also reported "a noteworthy fact" – "that the regiments which had been allowed to supply themselves with lager-beer or a malt-liquor, have suffered less from the want of vegetables and fresh meat, and have had fewer cases of diarrhea."

¹¹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XI, Pt. 3, 577.

¹² OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXVIII, Pt. 2, 534.

¹³ Burt G. Wilder, Practicing Medicine in a Black Regiment: The Civil War Diary of Burt G. Wilder, 55th Massachusetts, Edited by Richard M. Reid (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 142-43.

¹⁴ Augustus Cleveland Brown, The Diary of a Line Officer (privately published, 1906), 16.

¹⁵ Phillip Koempel, Phil Koempel's Diary, 1861-1865 (privately published, 1923), 7.

If the goal was to make “each man the best possible instrument for fighting,” then providing spirits was one way to achieve it.¹⁶ While northerners entertained the notion of using fermented beverages to fight dysentery, Confederate commissaries often substituted whiskey for coffee. Chronic coffee shortages plagued the southern armies and left Confederate soldiers without warm beverages in cold weather. In addition to not having winter clothing, John Henry Cowin of the 5th Alabama Regiment reported bleakly that the soldiers had “to draw regular *bust head* whiskey now instead of coffee,” an unfortunate occurrence that could turn a man into “a fool.”¹⁷

Using liquor to warm chilled soldiers was logical, but commanding officers also had to judge for themselves what constituted “extreme fatigue.” Officers took it upon themselves to distribute rations for men who were serving picket duty, marching, or doing any other task that might be considered abnormally strenuous. Providing rations for men digging trenches and mending roads was common. For example, in May 1862 during an advance by the Army of the Tennessee, John Quincy Adams Campbell and the 5th Iowa Infantry received whiskey rations after repairing a road crossing the Tennessee-Mississippi border. The temperate Campbell, however, dumped his whiskey ration on the road, greatly exasperating nearby comrades.¹⁸ In May 1864, Union soldiers stationed near Huntsville, Alabama, worked one day in “a heavy rain” tearing down a machine shop and loading the bits and pieces into a train so that they could be made into gun platforms. Jenkin Lloyd Jones of Wisconsin and his fifty comrades completed their tasks and “marched up in line to McBride’s headquarters, where whiskey rations were freely issued to all that wanted.” The men drank greedily, and the whiskey, along with news of

¹⁶ “The Health of the Army,” New York Times, August 1, 1861.

¹⁷ G. Ward Hubbs, ed., Voices from Company D: Diaries by the Greensboro Guards, Fifth Alabama Regiment, Army of Northern Virginia (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2003), 61; see also, John Bratton, Letters of John Bratton to his Wife, Edited by Elizabeth Porcher Bratton (privately published, 1942), 41.

¹⁸ John Quincy Adams Campbell, The Union Must Stand: The Civil War Diary of John Quincy Adams Campbell, Fifth Iowa Volunteer Infantry (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 40-41.

Grant's success in Virginia, "brought forth thundering acclamations" and an unruly march through town as the drunken men stumbled home for dinner. The work and the rain could have been unpleasant, but Jones noted that the "noise and fun" turned the "disagreeable" circumstances into "humorous" ones.¹⁹ Confederate soldiers digging trenches in Blandford near Petersburg, Virginia, received a similar indulgence. Knowing that his men worked "night and day without cessation" and "constantly exposed to the weather and the dampness arising from the ground incident to mining operations," Captain Hugh T. Douglas requested that his engineering troops receive whiskey rations.²⁰

Especially arduous tasks required whiskey and, sometimes, bonus pay. Union soldiers charged with burying the dead at Antietam drank copious amounts of whiskey to enable them to dump Confederate bodies into mass graves.²¹ At Petersburg in August 1864, especially exhausting earthworks construction necessitated whiskey rations and bonus pay. The Union Army's 10th Corps, situated near the city, gave division commanders the authority to issue half a gill of whiskey to their men who performed fatigue duty. Whiskey was only part of the men's compensation; they also earned over-time pay. Temperance men like John Q. A. Campbell might have found this policy more pleasing – any man who did not want his whiskey would trade it in for in additional wages. Commanding General Benjamin Butler believed that whiskey and additional wages would convince more soldiers to volunteer for the otherwise unappealing tasks.²²

¹⁹ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, An Artilleryman's Diary (Wisconsin History Commission, 1914), 208.

²⁰ QR, Ser. I, Vol. XL, Pt. 3, 784-85.

²¹ Steven R. Stotemyer, The Bivouacs of the Dead: The Story of Those Who Died at Antietam and South Antietam (Baltimore, MD: Toomey Press, 1992), 5. For scholarship on burying the dead, see John R. Neff, Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005), 16-65.

²² QR, Ser. I, Vol. XLII, Pt. 2, 70, 552-53.

Soldiers in the Union army seemed to generally understand that whiskey should be a reward not only for trench digging, but also for the often unpleasant task of picket or sentry duty. In March 1862, Charles S. Tripler, who was serving as the Medical Director for the Army of the Potomac, noted that the “severity” of exposure that men experienced while serving picket duty could be mitigated by giving the men “a whisky ration twice a day” (along with a pair of long boots).²³ Describing the general misery, David Day recalled how a picket stood “concealed behind a tree in the drenching rain, solitary and alone, absorbed only in his own reflections and looking out for the lurking foe” on stormy nights. Most men were “very anxious” about going out, but the men on detail managed to comfort “themselves with the thought that they can have all the whiskey they want when they get back the next morning.”²⁴ Like Day, Charles Francis Adams, Jr., longed for the “home comfort ones attaches to the bivouac” after a night of duty. As he “walked sulkily along,” soaking wet, Adams attempted to console himself by thinking “of one crumb of comfort.” Luckily, he returned to Hooker’s headquarters to find the officers a bit “lively,” and “smoking the best of tobacco, drinking hot whiskey punch and eating plum-cake fresh from Washington.”²⁵ Officers received better whiskey rations and knew of their importance in rejuvenating exhausted men. After being pushed out of Hagerstown, Maryland, by rebels, First Lieutenant Hancock T. McLean, of the 6th U. S. Cavalry, requested whiskey. He was “trying to do as much as [he] could with [his] little command” as they guarded and patrolled the area roads. The men and their horses were “completely fagged out.”²⁶

²³ OR, Ser. I, Vol. V, 110.

²⁴ David L. Day, My Diary of Rambles with the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Milton, MA: King and Billings Printers, 1884), 60.

²⁵ Worthington Chauncey Ford, Charles Francis Adams, and Henry Adams, A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865 (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1920), 1:204-5.

²⁶ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXVII, Pt. 1, 339.

So common was the assumption that liquor ought to accompany sentry duty, that men found ways to procure their own spirits. Some soldiers dealt with the effects of the weather by becoming intoxicated before their shifts ever began, exasperating those who spent extra time in the cold before being relieved.²⁷ But in the Union army, there seemed to be an understanding that pickets could demand a tribute of liquor from those wishing to pass into the camps. As Alfred Bellard recalled, a soldier presented him with “a suspicious looking bottle” in place of the countersign. After “taking a refreshing pul [sic] at the contents,” Bellard let the men pass; the “countersign” had been correct.²⁸ This seems to have been common. Even Benjamin Butler, who was notorious for limiting his soldiers’ access to alcohol, understood that it took a liquor to get past the guard. When trying to cross a bridge near Hampton Village, Virginia, Henry Warren Howe was turned back by the sentry for not having a pass. “Why didn’t you shake a whiskey bottle at him?” asked a frustrated General Butler, whose orders had not been delivered.²⁹

Providing rations for men digging in the mud or serving picket duty in the cold made sense given instructions to limit the effects of the weather and exhaustion, but officers had to use greater judgment during or after marches. Marching certainly tired soldiers, and many times they marched through rain and mud. But marching also required discipline and order, as men who straggled created headaches for commanding officers. There was no perfect solution for balancing the need for relief with the need to keep order. In July 1862, Surgeon Jonathan Letterman stipulated that before undertaking a march, all soldiers in the Army of the Potomac ought to have “a cup of coffee,” and “after their arrival in camp each man be given a gill of

²⁷ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, *An Artilleryman’s Diary*, 90.

²⁸ Alfred Bellard, *Gone for a Soldier*, 28- 29.

²⁹ Henry Warren Howe, *Passages from the Life of Henry Warren Howe, Consisting of Diary and Letters Written During the Civil War, 1816-1865. A Condensed History of the Thirtieth Massachusetts Regiment and Its Flags, Together with the Genealogies of the Different Branches of the Family* (Lowell, MA: Courier-Citizen Co. Printers, 1899), 26.

whisky in a canteen three-fourths filled with water.”³⁰ Letterman reiterated his policy in March 1863.³¹ Some officers developed different policies, at times miscalculating even though everyone agreed that whiskey took the edge off a march. Henry Warren Howe of the Thirtieth Massachusetts noted that “rations of whiskey were served” to him and his fellow soldiers after they had spent the day on a “tramp” along a two-mile stretch of river Mississippi bayou populated by alligators, snakes, and secessionists. They returned from their day of foraging “very tired.”³² A 152-mile march to Corinth, Mississippi, ended with the drawing of whiskey rations for Colonel Oscar Lawrence Jackson and the men of the 63rd Regiment Ohio Volunteers.³³ Long marches could leave men “tired, hungry, ragged, covered with mud, and sore,” as David Day, of the 25th Massachusetts, explained. It took “a good ration of whiskey,” along with bacon and hot coffee, for Day and his comrades “to limber up and feel a little more natural” on the morning after a march.³⁴

The problem with supplying rations during a march was, of course, obvious. Perhaps the most infamous instance of whiskey-related trouble occurred during Burnside’s Mud March after the battle of Fredericksburg. Charged with the task of getting demoralized troops to move during horrible weather, officers in the Army of the Potomac turned to whiskey. The unhappy men drank willingly, but officers lost control as drunken fights broke out.³⁵ Later in 1863, Confederates had similar troubles (albeit on a smaller scale) while on their way to Pennsylvania.

³⁰ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XIV, 350.

³¹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XI, Pt. 1, 213.

³² Henry Warren Howe, Passages from the Life of Henry Warren Howe, 42.

³³ Oscar Lawrence Jackson, The Colonel’s Diary: Journals Kept Before and During the Civil War by the Late Colonel Oscar L. Jackson, Sometime Commander of the 63rd regiment O.V.I., Edited by David P. Jackson (privately published, 1922), 93.

³⁴ David L. Day, My Diary of Rambles with the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 37; see also, Alfred Bellard, Gone for a Soldier, 77.

³⁵ Rable, Fredericksburg! Fredericksburg! (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 410-419; Scott C. Martin, “A Soldier Intoxicated is Far Worse Than No Soldier at All”: Intoxication and the American Civil War,” Social History of Alcohol and Drugs 25 (Fall 2011): 66-87.

Texan John Camden West explained the problems in a letter to his brother. After crossing the Potomac River in Maryland on a rainy, muddy day, Confederate soldiers were told they would have time to eat dinner. As the men prepared their fires, they received hearty rations of whiskey to combat the nasty weather. The “stiff drink” was enough that “about one-third got pretty tight.” Unfortunately, orders came to march again, and the tipsy soldiers “dragged” themselves toward Pennsylvania – “many slipped down and literally rolled over in the mud for it rained all the time.”³⁶

For the sober-minded, such incidents proved quite infuriating. When marching from Bristoe to Manassas, General Dan Sickles’s Excelsior brigade became “so drunk that nothing could be done with them.” They were sent back to camp, oblivious to the other brigades’ taunts of “Johnny stole a Ham, and Sickles killed a Man.” Such hijinks even raised doubts about the drunkards’ patriotism; some thought such men more immoral than rebel soldiers.³⁷ Straggling especially caused headaches for commanding officers.³⁸ During the Shenandoah Valley Campaign of 1864, officers of the Army of Northern Virginia found stragglers “who had been after whisky.” The men had been successful in their hunt, but General John B. Gordon poured out the whiskey on the turnpike.³⁹ Sobriety on a march was so rare an occurrence that company and brigade commanders rejoiced when they arrived at a destination without “irregularity.”

Jonathan Huntington Johnson of the 15th New Hampshire infantry proudly told his wife that his

³⁶ John Camden West, A Texan in Search of a Fight (Waco, TX: Press of J. S. Hill and Co., 1901), 90-91.

³⁷ Alfred Bellard, Gone for a Soldier, 169.

³⁸ Gideon Welles, The Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson, Edited by Howard K. Beale (New York: W. W. Norton, 1960), 2:75; Alonzo Miller, Diaries and Letters, 1864-1865 (Prescott, WI: privately published, 1958), 99.

³⁹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLIII, Pt. 1, 580-81.

men had marched twenty miles in six hours. They had sore toes, but no one had become drunk.⁴⁰ A safe and sober arrival filled officers with pride at their men's discipline.⁴¹

Moving soldiers by water and rail proved no easier. Four years of transporting troops unquestionably proved that chaos ensued whenever liquor was plentiful. In one incident in the winter of 1861, soldiers awaiting a steamer to Maryland arrived at the dock, only to wait four hours to board. This gave the men plenty of time to find whiskey to take the edge off the blustery winter weather. Soon, officers and companies were involved in a “free fight.” The ruckus that continued on board only ended after two men lost their balance and tumbled into the icy water.⁴² Soldiers who went on a bender while traveling by train not only annoyed their comrades, but they also exposed civilians to the debauchery of military life. When moving men on the railroad from La Mine Bridge to Saint Louis, Major R. H. Brown ordered ten men to keep the soldiers from straggling, stealing farm supplies, and finding whiskey.⁴³ Temperate soldiers found traveling with their drunken comrades “very disagreeable.”⁴⁴ Civilians too complained of tipsy soldiers creating disturbances. British observer William Howard Russell spent a “hideous” night in a train carriage with soldiers singing loudly after downing copious amounts of ‘forty-rod’ whiskey. The officers, he lamented, had lost control of their men.⁴⁵ Temperance reformers had their worst fears about the trains confirmed. One irate passenger wrote to the Journal of the American Temperance Union that the soldiers he encountered were all intoxicated, some by

⁴⁰ Jonathan Huntington Johnson, The Letters and Diary of Captain Jonathan Huntington Johnson: Written During His Service with Company D – 15th Regiment New Hampshire Volunteers from October 1862 through August 1863 while Part of the Banks Expedition (Brett, Alden, Chase, 1961), 136.

⁴¹ James P. Pate, ed., When This Evil War is Over: The Correspondence of the Francis Family, 1860-1865 (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), 74.

⁴² Alfred Bellard, Gone for a Soldier, 32-33.

⁴³ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXII, Pt. 1, 668.

⁴⁴ Robert Patrick, Reluctant Rebel: The Secret Diary of Robert Patrick, 1861-1865, Edited by F. Jay Taylor (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1959), 64.

⁴⁵ William Howard Russell, My Diary North and South (T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863), 301-2.

lager beer, others by something that “looked clearer and smelled stronger.” Although he noted that women were not subjected to the indecent scenes, respectable men who could not ride in the ladies’ car had to put up with raucous shouting and singing that continued until all the drunks fell asleep.⁴⁶ Such problems were so great, that in the winter and spring of 1865, Assistant Secretary of War Charles A. Dana, Major General Henry Halleck, and Brigadier-General Jonathan Rawlins all tried to cut off access to liquor on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.⁴⁷

If officers providing spirit rations risked men slipping and tripping through the mud or badgering civilian train passengers with their drunken songs, using alcohol to fortify men for a fight could prove an even greater – and potentially disastrous – gamble. Union officers sometimes took the chance, usually by providing whiskey before or after a fight. Thinking that combat was imminent and that the enemy awaited them near Winchester, the 30th Massachusetts served a ration of whiskey.⁴⁸ During a lull in the fighting at Ball’s Bluff, Confederate Colonel W. H. Jenifer requested a barrel of whiskey be sent for his men (knowing that other provisions were unavailable).⁴⁹ Likewise, after falling back to White House during the Battle of Gaines Mill, Colonel H. S. Lansing of the 17th New York Volunteers saw to it that his men were served a spirit ration as they stacked their arms.⁵⁰ A few days before the war’s end on March 30, 1865, Major General Nelson A. Miles made a similar request for his troops stationed near Petersburg. Assured that the enemy knew their position, Miles had the division band brought up and issued ration of whiskey among the soldiers so that they could relax for the night.⁵¹

⁴⁶ “Soldiers in the Cars,” *JATU* 24 (November 1861): 171.

⁴⁷ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. 2, 167; Pt. 3, 1240.

⁴⁸ Henry Warren Howe, *Passages from the Life of Henry Warren Howe*, 73.

⁴⁹ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. V, 370.

⁵⁰ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. XI, Pt. 2, 333.

⁵¹ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. LI, Pt. 1, 1209.

Most commanders naturally hesitated to supply troops with a spirit ration during the heat of battle. In July 1864, Confederate Major General Bushrod R. Johnson requested that that one brigade be given a ration of whiskey after being subjected to “sharpshooting and shelling” that “was quite brisk.”⁵² Liquor could calm the nerves, but Captain Augustus Cleveland Brown, of the 4th New York Regiment, Heavy Artillery, observed at close hand what could happen when men were given a whiskey ration as they began to fight. On June 18 during the siege of Petersburg, Brown noticed that the captain of the company positioned next to his was in a tight spot. The officer, according to Brown, was “as brave a man as ever lived, but was rather noted for his varied and vigorous vocabulary.” The captain, it seemed, had given his men a ration of whiskey just before they became engaged. Much to their captain’s (and Brown’s) horror, the men began “dropping into a little ditch just outside of the line of trees.” Casting his typically colorful vocabulary aside, the captain stood, “with tears streaming down his face,” screaming at his men, prodding them, and “begging them to get out and keep in line and not disgrace themselves or him.”⁵³ Just as civilians had argued from the beginning of the war, whiskey threatened men’s ability to perform under fire. Brown knew his soldiers not only appeared cowardly themselves, but also made him look foolish as their leader.

Commanders might avoid the captain’s fate by not doling out whiskey before a fight, but they often rolled out barrels of commissary to celebrate victory. Many officers were more than willing to reward hard work – on or off the battlefield – with an extra splash of whiskey. When his men conducted themselves well by “bringing in watermelons, peaches and other subsistence” David Day made sure “to slop a little extra into their caps.” The incentive, he thought, kept his

⁵² OR, Ser. I, Vol. XL, Pt. 1, 782.

⁵³ Augustus Cleveland Brown, The Diary of a Line Officer, 79.

men “vigilant and interested and gallant.”⁵⁴ Various Union generals passed around the spirits when good news from other theaters reached their camps. After hearing of General Grant’s successes in Tennessee in early 1862, a group of men encamped at Hall’s Hill near Arlington, Virginia, celebrated exuberantly. Writing to his father, young officer Stephen Minot Weld recounted that “the batteries fired salutes and the bands played.” General Fitz John Porter was so joyful that he gave all the colonels permission to issue celebratory whiskey rations to their men. They heard a rumor that Savannah had been taken as well, which only added to their joy. Porter happily predicted that the Union Army would take Richmond within six weeks.⁵⁵ Interpreting the regulations broadly, commanders determined that distributing whiskey to reward hard work and raise morale was just as important as relieving exhaustion.

Irregular Supplies

Determining when rations ought to be distributed may have been the purview of officers, but in reality, the question of supply largely determined army drinking patterns. Alcohol arrived irregularly in both armies, and its availability depended on the location of soldiers. Union armies were better supplied than their Confederate counterparts, due in large part to the fact that the Union subsistence departments were more efficient, in general, than Confederate ones.⁵⁶ When whiskey arrived, men welcomed the rations, despite complaining about their quality. But almost

⁵⁴ David L. Day, *My Diary of Rambles with the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry*, 96.

⁵⁵ Stephen Minot Weld, *War Diary and Letters of Stephen Minot Weld, 1861-1865* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1912), 57-59.

⁵⁶ Scholars have found that the Union Army was much better supplied than its Confederate counterpart, and in general, the Confederacy and its subsistence department suffered from chronic food shortages and economic mismanagement. See, Richard D. Goff, *Confederate Supply* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1969); David Herbert Donald, ed., *Why the North Won the Civil War: Six Authoritative Views on the Economic, Military, Diplomatic, Social, and Political Reasons behind the Confederate Defeat (Revised Edition)* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996); Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011).

as quickly as officers distributed the alcohol, men figured out how to drink more than their allotted amount, often becoming drunk.

Inventorying the provisions he had on hand at Chattanooga in October 1864, Captain M. H. Bright, Commissary of Subsistence, counted forty days' worth of whiskey along with other necessities such as meat, bread, coffee, sugar, beans, rice, and vegetables.⁵⁷ But soldiers' accounts indicate that most camps were not so well-stocked. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., had intimated that supplies came intermittently and though he looked forward to the comfort of a drink, it was best to avoid getting one's hopes up.⁵⁸ In fact, his liquor may have come from private stores instead of the brigade commissary; others were not so lucky. Lieutenant Augustus Ayling noted that the "Commissary had whiskey today and we got some for the mess." The occurrence was rare enough that he considered it worthy of comment.⁵⁹ Private Alonzo Miller similarly remarked that a dinner of fried pork, crackers, coffee, and whiskey before a dress parade was a welcomed change from a breakfast of beans.⁶⁰ That soldiers anticipated the possibility that liquor might arrive with supply wagons further indicates it was not a regular staple. Entertaining such a possibility Assistant Adjutant General C. A. Whittier allowed division commanders in the 2nd Corps to collect one-half rations of whiskey for their men.⁶¹

Reports indicate that whiskey's availability varied by theater, and for Union soldiers fighting in the West and in the trans-Mississippi, supply was especially erratic. In September 1864, correspondence between the Department of the Cumberland's Chief Quartermaster J. L. Donaldson and Major General Montgomery C. Meigs, Quartermaster-General of the U.S. Army

⁵⁷ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIX, Pt. 2, 275-76.

⁵⁸ Worthington Chauncey Ford, Charles Francis Adams, and Henry Adams, A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865 (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1920), 1:204-5.

⁵⁹ Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms: The Diary of Lieutenant Augustus D. Ayling, 29th Massachusetts Volunteers, Edited by Charles F. Herberger (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 209.

⁶⁰ Alonzo Miller, Diaries and Letters, 1864-1865, 104.

⁶¹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. 3, 646.

indicated that supplies – including whiskey – were abundant.⁶² However in November goods delivered by boat to Union soldiers stationed at Little Rock contained plenty of groceries and dry goods, and even some ale, but “no large shipments of liquor.”⁶³ Further west, deliveries of liquor could be even more irregular. When the colonel of the 10th Kansas Volunteers requested spirit rations for the soldiers serving on the Missouri-Kansas border in late 1863, Brigadier-General Thomas Ewing, Jr. promised that “whisky will go out as soon as opportunity offers.” Unfortunately for the men of the 10th Kansas, William Quantrill lurked in the woods, and Ewing did “not know when the escort is to be got exactly.”⁶⁴

Confederates enjoyed whiskey rations even less frequently, due to both shortages of liquor in the South and undependable supply trains. While the Union army relied on supplies sent from cities such as Boston and New York safely removed from the fighting, Confederates had more difficulty producing and shipping supplies – including liquor.⁶⁵ Confederate Lieutenant W. Ashley noted the infrequency of whiskey rations while encamped near Maryland Heights in July 1864: he had received only two “in over three years.”⁶⁶ General Robert E. Lee repeatedly expressed his concern to Commissary-General L. B. Northrop that General Joseph Johnston’s Army of Tennessee was well-supplied with food and even “some whisky” while his Army of Northern Virginia was starving because the soldiers only received a bit of meat and salt.⁶⁷ Lee’s characterization of whiskey as an additional component to a full food ration illustrates his frustration with haphazard Confederate supply patterns. In a war where most soldiers – and

⁶² OR, Ser. I, Vol. LII, Pt. 1, 621.

⁶³ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLI, Pt. 4, 571.

⁶⁴ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXII, Pt. 2, 524.

⁶⁵ OR, Ser. III, Vol. V, 423.

⁶⁶ The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc., Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 11 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1868), Doc 153.

⁶⁷ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIII, 1065.

plenty of civilians, for that matter – were suffering from food shortages, how was it that some men were receiving liquor rations in addition to their food?

Plenty of Confederates shared Lee's frustration, in a sense, and determined that jettisoning whiskey was one way to combat food shortages. In nearly all Confederate states, the distillation of grain was prohibited in order to preserve food.⁶⁸ This created a scramble for liquor rations. In Virginia, the army turned to apple brandy to replace whiskey and also began producing its own liquor despite protests from the state government, which had prohibited the manufacture of distilled spirits and attempted to confiscate the army's supply.⁶⁹ International suppliers and frequent impressments brought some relief.⁷⁰ But the rapidly inflating prices listed in Confederate records indicate that whiskey shortages became chronic – the cost of gallon went from \$3 in 1863 to \$15 in 1864.⁷¹ Perhaps the best indicator of Confederate liquor shortages comes not from impressment records but from Union confiscation reports. During the war, whiskey changed hands as often as other supplies. Early in the war, Union officers regularly reported capturing Confederate supplies containing 50 to 80 barrels of whiskey. By 1865, reports included only 1 to 12 barrels.⁷²

When whiskey happened to arrive with other supplies, some soldiers may well have had trouble drinking what most described as rather poor government liquor. As Francis Adamson Donaldson of the 118th Regiment Pennsylvania Volunteers explained, he kept “an old bottle half full of lemon peel” to mix with the commissary rations to knock “the rawness off.” Donaldson

⁶⁸ This will be discussed at length in Chapter 4.

⁶⁹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. 2, 1217; ...Communication of Secretary of War...January 5, 1865, 'conveying information relative to the impressments of brandy' (Richmond, VA: 1865), 1-8.

⁷⁰ OR, Ser. I, Vol. LIII, 961.

⁷¹ OR, Ser. IV, Vol. II, 744 [\$3, 1863]; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XL, Pt. 3, 767. [\$15, 1864].

⁷² OR, Ser. I, Vol. VIII, 404 [1861, 80 barrels]; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXV, Pt. 1, 13 [1863, 50 barrels]; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XV, 368 [1863, 50 barrels]; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXVII, Pt. 2, 779 [1863, 80 gallons]; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXVIII, Pt. 2, 775 [1864, 4 barrels]; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLI, Pt. 1, 882 [1864, 12 barrels]; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLIV, 238 [1864, 2 barrels]; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLVII, Pt. 1, 239 [1865, 5 barrels].

could not be sure “whether it was the beverage or the lemon flavor” but he felt downright “unpleasant about the stomach.” So unpleasant, he stopped drinking.⁷³ David Day of the 25th Massachusetts further explained the problem. It seemed that after “a barrel of whiskey has stood out all day in the sun and got about milk warm,” it became a bit harder to drink. Soldiers with “rather tender gullets” had to “make up all manner of contortions of face trying to swallow it.” They eventually succeeded but often had to “run about fifteen rods to catch their breath.”⁷⁴ Officers worried less about rot-gut. Their supply wagons tended to include wine instead of whiskey.⁷⁵

Regardless of its taste, soldiers and sailors, in general, took advantage of the opportunity to imbibe. Reflecting on his experiences Don Pedro Quarendo Reminisco recalled that whiskey rations were generally provided in the navy for all men who wanted it. Although those who chose to abstain could get extra pay, most men chose liquor. They received three rations a day.⁷⁶ Outside of the navy, similar arrangements could be made. Alonzo Miller for example sometimes traded his whiskey for extra coffee.⁷⁷ Others passed their gill along. William Wiley of the 77th Illinois noted that after they were issued rations, some of the men refused to drink and others, to compensate, “took a double portion and got gloriously drunk.”⁷⁸ This problem plagued Confederates as well. Virginian William Clark Corson explained that he and his buddy Billy Price had learned to take full advantage of the whiskey issued by the Confederate government.

⁷³ Francis Adams Donaldson, Inside the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Experience of Captain Francis Adams Donaldson, Edited by J. Gregory Acken (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole, 1998), 323.

⁷⁴ David L. Day, My Diary of Rambles with the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, 96.

⁷⁵ Robert Goldthwaite Carter, Four Brothers in Blue, or Sunshine and Shadows of the War of the Rebellion, A Story of the Great Civil War from Bull Run to Appomattox (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 458.

⁷⁶ Don Redro Quarendo Reminisco, Life in the Union Army: or Notings and Reminiscences of a Two Years' Volunteer (New York: H. Dexter, 1863), 19.

⁷⁷ Alonzo Miller, Diaries and Letters, 1864-1865, 90. Miller had a taste for coffee, to be certain, but he also used coffee as currency in at least once instance to buy pies. See, 13, 73.

⁷⁸ William Wiley, The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier: William Wiley of the 77th Illinois Infantry, Edited by Terrence J. Winschel (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), 153.

Price and Corson “contracted for the rations of all the fellows that don’t drink” in order to “have a lively time.”⁷⁹ The exasperated officers commanding the 5th Alabama Regiment decided to put a stop to men “getting tight” by doubling rations. They required the men to drink their rations in the presence of their company commanders. Soldiers could pass their rations along to a friend, but the company commander was in charge of keeping the whiskey out of reach for an hour. Spacing out the drinks prevented disorder.⁸⁰ The Confederacy’s whiskey shortage was not so severe that soldiers were completely unable to become intoxicated.

Camp Sutlers

Although commissary rations could be useful for getting drunk, their irregularity and poor quality often prompted soldiers to turn elsewhere for liquor – usually to the camp sutler. These private merchants generally worked by obtaining a permit or license that allowed them the exclusive privilege of peddling goods ranging from boots, to lemonade, pie, and whiskey. Long a staple of American military life, sutlers ideally operated in accordance with military regulations that required the vendor to set standard prices and only peddle authorized goods. Any violation would result in the revocation of his license and confiscation of his wares. But once civil war broke out, sutler regulations became wholly haphazard. There was confusion about who had the authority to make contracts with vendors. The Secretary of War, state governors, generals, and even regimental commanders granted privileges to sutlers.⁸¹ This caused confusion for commanding officers attempting to ascertain whether a vendor had the right to be present in his camp. Regulations varied, and the high demand for alcohol led many peddlers to raise prices,

⁷⁹ William Clark Corson, My Dear Jennie: A Collection of Love Letters from a Confederate Soldier to His Fiancee during the Period 1861-1865, Edited by Blake W. Corson, Jr. ([S.I.]: B. W. Corson, 1982), 31.

⁸⁰ G. Ward Hubbs, editor, Voices from Company D, 358.

⁸¹ Alfred J. Tapson, “The Sutler and the Soldier,” Military Affairs 21 (Winter 1957): 176.

lower the quality, and sell whiskey under the table. By doing so, they gained a reputation for unscrupulousness, provoked soldiers' ire, and contributed to discipline problems.

In the Union army, there was no uniform policy governing liquor sales from camp sutlers. According to the United States Sanitary Commission report, in 169 regiments encamped near Washington in 1862, the sutler was prohibited from selling whiskey, but in thirty-one, he was allowed to sell liquor. The USSC noted further that in 177 of the regiments, "it appeared that the men did in fact, get liquor with more or less freedom and facility from the sutlers or otherwise."⁸² Washington was not unique. In many regiments sutlers were prohibited from selling liquor. In others they were allowed to sell to officers but not to enlisted men. In practice, sutlers simply sought to turn a profit, and so their presence presented armies with a bit of a conundrum – their services were useful because they could supplement or substitute for the commissary department. But the ease with which sutlers could skirt murky policies created headaches for regimental officers.

That officers – including generals – used sutlers' stores to refresh themselves is clear.⁸³ New Yorker Augustus Cleveland Brown noted with some disgust that many of the officers made "large purchases of useless sutler's stores" after receiving a large pay-day and continued their celebration by having "a reception in the private tent of the sutler." Whiskey flowed abundantly.⁸⁴ Augustus Ayling and his fellow Massachusetts officers "had a gay time" after purchasing a keg of beer from another sutler.⁸⁵ Union prisons also contracted with various sutlers

⁸² "Sanitary Commission," *JATU* 25 (January 1862): 7. In 1861, contracts were granted by a variety of individuals. "Wilson's Bill," passed March 19, 1862, placed regimental sutlers' appointments in the hands of commissioned officers, but left post sutler appointments under the control of the Secretary of War, see John Thomas Murphy, "Pistol's Legacy: Sutlers, Post Traders, and the American Army, 1820-1895" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana, 1993), 50.

⁸³ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. XXII, Pt. 2, 357.

⁸⁴ Augustus Cleveland Brown, *Diary of a Line Officer*, 17.

⁸⁵ Augustus D. Ayling, *A Yankee at Arms*, 124.

to provide goods to both prisoners of war and the garrisons guarding them.⁸⁶ In Camp Morton, Indiana, the sutlers' instructions were clearly spelled out. Prisoners of war were to have access to a sutler so that they could buy pies, cakes, candy, and soda water. But the men of the 5th Regiment Veteran Reserve Corps, part of the garrison guarding the prisoners, could also buy ale and beer (in addition to the other goods) from the commissary-approved sutler.⁸⁷ Soldiers guarding prisoners of war in Washington, D.C., purchased beer and oysters from their sutler.⁸⁸

But sutlers provided more than alcohol for parties in officers' tents; plenty sold liquor illegally, and often found themselves drawing the ire of commanders. In February 1864, a vendor from St. Louis showed up in Union-occupied Jackson, Missouri, with copious amounts of powder and whiskey and no permit to sell his goods. Colonel John B. Rogers had his doubts about the legality of the man's actions and inquired of General Clinton Fisk if vendors were truly allowed to sell powder and liquor without permits – the idea seemed ludicrous to him.⁸⁹ Elsewhere, sutlers obtained licenses but violated their provisions. One man smuggled liquor under the labels of “Canned Fruits, Canned Berries, Cordials, and Bitters” and sometimes did not even bother with those disguises but instead sold liquors “greatly beyond the list of articles authorized by law.”⁹⁰ Confederate General William Dorsey Pender had an equally exasperating problem with his sutler, a Mr. Frank who had been authorized to sell goods in camp but had been expressly forbidden to sell liquor. Disregarding Pender's orders, Frank sold whiskey to officers. Pender kicked him out of the camp but seemed puzzled by the sutler's contradictory behavior.

⁸⁶ OR, Ser. II, Vol. VII, 122; OR, Ser. II, Vol. V, 335-336.

⁸⁷ OR, Ser. II, Vol. VII, 71.

⁸⁸ OR, Ser. II, Vol. V, 335-336.

⁸⁹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIV, Pt. 2, 435. Fisk agreed and suspected that the powder and whiskey were on their way to rebel guerrillas in the southeastern portions of the state.

⁹⁰ Joseph R. Reinhart, ed. and trans., Two Germans in the Civil War: The Diary of John Daeuble and the Letters of Gottfried Rentschler, 6th Kentucky Volunteers (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 84.

On the one hand, the man was “very gentlemanly in deportment and very accomodating [sic],” but, at the same time, his “whole existence seems to be bound up in money.”⁹¹

Illegal sales to enlisted men often proved too profitable to resist. One sutler in Huntsville, Alabama, offered to sell the officers and enlisted men of General Horatio Van Cleve’s division canteens filled with lager beer for 50 cents a quart. A “stream of soldiers” took him up on the offer.⁹² Sutlers following the 141st Pennsylvania sold whiskey to men of all ranks “on the sly and upon a large scale.” These sutlers and others who sold to privates were kicked out of camp or fined, sometimes as much as \$100.00.⁹³ Others were more harshly punished. Alabama soldier John Henry Cowin and a detail of men were sent out one night to find all “chuck-luck dealers” to arrest them and confiscate their whiskey.⁹⁴ Colonel Samuel Starr, commander of the 5th New Jersey well-known for his harsh discipline, “severely dealt with” two men from Washington who decided to sell illegally to soldiers “at a fabulous price.” Despite being civilians, the vendors were arrested, court-martialed, and “sentenced to receive 20 lashes on their bare back and to be set adrift in the Potomac in an open boat without oars.”⁹⁵

The incident in the 5th New Jersey illustrates the dual nature of the sutler debacle: men not only provided liquor to enlisted men, but they sold it at seemingly exorbitant prices. Sutlers’ prices, many soldiers believed, bordered on extortion. Veterans understood and at least tolerated sutlers’ crooked practices, but fresh volunteers were shocked by their unscrupulous behavior.⁹⁶ Sutlers, undoubtedly, were opportunists, and the war offered “a splendid chance to make

⁹¹ William Dorsey Pender, The General to His Lady: The Civil War Letters of William Dorsey Pender to Fanny Pender, Edited by William W. Hassler (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 105-106.

⁹² William Bircher, A Drummer-Boy’s Diary, 73.

⁹³ Joel Molyneux, Quill of the Wild Goose: Civil War Letters and Diaries of Private Joel Molyneux, 141st Pennsylvania Volunteers, Edited by Kermit Molyneux Bird (Shippensburg, PA: Burd Street Press, 1996), 180; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLI, Pt. 4, 726; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXV, Pt. 1, 632.

⁹⁴ G. Ward Hubbs, ed., Voices from Company D, 71-72.

⁹⁵ Alfred Bellard, Gone for a Soldier, 39.

⁹⁶ Alfred J. Tapson, “The Sutler and the Soldier,” 175.

money.”⁹⁷ Whiskey selling proved to be a booming business. Less than a day after setting up shop near Leesburg, one Confederate sutler had “sold about 100 bottles of whiskey.”⁹⁸ They ranged in price from \$1.50 to \$3.00, and soldiers who wanted to buy a gallon typically paid closer to \$10.00, whether they were buying from Union or Confederate sutlers.⁹⁹ One report indicated that a sutler could maximize his profits further by selling his whiskey by the gill instead of by the gallon – if a gallon of whiskey sold for \$10.00 in the sutler’s tent, the same amount could be retailed for \$16.00 if it were sold by the gill (glass).¹⁰⁰ As high as these prices were, however, they may have partially stemmed from wartime shortages rather than out-right extortion. In Virginia, civilian liquor dealers’ records show that the cost of whiskey went from approximately \$1.00-\$1.50 per gallon in 1861 to \$5.00 in 1862. Even on the home front bottles of whiskey cost \$2.00 to \$3.00.¹⁰¹ Regardless, plenty of men believed there was money to be had selling whiskey to soldiers. Even commissary officials took advantage to sell government whiskey at high prices. A brigade commissary in the Union Army’s 11th Corps decided to profit by supplying whiskey to regimental officers on the sly.¹⁰² An August day in 1862 found a

⁹⁷ Robert McAllister, The Civil War Letters of General Robert McAllister, Edited by James I. Robertson, Jr. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1965), 209.

⁹⁸ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, as Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A. Moore, Co. G, 17th Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Guards, Holly Springs, Mississippi (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 65.

⁹⁹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. X, Pt. 2, 14; Joel Molyneux, Quill of the Wild Goose, 180; “[correspondence of the Richmond Dispatch],” Richmond Daily Dispatch, November 7, 1861; OR, Ser. I, Vol. L, Pt. 1, 640; Lawrence Sangston, The Bastiles of the North (Baltimore, MD: Kelly, Hedian and Piet, 1863), 78.

¹⁰⁰ OR, Ser. I, Vol. L, Pt. 1, 640.

¹⁰¹ For 1861 prices, see David Holmes Morton Daybook and Journal, 1861-1865, Charlotte County Court Records; Unidentified Daybook F, 1861-1876, New Kent County Court Records; For 1862 prices, see Account Book, 1861-1865, Charlotte County Court Records, Local Government Records Collection, The Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. John Thomas Murphy does not find overt corruption in his study of Civil War sutlers. He argues that the system created headaches (in more than one sense), but that sutlers, by and large, were familiar with military culture and while they were in the business of earning a living, they were not systematically corrupt. The wartime prices on the Virginia home front appear to corroborate his conclusions. See, “Pistol’s Legacy: Sutlers, Post Traders, and the American Army, 1820-1895,” 15-72.

¹⁰² J. Chandler Gregg, Life in the Army in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, including Observations in New Orleans, with an Account of the Author’s Life and Experience in the Ministry (Philadelphia, PA: Perkinpine and Higgins, 1866), 88.

brigade commissary in the Army of the Potomac's 3rd Corps in a similarly "speculative" mood. He began selling "whiskey by the canteen full very indiscriminately" (which resulted in a drunken mutiny).¹⁰³ In Missouri, another commissary official worked less directly – passing along confiscated goods to sutlers who could resell them at higher prices in the camps and in northern cities.¹⁰⁴

That soldiers and officers found "extravagant prices" irritating would be an understatement.¹⁰⁵ From their perspective, sutlers undercut the war effort. Union soldier William Need complained to Simon Cameron in 1861 that sutlers were "suck[ing] the blood...out of loyal defenders of the American Government."¹⁰⁶ After capturing a "Jewish sutler" working in Winchester, Virginia, Confederate Private David Holt recounted how a peddler had tried to sell overpriced goods to women in Winchester, Virginia. He justified his prices to Holt – "I got sell every ding high to get my money back, anymore already" – and although Holt considered the captured sutler to be a "true sport," the manner in which Holt discussed the encounter reveals his perspective on the profession. Although licensed by the federal government, the man was Jewish and spoke "in a funny manner." He used the war as an opportunity to make money and showed no loyalty to the Union government nor any animosity toward his Confederate captors.¹⁰⁷

If extorting soldiers and civilians were not bad enough, sutlers repeatedly found themselves accused of selling inferior or prohibited spirits. Political prisoner Lawrence Sangston remarked that the over-priced "Boston whiskey" he purchased from the prison sutler was

¹⁰³ George Thornton Fleming, ed., Life and Letters of Alexander Hays, Brevet Colonel United States Army, Brigadier General and Brevet Major General United States Volunteers, Compiled by Gilbert Adams Hays (Pittsburgh, PA: privately published, 1919), 261.

¹⁰⁴ OR, Ser. I, Vol. X, Pt. 2, 14.

¹⁰⁵ OR, Ser. I, Vol. X, Pt. 2, 14; see also Joseph R. Reinhart, ed. and trans., Two Germans in the Civil War, 84.

¹⁰⁶ OR, Ser. I, Vol. L, Pt. 1, 640.

¹⁰⁷ David Holt, A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private David Holt, Edited by Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 75.

“nothing but reduced alcohol with some coloring matter in it.” Irritated, he resolved not to drink any more of the rotgut.¹⁰⁸ Soldiers elsewhere disparaged the quality of contraband whiskey. The sutler serving the Illinois soldiers encamped near Peoria had some difficulty after he “got to making bad whiskey.” The men were so angry that they made “an assault on his works” by destroying his tent and stealing his goods. The officers encouraged the shenanigans.¹⁰⁹

Frustrated officers banished pesky sutlers but could not keep the soldiers from acquiring whiskey. When General George B. McClellan attempted to cut off access to liquor by prohibiting the trade in the Army of the Potomac, “unprincipled men in and out of the army” began smuggling spirits into the ranks. Most soldiers simply found inventive ways to sneak liquor into camp. Early in the war, the soldiers of Hooker’s Division resorted to all manner of chicanery – filling butter tubs and potato sacks with whiskey to get past the inspectors. One soldier figured out that the barrel of his musket held a pint of whiskey. The man “straightway gets a pass, has himself and his musket filled, and comes into camp, and fills a famished comrade.” Others disguised the whiskey as pickles, hair tonic, and – perhaps less subtly – as Schniedam Schnapps. One inventive fellow even buried casks of rum so that he could pump it out and dispense it “from the bowels of the earth.”¹¹⁰ Soldiers of the Irish Brigade once made arrangements with the rebel soldiers on the opposing picket lines – exchanging whiskey along with coffee, sugar, and tobacco. Officers tacitly approved.¹¹¹ Most of these arrangements were informal, but plenty of men pocketed extra money by funneling whiskey into the camps.¹¹² A night watchman at Ship Island, Mississippi, in 1864 devised a scheme to sell liquor in exchange for clothing. He kept his

¹⁰⁸ Lawrence Sangston, The Bastiles of the North, 78.

¹⁰⁹ William Wiley, The Civil War Diary of a Common Soldier, 8.

¹¹⁰ George E. Stephens, A Voice of Thunder: The Civil War Letters of George E. Stephens, Edited by Donald A. Yacovone (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 140-1, 156.

¹¹¹ D. P. Conyngham, The Irish brigade and its campaigns: with some account of the Corcoran Legion and sketches of the principal officers (New York: William McSorley, 1869), 87.

¹¹² J. Chandler Gregg, Life in the Army in the Departments of Virginia, and the Gulf, 95.

whiskey under the floorboards of his tent, but a loose plank gave him away.¹¹³ These enterprising soldiers were aided at times by more elaborate operations. Chaplain Joseph Twichell noticed a systemic smuggling problem when his men began working at a wharf near Yorktown, Virginia. Because a large volume of supplies came to the Union troops by way of the Chesapeake Bay, “cunning...rumsellers” were able to sneak enormous quantities to the soldiers by concealing it in sloops. The bay was so crowded and the profits so “enormous” that putting a stop to the traffic was nearly impossible.¹¹⁴

While sober-minded officers wrung their hands, plenty of soldiers considered that smugglers provided an invaluable patriotic service. Yorktown, Virginia, truly was a hub of whiskey trafficking, and soldiers in the Irish Brigade regularly did business with a woman near Ship Point. She “always kept on hand a generous supply of bottled commissary,” which she watered down (“for fear it would be too strong and hurt the boys”) and sold it “on the sly for three dollars per bottle.” Known affectionately as the “supernumerary quartermaster or commissary assistant,” the woman was not the only one of her type serving in the Union army.¹¹⁵ The Carter brothers were fascinated by a similar woman they read about in the Pennsylvania newspapers. She accompanied her husband to war and provided nursing and domestic services to the men while participating in battles at Bull Run, Fair Oaks, Richmond, and Fredericksburg. Nothing could “dampen her patriotism,” and when the woman was not “under fire” she purchased and sold luxury goods such as tobacco, ham, and cigars to the soldiers. When it came to contraband whiskey, her patriotism paid off – she sold her liquor to the soldiers at \$5.00 a

¹¹³ Rufus Kinsley, *Diary of a Christian Soldier: Rufus Kinsley and the Civil War*, Edited by David C. Rankin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2003), 144.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Hopkins Twichell, *The Civil War Letters of Joseph Hopkins Twichell: A Chaplain's Story*, Edited by Peter Messent and Steven Courtney (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 123.

¹¹⁵ D. P. Conyngham, *The Irish brigade and its campaigns*, 120.

pint.¹¹⁶ Unlike male sutlers, these women were not considered profiteers. Instead, their sex allowed them to smuggle contraband into the ranks undetected. Equally interesting, soldiers believed that they provided a valuable service. Though they might get testy when quality was poor and prices were high, soldiers – unlike temperance reformers – seemed to be of the opinion that sutlers did their patriotic duty by providing much needed liquor to thirsty troops.

Civilians and the Liquor Supply

When it came to providing additional liquor to soldiers, civilians were ambivalent. Soldiers with no sutler or commissary rations often turned to farmers and family members to keep their canteens full. Union and Confederate soldiers both knew where to find alcohol in the southern states, and many civilians – especially southerners – were happy to have the extra income. Families shipped spirits of all sorts in care packages. But these informal channels of supply, coupled with the whiskey traffic perpetuated by sutlers and smugglers, alarmed northern and southern temperance reformers. Soldiers may have considered whiskey suppliers to be patriots, but reformers sharply disagreed. They condemned dealers for making soldiers drunk and of being more concerned with turning profits than supporting the war effort.

Confederate and Union soldiers saw farmers as reliable suppliers of alcohol.¹¹⁷ Confederate troops had an advantage when it came to knowing where to get liquor from the locals. In the mountains of Virginia, apple brandy was much more plentiful than whiskey, and soldiers loved it. Men marched over the same ground multiple times during the course of the war and visited their favorite watering holes repeatedly. Whenever they were encamped near the

¹¹⁶ Robert Goldthwaite Carter, *Four Brothers in Blue*, 281-282.

¹¹⁷ Charles Barber, *The Civil War Letters of Charles Barber, Private, 104th New York Volunteer Infantry*, Edited by Raymond G. Barber and Gary E. Swinson (Torrance, CA: Gary E. Swinson, 1991), 16.

Hawks-bill Valley, soldiers in Jackson's Corps made a "bee-line for Kite's apple brandy distillery."¹¹⁸ Farmers near Camp Kellyville along the Rapidan also traded with Confederate soldiers in the 16th Mississippi by providing chicken, bread, and an apple brandy that "packs a wallop."¹¹⁹ The Mississippians acquired a taste for the stuff, which led to an altercation with one opportunistic seller. After soldiers began flocking to his secluded location (about two miles from camp) to fill their canteens at a dollar a drink, the "old countryman" decided to increase profits. First he doubled and tripled the price, and he found thirsty soldiers willing to shell out the money. But when he raised the cost to five dollars per shot, the angry Mississippians knocked him over the head and stole his brandy. When the moonshiner marched into camp, seeking compensation for his stolen goods, the officers, no doubt tipsy from their fresh supply of his liquor, threatened to arrest him for violating General Lee's orders by selling to soldiers. They chased the Virginian into the woods and kept his brandy for themselves.¹²⁰

Confederate soldiers may have known the Virginia mountains the best, but apple brandy flowed through the Union ranks as well. The "beverage of the South" provided refreshment to Massachusetts soldier Zenas T. Haines and his comrades, who preferred it to the whiskey rations provided by the Union army. While traveling to Newbern, North Carolina, via steamer, Haines overheard the soldiers paying a musical tribute to their "good old apple-jack," which "will lay you on your back." "Drink her down," commanded the refrain happily, "Drink her down!"¹²¹

¹¹⁸ James Cooper Nisbet, *Four Years on the Firing Line*, 33.

¹¹⁹ Franklin Lafayette Riley, *Grandfather's Journal: Company B, Sixteenth Mississippi Infantry Volunteers, Harris' Brigade, Mahone's Division, Hill's Corps, A.N.V., May 27, 1861-July 15, 1865*, Edited by Austin C. Dobbins (Dayton, OH: Morningside House, Inc., 1988), 75.

¹²⁰ David Holt, *A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia*, 184-88.

¹²¹ Zenas T. Haines, *In the Country of the Enemy: The Civil War Report of a Massachusetts Corporal*, Edited by William C. Harris (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1999), 90.

While Union soldiers drank down their brandy and drunkenly sang its praises, Union officers sent details out into the southern woods, searching – sometimes in vain – for the stills.¹²²

Sellers and their prospective buyers knew how to avoid being caught by teetotaling and rule-abiding officers. Men with whiskey lurked in the woods near camps, selling to soldiers “indiscriminately.”¹²³ Straggling soldiers sometimes headed to taverns on the side of the road.¹²⁴ Giving commanding officers the slip became a bit of an art. Confederate surgeon Junius Bragg noted that he and his comrades had “indulged in godly conversation” on the way to church in Homer, Arkansas. The “text” they studied dealt with the subject of buying whiskey along the roadside for \$2.00 a drink. Many soldiers enthusiastically waited “to hear the ‘Word’” that Sunday morning.¹²⁵ After noticing that Confederate soldiers seemed to be well-supplied with whiskey, despite the government’s prohibitory measures, English observer W. C. Corsan set out to find where the troops found their spirits. After hours of inquiry in a Louisiana town, he followed a man to a cottage where he was locked into a dirty bedroom and sold a spoonful of rye whiskey for a dollar.¹²⁶

While officers looked for ways to curtail the rural trade, military officials were equally perplexed by the number of packages arriving from well-intentioned relatives, especially around Christmastime. John Dooley’s family – his father, specifically – sent him more than a quart of whiskey for the holidays. He remarked that “a great many” of the soldiers in the regiment

¹²² Alexander G. Downing, Downing’s Civil War Diary, Edited by Olynthus B. Clark (Des Moines, IA: Iowa State Department of History and Archives, 1916), 29.

¹²³ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XIII, 170.

¹²⁴ Wilder Dwight, Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight: Lieut.-Col. Second Mass. Inf. Vols. (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Co., 1891) 113.

¹²⁵ Junius Newport Bragg, Letters of a Confederate Surgeon, 1861-1865, Compiled by Helen Bragg Gaughan (Camden, AR: The Hurley Company, 1960), 231.

¹²⁶ W. C. Corsan, Two Months in the Confederate States: An Englishman’s Travels through the South, Edited by Benjamin H. Trask (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 35.

received similar gifts.¹²⁷ But families did more than send a jug of whiskey to relieve the Christmas blues. Plenty of male family members – fathers, uncles, and brothers – supplied whiskey whenever they could, especially in the Confederacy. Because enlisted men were so often prohibited from obtaining whiskey from camp sutlers, they relied on family members to sneak in the contraband during visits. After having breakfast with his uncle and a friend from home, John Henry Grabill found out that a quart of whiskey would be arriving in the mail.¹²⁸ Robert A. Moore’s father brought a bottle of whiskey with him when he traveled from Mississippi to Virginia to visit his son.¹²⁹ Other soldiers made certain their families knew that they wanted the whiskey. Virginian Marx Mitteldorfer made multiple references in his letters home. Early in the war, he thanked his uncle for sending along a jug of whiskey and volunteered to send about two dozen empty bottles back.”¹³⁰ Some men simply manufactured their own. Thomas Jefferson Davis of the 18th Wisconsin made himself a keg of beer while encamped near Cartersville, Georgia, although he glumly told his wife that he did not think it would make anyone “mutch intoxicated.”¹³¹

Confederate families sent packages of whiskey to imprisoned sons and brothers as well. In November 1861, Lawrence Sangston received whiskey, mint julep, and lavender brandy from home – gifts that led other prisoners to solicitously “enquire after my health.” Although the guards inspected all packages, Sangston was allowed to keep his spirituous provisions as long as

¹²⁷ John Edward Dooley, John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal, Edited by Joseph T. Durkin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 79, 82.

¹²⁸ John Henry Grabill, July 3, 1861, Diary of a Soldier of the Stonewall Brigade (Woodstock, VA: Shenandoah Herald, 1909), no page.

¹²⁹ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, 51.

¹³⁰ Marx Mitteldorfer to Parents, August 7, 1861, Mitteldorfer Letters, 1861; Marx Mitteldorfer to Cousin Moses, [February ?] 10, 1862, Mitteldorfer Letters, 1862, Soldier Letters, Eleanor S. Brockenbrough Library, The Museum of the Confederacy, Richmond, VA.

¹³¹ Thomas P. Nanzig, editor, The Badax Tigers: From Shiloh to the Surrender with the 18th Wisconsin (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 266.

he promised to use them “judiciously” and “not make the fact generally known that I had them.”¹³² Later in the war, Major General Benjamin Butler was less lenient when it came to prisoners of war. While he recommended that prisoners be allowed to purchase supplies he strongly advised that packages from family and friends containing “contraband” and other “hurtful” items (such as whiskey) not be delivered to the prisoners.¹³³

Regardless of the source, teetotaling northern and southern civilians shared the concerns of commanding officers about the nearly unstoppable liquor trade. Although Confederates tried to control the distillation of ardent spirits throughout the war, Confederate temperance reformers had little to say about individual sales to soldiers. In 1863 The Ten Islands Baptist Association of Calhoun County, Alabama, strongly urged citizens to “strike with terror and dismay the sordid retailers of the hellish poison” in order to save them and their customers from hell, but they stopped short of connecting the sin of liquor trafficking to Confederate soldiers and their well-being.¹³⁴ North Carolina’s temperance newspaper, The Spirit of the Age, came closer to singling out those who sold to soldiers. The paper relayed the story of an ill-tempered whiskey peddler in Cleveland County, North Carolina, who dropped dead less than a week after ripping up a temperance tract and cursing the “friend” who gave it to him. The article did not identify the man peddling his destructive spirits, but the county certainly raised a number of regiments, so he could have been selling to soldiers before they departed. The message was clear – when sutlers died, they “Departed for a more dreary region than is pleasant to contemplate.”¹³⁵ Such moralizing in turn provoked a reaction. A correspondent for the Richmond Dispatch, writing

¹³² Lawrence Sangston, The Bastiles of the North, 81, 93-94.

¹³³ OR, Ser. II, Vol. VII, 531.

¹³⁴ Ten Islands Baptist Association, Minutes of the Proceedings of the Ten Islands Baptist Association. Held with the Church at Post Oak Spring, Calhoun County, Alabama, on the 26th, 27th and the 28th Days of September, 1863 (Alabama?: s.n., 1863?), 6.

¹³⁵ LEWXAM, “For the Spirit of the Age,” Spirit of the Age 14 (August 25, 1862): 4.

from Camp Bariow on the Greenbrier River, urged the “prattling Sons of Temperance” to save their sermons on morality for “times of peace.” Although the writer was “not a lover of the ‘ardent,’” he concluded that for the soldiers, “whiskey is necessary, a stimulating contra actor to these cutting mountain breezes.” Thus despite their high prices, county sutlers provided a service to the Confederacy.¹³⁶

Northerners were more straight-forward in their condemnation of liquor suppliers. Army and navy whiskey rations dismayed the American Temperance Union, which devoted a good deal of attention to the subject. When Generals McClellan, Benjamin Butler, and Henry Halleck abolished liquor rations in their commands early in the war reformers rejoiced.¹³⁷ By September 1863, they were dismayed that rum rations had been restored on the premise of keeping the army healthy.¹³⁸ They expressed similar views about naval rations.¹³⁹ The spirit ration, reformers charged, served no legitimate purpose. Citing claims from the army that whiskey was necessary in cases of fatigue or as a stimulant to “act upon dull, stupid men as does a spur or a whip upon a dull horse,” they pointed out that this was a slippery slope – “the army are always fatigued,” men would begin to crave a gill in all sorts of weather, and daily rations would be the “most dangerous to the physical and moral man.”¹⁴⁰ A poetic Pennsylvania woman hoped that the military would “Withold [sic] the whisky rations,” so that their “cherished ones” would “fall

¹³⁶ “[correspondence of the Richmond Dispatch],” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, November 7, 1861.

¹³⁷ “Spirit Ration Discontinued,” *JATU* 25 (July 1862): 112; “Gen. Butler’s Order,” *JATU* 25 (August 1862): 116; “Gen. Halleck’s Army,” *JATU* 25 (August 1862): 116.

¹³⁸ “The Rum Ration Restored,” *JATU* 26 (September 1863): 129.

¹³⁹ “Congratulations for the Navy,” *JATU* 25 (August 1862): 113; “Spirit Ration in the Navy,” *JATU* 25 (November 1862): 170.

¹⁴⁰ “Excursion to Washington,” *JATU* 24 (July 1861): 106; “A Whisky Ration,” *JATU* 27 (July 1864): 105; “Whiskey Rations,” *JATU* 25 (May 1862): 73.

nobly, facing rebel guns” as “good men, and ‘temperance sons.’” Whiskey rations compromised a soldier’s ability to die a good death. It was not worth the risk.¹⁴¹

Tee-totalling northerners were equally skeptical of sutlers. One army correspondent condemned sutlers not only for robbing soldiers with their “exorbitant prices,” but also for “robbing them of their manhood and ruining them forever” by selling them liquor.¹⁴² The New York Herald went further, comparing sutlers to extortioners. The paper accused the “unprincipled” peddlers of causing serious problems for the Union soldiers, including deadly battlefield disasters.¹⁴³ New Yorkers, joined by Senator Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, called for the federal government to “drive the devils” from Union camps. Not only were they miring soldiers in debt and debauchery, but they represented a more dangerous political foe. The American Temperance Union pointed out that sutlers were asking northern businessmen (“every seller of gingerbread and grog”) to raise funds to protect their interests.¹⁴⁴

The way reformers saw it, any trafficker in spirituous beverages was a political and national liability. And nothing captured their concerns better than General George Meade’s placing the sutler system in the Army of the Potomac under the control of Provost Marshal General Marsena Patrick. Though reformers believed they could trust Patrick on some level, they doubted that his personal morality would overcome the problems caused if sutlers were allowed to sell the “deadly poison.” Drawing on the historical notion that “men of good moral character”

¹⁴¹ Myra Myrtle, “Whisky Rations,” from the Northern Christian Advocate, reprinted in the JATU 27 (November 1864): 173. The last stanzas are: “Withhold the whisky rations, we entreat; / Let every other comfort be replete, / But give no deadly drink, however sweet. / Give not this serpent to our cherished ones, / They may fall nobly, facing rebel guns, / But let them fall good men, and ‘temperance sons.’” For scholarship on the “good death” and the war, see Drew Gilpin Faust, This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

¹⁴² “Lancaster Co. Regiment,” JATU 25 (February 1862): 28; for additional example, see “Army Correspondence: Letter from Joseph Little, Chaplain 5th Virginia,” JATU 26 (May 1863): 78.

¹⁴³ Oscar G. Sawyer, Correspondent, “Important from Charleston,” New York Herald, August 3, 1863.

¹⁴⁴ “Lancaster Co. Regiment,” JATU 25 (February 1862): 28; “Sutlers in the Camp,” JATU 25 (January 1862): 11.

should be the only ones given the privilege of selling ardent spirits, the ATU pointed out the fundamental flaw with the entire system of regulating sutlers. “Thousands” of men – soldiers in this case – would be “ruined because they bought of good men.” A moral liquor dealer was an oxymoron. Sutler’s laws, like all attempts at regulation, would “prove a failure.” And reformers, knowing that the stakes were high – military success and national salvation hung in the balance – implored northerners to come by “common consent” to suppress the liquor trade.¹⁴⁵

Conclusion

Northern temperance reformers were in the minority with their calls for absolute teetotalism in the ranks. Neither Union nor Confederate military officials took steps to abolish fatigue rations, and civilians – especially in the South – often seemed willing to sell or provide alcohol when commissary supplies ran short. Nevertheless, the American Temperance Union’s contention that supplying whiskey caused “trouble” was often accurate. There was no uniform policy regulating whiskey’s distribution. And officers who took advantage of their rank to procure their own spirits left enlisted men feeling justified in sneaking liquor from sutlers or distillers in the woods.

The resulting problems increasingly caught civilians’ attention – especially when soldiers camped near towns and cities. Men who marched through towns drunk on whiskey rations wreaked havoc on communities. More problematic were the many men who developed a knack for finding liquor – from farmers or shops – wherever they went. Keeping peace in northern and southern cities would require military officials to pass prohibitory measures to protect vulnerable citizens. More than that, civilians who were not temperance reformers increasingly came to the

¹⁴⁵ “Gen. Meade and the Sutler System,” JATU 27 (February 1864): 25.

conclusion that massive armies and whiskey distilling were a dangerous combination. When it came to protecting cities, civilians – especially southerners – came to agree with reformers that regulation was not sufficient and that prohibition might be required.

Chapter 4
“Ladies are afraid to go into the Streets”
Soldiers, Civilians, and the Regulation of Alcohol

In early 1862, the Virginia legislature voted to prohibit distilling because it wasted grain.¹ State Senator James M. Whittle voted for the measure and received angry letters from his constituents in Pittsylvania County. Writing to a friend and political supporter, Whittle explained that though he had been encouraged “to support the stills” – specifically those Virginians who distilled grains for their own private use – he believed that the prohibition on distilling could be borne stoically and patriotically. The problem with distilling during a time of war was two-fold: the state was running out of grain and “the army has been demoralized by liquor.” If distilling continued, Whittle pointed out, there was no way for the Confederacy to sustain its war effort. “Certainly some will lose money” by being unable to distill, he acknowledged, “but we all lose money by the war & no one ought to complain on that account.” Instead, all Virginians – except speculators – must embrace the financial hardships caused by the war. Even Whittle was willing to adjust his habits. Knowing that whiskey “has killed more than the Yankee,” he vowed “to take not a drop...to save the cause of the country.” His teetotalism, though, was merely a patriotic gesture. He was “no temperance man & had no such view in my vote.”² Whittle’s view that the war necessitated prohibition for pragmatic – but not moral – reasons is reflected in the debates over distilling and controlling spirits throughout the Confederacy.

¹ “An act to prevent the unnecessary Consumption of grain by Distillers and other Manufacturers of Spirituous and Maltliquors – passed March 12, 1862,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 17, 1862.

² James M. Whittle to Zach L. Finney, March 20, 1862, Accession 41447, Personal Papers Collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

For decades, temperance reformers had argued that distillers and liquor traffickers threatened the nation by introducing bottled chaos to American cities. As rural folk and immigrants flocked to cities to find work in factories, crowded conditions increased the probability of theft and violent crime as strangers bumped into each other at every turn. Reform-minded middle-class Americans – especially temperance reformers – believed that alcohol contributed to urban disorder by provoking violence and destabilizing families.³ But when it came to controlling access to alcohol, temperance reformers found themselves at odds with most politicians. States passed laws that regulated, rather than prohibited, the manufacture and sale of ardent spirits, requiring the licensing of those who sold spirits or kept saloons. In the 1850s, temperance reformers mustered support for total prohibition in some northern states, in the form of “Maine Laws” (which took their name from the first state to pass such measures), but the laws were largely ineffective and by 1860 most had been repealed. While reformers increasingly believed that only legal suasion would keep Americans from drinking too much (in their eyes, moral suasion had failed in the antebellum decades, though license laws and traffic regulations had reduced consumption), most middle-class Americans – including politicians – believed that consuming alcohol was a personal decision and that pragmatic regulation sufficiently controlled the crime, poverty, and urban disorder caused by rampant intoxication. To a large extent, they were right. License laws had effectively reduced alcohol consumption in most northern cities.⁴

³ For scholarship on urban reform efforts to promote temperance, see Paul Boyer, Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978); Robert H. Abzug, Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Bruce Dorsey, Reforming Men and Women: Gender in the Antebellum City (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), 90-135; Bruce E. Stewart, Moonshiners and Prohibitionists: The Battle of Alcohol in Southern Appalachia (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 9-60.

⁴ For scholarship on licensing laws and their limits, see Lee L. Willis, Southern Prohibition: Race, Reform, and Public Life in Middle Florida, 1821-1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 41-66; Jack S. Blocker, American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 1-60; Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers' Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1960), 99-134; Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers: 1815-1860 (Revised Edition)

But the war required Americans to take a second look at liquor regulations and legal prohibition. In the Union and the Confederacy, civilian and military authorities reached different conclusions about how best to regulate the liquor traffic and prevent drunken disorder from hindering the war effort. In the North, federal and state authorities were most interested in harnessing the liquor trade to increase tax revenue, much to the consternation of temperance reformers. But if taxed whiskey had its uses, its availability exacerbated problems with drunken soldiers. Whenever Federal troops camped near or occupied cities, military officials had to make spur of the moment prohibitory measures to limit conflicts between soldiers and civilians. In Confederate cities, civilian and military authorities took a similar approach, severely limiting the availability of alcohol. When it came to regulating the southern liquor traffic, however, Confederates faced a bigger problem. Unlike the North, the South was plagued by food and supply shortages and grain became a precious commodity. Preserving food forced many southern state governments, as well as the Confederate government, to place prohibitions on distilling.

Many supporters of wartime regulations and prohibitions argued that the limits they placed on the manufacture and sale of liquor were motivated by pragmatism, not morality. The Union government needed revenue. Military authorities needed to maintain discipline. City officials needed to prevent soldiers from menacing civilians. And Confederates needed to preserve grain. Practical-minded politicians and officers set themselves apart from the preachy temperance reformers. Scholarship so far has taken politicians and military officials at their word: any wartime regulatory measures have been deemed practical to facilitate discipline and conserve food. But during a time of war, protecting civilians and preserving resources is morally

(New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 125-146; Ian R. Tyrrell, Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979).

imperative.⁵ During the Civil War, northerners and southerners determined that civilians who produced liquor illegally or without a license hurt the war effort by withholding taxes. Liquor traffickers turned soldiers into ineffective drunks. Grain wasted in distilling caused women and children to starve. More than that, civilians called for civil and military authorities to regulate liquor to protect them from ornery soldiers and (in the South) starvation. By doing so Americans became increasingly comfortable with the notion that the state had the authority to dictate who was behaving as a moral, patriotic citizen.

Taxes and Licenses in the North

When it came to regulating alcohol during the war, the United States Congress had one primary concern: using excise duties on alcohol to generate income. Taking advantage of the vast amounts of capital available in the northern states, the federal government set out in 1861 to raise both income and excise taxes.⁶ Congress's concerns were pragmatic, but northern temperance reformers found the excise taxes difficult to stomach, as it seemed that the federal government was tacitly approving consumption. Not only did reformers find the taxes troubling, but they argued that existing state license and Sunday prohibitions needed strengthening in order to protect northern communities and soldiers from bacchanalian chaos.

⁵ Lee L. Willis argues that Confederates acted pragmatically, prohibiting alcohol to promote soldier discipline and save resources, see [Southern Prohibition: Race, Reform, and Public Life in Middle Florida, 1821-1920](#), 67-81. Joe L. Coker contends that a legal prohibition movement did not gain traction in the South until the 1880s, see [Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement](#) (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky). In her study of World War I, Helen Zoe Veit demonstrates that food rationing had specifically moral connotations: Americans needed to save the best food for soldiers and carefully select foods for their families that would promote the war effort. People who ignored rationing recommendations were unpatriotic and immoral. See, [Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century](#) (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁶ Phillip Shaw Paludan, [A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861-1865](#) (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996), 105-126.

In July 1861, the federal government began instituting an excise tax on alcohol that it would maintain and raise throughout the war. The tax was the first federal regulatory measure placed on alcohol in more than four decades. Only twice previously, for brief periods – 1791-1802 and 1814-1817 – had the federal government taxed distilling in order to pay off debts incurred during the Revolution and the War of 1812.⁷ After months of debate, in July 1862, Congress placed duties of \$.20 per gallon on all distilled spirits and \$1.00 per barrel on “all beer, lager beer, ale, porter, and other similar fermented liquors, by whatever name such liquors may be called.” Congress raised the duties on distilled liquors to \$.60 per gallon in March 1864, \$1.50 per gallon in July 1864, and \$2.00 in January 1865.⁸ While both houses agreed on the necessity of such measures, when it came to determining how to tax distilled and fermented beverages that were aged (where their volume changed over time) or “on hand” when the legislation was passed, congressmen disagreed. The House of Representatives decided not to tax liquor (especially foreign liquor) retroactively, but when it came to lager beer, Congress found itself struggling against the increasingly powerful Liquor Dealers’ Association. When the excise laws were passed in 1862, Congress made provisions for the aging process and exempted beers that

⁷ Michael R. Veach, Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey: An American Heritage (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013), 63.

⁸ “An Act to provide Internal Revenue to support the Government and to pay Interest on the Public Debt,” United States Statutes at Large, 12:432-489; “An Act to amend an Act entitled ‘An Act to provide Internal Revenue to support the Government and pay Interest on the Public Debt,’ approved July 1, 1862, and for other Purposes,” 12:713-731; “An Act to increase the Internal Revenue, and for other Purposes,” 13:14-17; “An Act to provide Internal Revenue to support the Government, to pay Interest on the Public Debt, and for other Purposes,” 13:223-306; “An Act to amend an Act entitled, ‘An Act to provide Internal Revenue to support the Government, to pay Interest on the Public Debt, and for other Purposes,’ approved June thirtieth, eighteen hundred and sixty-four,” 13:469-470. See also, Thirty-Seventh Congress, First Session, Journal of the Senate of the United States of America, vol. 53 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1861), 110-1; Thirty-Seventh Congress, Second Session, Journal of the Senate of the United States of America, vol. 54 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), 598-602, 748; Thirty-Seventh Congress, First Session, Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, Vol. 58 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1861), 145, 201; Thirty-Seventh Congress, Second Session, Journal of the House of Representatives of the United States, vol. 59 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1862), 148. For scholarship on the whiskey tax, see Tun Yuan Hu, The Liquor Tax in the United States, 1791-1947: A History of the Internal Revenue Taxes Imposed on Distilled Spirits by the Federal Government (New York: Columbia University Graduate School of Business, 1950), 37-8.

had been placed in storage in February and March 1862 that would not be ready for consumption until September 1862. All beer removed after September 1 would be taxed. In 1865, the Liquor Dealers' Association decided, however, that any beer placed in storage before February 1862 should be exempt from the tax regardless of whether or not it was removed by September 1862. Congress refused to refund their taxes.⁹

Liquor dealers fought against taxes, but temperance-minded northerners believed that drinking could be severely curtailed if the tax burden put dealers out of business. In Congress, Representatives Josiah Grinnell (Iowa, Union Party) and John Law (Indiana, Democrat) argued that tax rates carried moral implications. As Law saw it, reducing the taxes on fermented beverages would encourage Americans to consume more beer and less liquor. When the use of hard spirits decreased, the country would sober up.¹⁰ Thus, when Congress raised duties on distilled liquors in 1864, taxes on fermented beverages remained at just \$1.00 per barrel.¹¹ Attempts in 1865 to increase the tax to \$1.50 were voted down in the Senate.¹² The American Temperance Union certainly did not argue for lowering taxes on any form of alcohol, but they retreated – slightly – from their stance that any tax or license law legitimized the traffic. In 1863, the ATU urged the federal government to scale back citizens' general tax burden by imposing higher taxes on liquor dealers. Higher taxes might make alcohol prohibitively expensive for consumers, or wipe out the trade altogether. The ATU created a petition and encouraged reformers throughout the North to circulate it. They urged Congress, “in justice and for the benefit of the country,” that liquor dealers “should be made to bear more heavily than others the

⁹ “House of Representatives: The Internal Tax Bill,” New York Times, April 22, 1864; “Internal Revenue Decisions,” New York Times, July 2, 1865.

¹⁰ “House of Representatives: The Internal Tax Bill,” New York Times, April 22, 1864.

¹¹ “From Washington: Dispatches to the Associated Press,” New York Times, April 16, 1864.

¹² “Thirty-Eighth Congress: Second Session – House of Representatives, The Internal Revenue Bill,” New York Times, February 19, 1865.

burdens of war.” The extra duties would “in some degree compensate for the immense evils” caused by the traffic.¹³

With their statements on the civilian tax burden, the New-York-centered ATU was merely reiterating its opinion that liquor dealers burdened society. Even before the first battle of Bull Run, these reformers declared that they were not willing to pay higher war taxes unless the state amped up its efforts to enforce existing license laws. In 1861, there were more than 10,000 dram shops in New York City, and most of them were unlicensed. The New York Times estimated that the city could tap into more than half a million dollars in revenue simply by collecting license fees and fines. Comparing rum-sellers to secessionists, the Times maintained that the city “can’t afford to have [laws] defied in New-York” while “we are fighting to enforce the laws in Dixie Land.” The unregulated liquor traffic had been burdening the citizens of New York with crime and extra taxes for years, but during wartime, when coffee, tea, and sugar were being taxed, citizens were aghast that “the rum-trade” was largely exempt. Liquor dealers “must pay in war time” to keep “the privilege of making paupers and tipplers.”¹⁴

But as the Journal of the American Temperance Union acknowledged, the goal of the excise tax was not to put liquor dealers out of business but to use their goods to raise revenue, and the Union therefore benefitted American tipping. In an ironic article reprinted from an exchange paper, the JATU somewhat light-heartedly shared the story of “a ‘loyal’ man” who “got a little heavy about the head.” Sensing that a crowd of people were casting silent judgment on him for his drunkenness, the man pointed out that every man that “drinks taxed lickens” was a patriot. “Every blessed drop of licker he swallows is taxed to pay the salaries of them big officers

¹³ “Taxing of Liquors,” Journal of the American Temperance Union and The New-York Prohibitionist 26 (February 1863): 17.

¹⁴ “A Revenue Placer,” New York Times, June 16, 1861.

at Washington and support the war,” he explained. If “all was to quit a drinking why the war must stop and the Government fail.” He, personally, would “rather drink buttermilk, or ginger-pop, or soda-water.”¹⁵ Of course, drinking for the good of the war effort was not what reformers had in mind, and the transcriptions of slurred speech and use of quotations around the adjective “loyal” reveal the ATU’s true position on licensed liquor. Even so, taxing liquor heavily, they believed, mitigated a few of the harmful effects of alcohol if it relieved northern civilians of some of their personal tax burdens.

Controlling Union Soldiers in Towns

The grog-slugging patriot exemplified for reformers the kind of damage legal alcohol sales brought to northern cities. Groups of rowdy drunken men had plagued cities in antebellum decades, but the war created a new problem: the drunken soldier, especially in the North. Elsewhere, notably in the border regions, soldiers managed to rustle up liquor when they passed through towns, causing disorder. When troops occupied southern towns, soldiers and civilians clashed, and alcohol exacerbated tensions. Civilians sometimes supplied the booze, but they also worried about drunken soldiers. In circumstances where northerners might have previously eschewed Maine Laws in favor of license laws, heightened threats from rowdy soldiers changed their minds. Because so many of the urban problems were caused by soldiers, and commanding officers were enacting regulations on the ground (at times in place of civilian authority), military officials found themselves developing policy *ad hoc*.

In major northern cities, nearby army camps created problems from the earliest months of the war. For New York, the trouble began in October 1861. Initially, New York placed its

¹⁵ From an exchange paper, “Patriotic Drinking,” *JATU* 27 (September 1864): 134-35.

soldiers in Camp Washington on the “isolated but healthful” Staten Island. There, army officials believed they could maintain discipline among the volunteers with the help of civilian authorities because there was no access to the city save a ferry-boat and the island did not have many “temptations” to offer. There were occasional violent confrontations around village liquor shops, and surgeon Thomas T. Ellis noted that the morning sick report “often swelled” with bruised and hung-over soldiers. Yet for the most part reasonable discipline was maintained.¹⁶ By fall, however, Camp Washington was filled to the brim, and seasoned regiments were moved to the newly formed Camp Ledlie, located at the Palace Garden near Sixth Avenue in Manhattan. As its name suggests, the Palace Garden “had been previously used as a place of public amusement.” Not only was it inhospitable – lacking bunks, lights, and ventilation – but the building also was located in a neighborhood filled with drinking houses.¹⁷ And the Palace Garden was not the only urban “encampment” near large supplies of alcohol. In January 1862 Charles Francis Adams, Jr., found himself “barracked in a German amusement building and grove on 64th street.” This beer garden, though, seemed to host its officers more “comfortably” than the enlisted men’s Palace Garden.¹⁸ Unsurprisingly, it did not matter much if the men were sleeping with mattresses spread on filthy floors or were quartered pleasantly in cleaner rooms, nearby bars and beer gardens offered too many temptations. Compounding the problem were the officers, whose “absence at night” created a situation where drunken soldiers returned to quarters and brawled with each other. After drinking “about as much liquor as the landlord thought was for their good,” soldiers refused to leave Willer’s lager-beer saloon in New York City. A fight ensued, and one soldier

¹⁶ Thomas T. Ellis, Leaves from the Diary of an Army Surgeon; or, Incidents of Field, Camp, and Hospital Life (New York: John Bardburn, 1863), 16.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 19-20.

¹⁸ Worthington Chauncey Ford, Charles Francis Adams, and Henry Adams, A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865 (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1920), 1:97.

“received a severe scalp wound.” The soldiers went on a rampage and proceeded to destroy private property and terrify civilians as they roamed the neighborhood wielding muskets and demanding justice for their injured comrade.¹⁹ Attempts to control soldiers’ access to alcohol generally failed, and men readily invented tales of sick relatives to obtain passes for short furloughs – often forays into the city for drink.²⁰

Perhaps no northern city encountered quite the vast array of problems as Washington, D. C., and its surrounding communities, which by the summer of 1861 had descended to bacchanalian excess. British observer William Howard Russell noted in July 1861 that Union officers made copious purchases from a “wine and spirit store” near his lodging, and as the night wore on, there was “a good deal of tumult” when a group of Zouaves wrecked a brothel. One private was murdered, and there were “no police, no provost guard” to control the crowd.²¹ In the weeks following the first Battle of Bull Run, Captain Robert Goldthwaite Carter, who served with the city guards, recalled that “Saloons, houses of ill fame, and dens and dives of all descriptions had sprung up like mushrooms.” Perhaps the “most prolific” was a variety theater known as the “Canterbury Hall,” which had entertainment so “marvelous” that soldiers encamped near the city would sneak off as often as possible to enjoy its distractions.²² When soldiers arrived in the city, the more sober-minded, such as Charles B. Haydon, quenched their thirst in moderation, with a glass or two of lager-beer.²³ But Carter spent his day patrolling Canterbury Hall and other establishments, rounding up drunken soldiers. Most men did not

¹⁹ “Disgraceful Conduct of Soldiers,” *New York Times*, October 15, 1861.

²⁰ Thomas T. Ellis, *Leaves from the Diary of an Army Surgeon*, 19-20; Worthington Chauncey Ford, Charles Francis Adams, and Henry Adams, *A Cycle of Adams Letters, 1861-1865*, 1:97.

²¹ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* (T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863), 390.

²² Robert Goldthwaite Carter, *Four Brothers in Blue, or Sunshine and Shadows of the War of the Rebellion: A Story of the Great Civil War from Bull Run to Appomattox* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 30.

²³ Charles B. Haydon, *For Country, Cause, and Leader: The Civil War Journal of Charles B. Haydon*, Edited by Stephen W. Sears (New York: Tichnor and Fields, 1993), 63-64.

exercise Haydon's restraint. By August 2, 1861, Provost Marshal General Andrew Porter attempted to establish order in the city by issuing General Orders, No. 1, which provided for the arrest of any soldier absent without a pass and further called for the "suppression of gambling-houses, drinking houses, or bar-rooms, and brothels."²⁴

The problems, however, did not completely abate – at least not in the surrounding communities. Assigned to Provost Guard in August 1861, Massachusetts Private Rufus Robbins was tasked with "report[ing] liquor sellers" and capturing wayward soldiers and rebels in Georgetown.²⁵ Although William Howard Russell had initially commented that Georgetown was "much more respectable and old-world looking than its vulgar, empty, overgrown, mushroom neighbor, Washington," by October 1861, he was aghast after nearly being run down by drunken soldiers and officers who had been "riding full gallop down the streets, and as fast as they can round the corners." Russell himself nearly took a sabre to the head, and at least two officers – a colonel and a major – were killed "by falls from horseback, in furious riding in the city." Only by placing mounted guards in the streets could the Union army get their men under control.²⁶

Alexandria, Virginia, offered all the moral entrapments of Washington with the addition of disloyal citizens, a combination that greatly exasperated Union military officials. In a February 1862 letter to Secretary of State William Seward, Special Government Agent S. W. Morton warned that the city was not only full of secessionist sympathizers but also abounded with "the vilest of whisky dens and rum holes and other vile places of corrupt debauch to demoralize the soldiers." The road leading to the camps outside of town were "filled with staggering, drunken soldiers, poisoned and rendered unfit to serve their country." They

²⁴ Robert Goldthwaite Carter, *Four Brothers in Blue*, 30.

²⁵ Rufus Robbins, *Through Ordinary Eyes: The Civil War Correspondence of Rufus Robbins, Private, 7th Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers*, Edited by Ella Jane Bruen and Brian M. Fitzgibbins (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2000), 49.

²⁶ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 482, 561.

“disgraced” the Union Army with their conduct. Moreover, Morton feared that the unruly environment of the city, along with alcohol’s undoubtedly bad influence, facilitated a rebel spy network. He advised the military to govern the city with “more stringent measures” in the interest of the Union.²⁷ If Seward authorized the Union Army to enact more forceful polices to control vice, the measures never took hold. Eighteen months later, Indiana soldier Elijah Cavins described the city as “a perfect Sodom.” Being close to the city had its advantages – Cavins was eating fresh fruit of all varieties -- but the “rowdyism and drunkenness” made him wish to be “farther off from town.” There were “bawdy houses” everywhere, women made “indecent advances” toward soldiers and watched them bathe. Cavins found the experience “disgusting.”²⁸

In the western theater, river towns provided plenty of opportunity for drinking and mischief. St. Louis had a burgeoning beer industry before the war, and its location at the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers and on the border between the North, the South, and the West meant it would often be filled with soldiers. Though Union officials banned liquor, they permitted soldiers to drink lager beer (because it was less intoxicating) and contracted agreements with local brewers.²⁹ The resulting atmosphere dismayed John Vance Lauderdale. On his way to church one Sunday morning, there were more people on the street “than looks well.” St. Louis could not “boast much for its morality....*Everybody*—almost—drinks.” Lauderdale credited the many beer gardens to the “mixed population” of German and French Americans coupled with the “floating population” and believed that steady drinking made

²⁷ The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (70 vols. in 128; Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. II, Vol. II, 218.

²⁸ Elijah Henry Clay Cavins, The Civil War Letters of Col. Elijah H. C. Cavins, 14th Indiana, Compiled by Barbara A. Smith (Owensboro, KY: Cook-McDowell, 1981), 182.

²⁹ Maureen Ogle, Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 2006), 1-85, 42-45.

St. Louisians and their visitors lazy. The sailors charged with building the levee spent more time “standing around in little groups in front of the liquor shops” than working.³⁰

Three hundred miles south in Memphis, Union soldiers kept the roads to and from their camps crowded with drunks. Jenkin Lloyd Jones spent his New Years’ Eve in Memphis, during which time “nearly two-thirds of the soldiers were *drunk*,” though he was more amused than appalled.”³¹ For John Quincy Adams Campbell, however, the “everyday occurrence” of men returning from Memphis drunk was abominable. Although Union officials increasingly concluded that soldiers were unable to control themselves and that the only way to prevent drunkenness was to close shops, Campbell disagreed and argued that manliness required self-control. That the “temptation” of Memphis was close-by was “no excuse,” he thought, and soldiers “whom I had *before* considered men of principle and mind, have given way to their passions and sunk the *man* into a mere *animal*, disgracing themselves, their company, their regiment, their friends, and *their race*... The *man* shines the brightest through trials and temptations—the *creature* bows to every adverse wind.”³² In Campbell’s mind, adversity separated men from animals. Men who avoided the bottle retained their manhood in the midst of life’s trials. Those who visited the liquor shops of Memphis (or any other city) jeopardized the reputation and fitness of the Union Army. Temperance reformers would have heartily agreed with his assessment.

Being encamped near a large city certainly enabled soldiers to drink, but plenty of men figured out how to work in a drunken spree while marching through small towns. Massachusetts

³⁰ John Vance Lauderdale, The Wounded River: The Civil War Letters of John Vance Lauderdale, M. D., Edited by Peter Josyph (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993), 85.

³¹ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, An Artilleryman’s Diary (Wisconsin History Commission, 1914), 24.

³² John Quincy Adams Campbell, The Union Must Stand: The Civil War Diary of John Quincy Adams Campbell, Fifth Iowa Volunteer Infantry (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 77.

Lieutenant Augustus Ayling was notably adept. In Kentucky in June 1863, Ayling was living an “inactive life” of “reading, smoking and sleeping” because he and his men were not “fighting every day.” To pass the time, Ayling and his friends went into town one evening “to call on some friends” who happened to be “nice girls.” Throughout the night, Ayling and his buddies met up with various officers, serenaded folks they knew, enjoyed “cake and wine,” “went to several other places and had a general good time,” and ultimately ended their adventures around midnight with “a good night drink of ‘Bourbon’” and went to bed. The next day Ayling and the 29th Massachusetts began a ten-day journey that would ultimately send them through Memphis on their way to join Union forces at Vicksburg. As the men marched, there was a stop for the night in Waynesburg, a tiny town that included five houses, one tavern, and three whiskey shops. There were whiskey shops up the road in Lancaster as well, and soldiers straggled so they could purchase whiskey. After several days of marching, consuming “several bottles of native wine” helped ease the pain in Ayling’s aching heels. When the regiment finally landed in Memphis a week later, Ayling’s feet were rested enough that he could join other officers for a night on the town. After enjoying “juleps” and “cobblers,” the men treated themselves to a showing of The Drunkard, which was, ironically, a temperance play. Not surprisingly, Ayling declared the play “Not very interesting!” and “went with the crowd around town and did not get to bed until about two.”³³

Local people were more than willing to sell or give liquor to troops. In July 1861, the “hospitable citizens” of Camden, New Jersey, decided to welcome Union volunteers with a feast and a goodly amount of liquor. Guards were stationed at the doors of every “rum-hole,” but even

³³ Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms: The Diary of Lieutenant August D. Ayling, 29th Massachusetts Volunteers, Edited by Charles F. Herberger (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 133-34; 138-39; for information on The Drunkard, a temperance play first performed in 1844 that told the tale of a drunkard’s family, see John Allen Krout, The Origins of Prohibition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1925), 254-55.

so, the men managed to pass around bottles. Union Chaplain Joseph Twichell concluded that such “mistaken liberality” could have had incredibly dire consequences if the regiment had been allowed to drink all that was offered. As it was, before the night ended, “a man was seriously wounded in the face by a cannon fired in our honor.”³⁴ Twichell seems to have wished that the good folk would have displayed their loyalty in a less liquid form. The people of Camden may have been motivated by patriotism, but when Union troops under Colonel A. L. Lee entered Somerville, Tennessee, in January 1863, Confederate sympathizers “treated the soldiers well, and offered them in singular profusion wines and liquors of all kinds.” Beyond what the townspeople provided, Lee found fourteen barrels of whiskey in a Confederate store-house. He posted a captain to guard the place, but the Union soldiers, who had eaten nothing all day after spending the night outside in a “pelting storm” drank heavily and became “somewhat exhilarated” on the liquor provided by civilians. The intoxicated soldiers attempted to break into the store-house, and shot the captain when he refused to let them pass. Lee was aghast at the violence. The South was known for its “proverbial” whiskey shortage, and he had never thought to develop a policy for preventing rampant drunkenness among his men.³⁵

Despite rumored and real liquor shortages, Union troops managed to acquire it through great ingenuity. When marching through Frizzleburg, Maryland, in June 1863, Union soldiers knew “that there was a barrel of whiskey on tap here, in a carriage shed under a barn.” The men helped themselves.³⁶ When no one could sell or dispense whiskey, soldiers simply stole it. Near Chico Pass, Louisiana, Massachusetts soldiers “broke open” a bar.³⁷ In Jackson, Mississippi,

³⁴ Joseph Hopkins Twichell, The Civil War Letters of Joseph Hopkins Twichell: A Chaplain’s Story, Edited by Peter Messent and Steven Courtney (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006), 47.

³⁵ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Pt. 3, 141-43.

³⁶ Robert Goldthwaite Carter, Four Brothers in Blue, 297.

³⁷ Henry Warren Howe, Passages from the Life of Henry Warren Howe. Consisting of Diary and Letters Written During the Civil War, 1816-1865. A Condensed History of the Thirtieth Massachusetts Regiment and Its Flags.

soldiers ransacked closed shops in search of rum.³⁸ When Union troops entered Columbia, South Carolina, in February 1865, “almost wild soldiery” roamed the streets “under the control of no one.”³⁹

The unruly soldiers angered civilians whose towns were overrun by troops, and at least two communities worked with military authorities to establish traditional campaigns of moral uplift to end all the revelry. When Camp Hicks was established near Frederick, Maryland, in 1861, Lieutenant-Colonel Wilder Dwight spent time talking with local citizens about preserving “peace and quietness” in the “fine old town.” The “band-leader already talks of giving concerts” – the goal being, of course, keeping “the men in order, and preventing drunkenness.”⁴⁰ Just in case the concerts were not distracting enough, sentries were posted on every street to collect miscreants. Charles Fessenden Morse thought this system worked fairly well. To go into the city, soldiers had to obtain passes, and it was in “their interest to keep sober and quiet” so as not to lose the privilege.⁴¹ The residents of Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, implored the Union command to take similar measures. By 1864, the citizens complained that intoxicated soldiers committed “outrageous violations of morality...on our streets in open day. Night is rendered hideous by the howling imprecations and riotings of drunken men.” The editors of the Valley Spirit believed that “an effort should be made by the officers in command” to put a stop to the debauchery. In the meantime, concerned citizens made plans for a “series of free lectures, by some of the reverend clergy, on sin and wickedness in general and drunkenness [sic], rioting and profanity in

Together with the Genealogies of the Different Branches of the Family (Lowell, MA: Courier-Citizen Co. Printers, 1899), 60.

³⁸ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV, Pt. 1, 754.

³⁹ Oscar Lawrence Jackson, The Colonel's Diary: Journals kept Before and During the Civil War by the Late Colonel Oscar L. Jackson...Sometime Commander of the 63rd regiment O. V. I., Edited by David P. Jackson (privately published, 1922), 183-84.

⁴⁰ Wilder Dwight, Life and Letters of Wilder Dwight: Lieut-Col., Second Mass. Inf. Vols. (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Co., 1891), 167.

⁴¹ Charles Fessenden Morse, Letters Written during the Civil War, 1861-1865 (privately published, 1898), 33.

particular.” Doubling that the lectures alone would restore order, the editors also believed that “some stringent notification should be served” to local hotel and saloon keepers.⁴²

Both the problems in Chambersburg and the success in Frederick reveal the limits of simply cajoling soldiers to behave. Military authorities had to take stronger actions. Posting sentries and putting provost guards on patrol were common methods of curbing drunkenness. In Baltimore, General Benjamin Butler ordered the Provost Marshal of the 8th Army Corps to “keep them [recruits] under close guard” to prevent them from getting drunk before they were transported to Fort Monroe.⁴³ Most of the time, however, these guards were ineffective because the men were able to leave camp. In October 1864, John Quincy Adams Campbell complained about being assigned “officer of the day” in Louisville. The soldiers “were allowed to go out in town as they choose,” and he had the task of keeping them corralled. He “managed to get along,” but noted that “a number of the men came to quarters very drunk during the evening.”⁴⁴ Jenkin Lloyd Jones encountered similar problems on guard duty near Allatoona, Georgia. A sergeant “went out with a squad on pass.” They returned from town “too drunk to take care of themselves.”⁴⁵ If men had passes, guards were largely powerless to stop them. Plenty of times, however, the guards themselves were drunk. For example, the 29th Massachusetts assigned Company H to be its provost guard, but this included the julep-guzzling Lieutenant Ayling.⁴⁶ Ayling claimed to have kept order but he was no temperance crusader, and neither were most of the other men who served as provost guards. As rhyme-loving Don Redro Quarendo Reminisco remembered it, military regulations in Washington were ineffective because when the Provost-

⁴² “Town Morality,” Valley Spirit (Franklin County, PA), February 10, 1864.

⁴³ Benjamin Franklin Butler, Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, During the Period of the Civil War (Norwood, MA: Plimpton Press, 1917), 4:91.

⁴⁴ John Quincy Adams Campbell, The Union Must Stand, 189.

⁴⁵ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, An Artillerymen’s Diary, 244.

⁴⁶ Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms, 134.

Marshal confiscated the whiskey and put it in “a sequestered lot,” “each *provost guardsman* became a drunken sot.”⁴⁷

Because preventative measures often failed, many commanding officers focused on punishing drunkenness when it occurred. Butler had little patience with drunken soldiers and officers under his command. In June 1862 in New Orleans, two Union privates broke into a civilian home “under the effects of bad whiskey.” They were first accused of looting, until Captain Robert S. Davis discovered that they were merely so intoxicated that they had stormed the wrong house in search of concealed arms. Still, as punishment for their mistake they were sentenced to a few months hard labor before they were dishonorably discharged.⁴⁸ When no civilians were involved, Butler seems to have taken a softer approach, merely arresting anyone drunk in public, regardless of the “insignia of office.”⁴⁹

In many cases, however, officers determined that they had to cut the alcohol problem off at its roots, by prohibiting civilians from selling liquor and by closing shops. But in at least one instance, Federal officials initially rewarded the privilege of selling liquor to “loyal” citizens. In 1862, the St. Louis region of Missouri had not only been flooded with Union soldiers, but bands of guerrillas moved in and out of the city. Sometimes they stole horses from citizens, although there were “no threats or acts of violence toward anyone.” Union forces noticed that most disturbances occurred as a result of “bad whisky,” and they suggested extending the “same regulations in regard to dram-shops as exist in Saint Louis” so that “the peace of the country generally would be better preserved.” Based on their suggestion, “no permits to dram sellers or liquor dealers in any town or village” would be given “unless recommended by a majority of the

⁴⁷ Don Redro Quarendo Reminisco, Life in the Union Army: or Notings and Reminiscences of a Two Years' Volunteer (New York: H. Dexter, 1863), 126.

⁴⁸ Benjamin Franklin Butler, Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, 1:594.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 5:11.

citizens through the committee of safety.”⁵⁰ These measures, presumably, would ensure that only reliable (loyal) citizens opened dram shops. Despite efforts to control access to liquor, 1864 reports indicate that Missouri dram shops remained a problem as the Federal forces tried to suppress guerrilla bands. In the town of Weston, General James Craig was trying to organize companies to guard the towns and relieve the Union soldiers for other duties. But liquor “shops were running under the highest kind of pressure, and very many of the people excited.” Union officials closed all the shops and tried to disperse the crowds, but they seemed less than optimistic about getting the militia units sober and fit for duty.⁵¹

Elsewhere in the South, Union officers argued that completely closing liquor shops was the only way to ensure that rowdy Union soldiers would not harass civilians. In March 1865, General Edward R. S. Canby issued General Orders No. 32 for the Military Division of West Mississippi that, among other things, prohibited the sale of all intoxicating liquors – including wines, beers, and ales – “in the vicinity of any place occupied by our troops, either on the march or stationed.”⁵² Under such sweeping orders, commanding officers would close shops frequented by Union troops. The reason for these prohibitory measures, officers believed, was that Federal soldiers had a duty to protect citizens, especially women and children, even in rebel territory. Colonel John Kennett of the 4th Ohio Cavalry stated this clearly after the occupation of Tullahoma, Tennessee, in March 1862. Kennett assured the citizens that the soldiers sent by the government had only “kind intentions.” If rebel citizens were to be brought back into the national fold, kindness was imperative. But to maintain good relations with the townspeople, Kennett also

⁵⁰ OR, Ser. II, Vol. I, 114.

⁵¹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLI, Pt. 2, 100.

⁵² OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLVIII, Pt. 1, 1093.

had to hunt down whiskey dealers. He found two shops and “threatened to burn them down if the inmates retailed a single dram.”⁵³

Kennett may have been hopeful that secessionists could be converted to Unionists, but other Federal officers believed that women and children needed protecting, whether they became loyal citizens or not. Upon arriving in New Orleans in May 1862, General Butler issued General Orders, No. 25, which, among other things, stated that the duty of the Union army was to “feed and protect” the women and children while removing “a whisky-drinking mob” from the city.⁵⁴ In February 1864, Colonel R. B. Palmer of the 73rd Regiment Enrolled Missouri Militia also observed that whiskey dealers prospered at the expense of women and children. Not only were vulnerable civilians starving, but soldiers who purchased the liquor became drunk and exacted “vengeance on any whom they may choose to look on as personal or political enemies.”⁵⁵ The Union military had a duty to use its authority to prevent liquor from harming women and children.

Perhaps surprisingly, given their penchant for loudly proclaiming their Confederate sympathies, southern white women also lay claim to protection by Federal commanders, and more specifically for protection from drunken soldiers. Historians have shown that northern and southern women became increasingly comfortable petitioning the state during the war.⁵⁶ After

⁵³ OR, Ser. I, Vol. X, Pt. 1, 48; Kennett’s policy exemplifies what Mark Grimsley has termed “conciliatory policy,” which guided the Union military’s actions toward civilian populations in 1861 through the summer of 1862. The purpose of conciliation was to treat Confederate civilians kindly in order to possibly bring them back into the Union. See, Mark Grimsley, The Hard Hand of War: Union Military Policy toward Southern Civilians, 1861-1865 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁵⁴ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XV, 425.

⁵⁵ OR), Ser. I, Vol. XXXIV, Pt. 2, 412.

⁵⁶ Judith Giesberg, Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Nina Silber, Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005); George C. Rable, Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Stephen V. Ash, When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Drew Gilpin Faust, Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Stephanie McCurry, Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in

Federal forces occupied Murfreesboro, Tennessee, in the spring of 1862, Kate Carney and other women enthusiastically declared their support for the Confederacy and Jefferson Davis. An intoxicated soldier became “so enraged” that he “jumped over the fence [and] rushed into the house saying he considered the ladies under arrest.” The outraged women then sent for Federal guards, who hauled the drunkard off to jail.⁵⁷ Although they laughed off the incident, these Confederate women—ironically given their own defiant attitudes—also laid claim to protection from Union troops and requested guards to remove disorderly soldiers from their presence. When Yankee soldiers poured into Richmond after the fall of Petersburg, Judith McGuire and other women were terrified and did not sleep as “Federal soldiers were roaming about the streets; either whiskey or the excess of joy had given some of them the appearance of being beside themselves.” When the unruly Yankees occupied the lawn of one of her neighbors, McGuire wasted no time requesting that the Federal provost-marshal place a guard at her house, demanding Federal protection.⁵⁸

Perhaps the most vivid example of drunken Union soldiers threatening Confederate women comes from Eliza Frances Andrews. Shortly after the Confederate surrender at Appomattox, Andrews heard about the “depredations” the Union soldiers were committing as they took “peaceable possession” of her Georgia county. In one instance, they broke into a neighbor’s cellar and consumed “as much of his peach brandy as they could hold.” What they could not drink, they ruined with their spit, and then they “strut about the streets of Washington with negro women on their arms...sneak[ing] around into people’s kitchens [and] tampering with

the Civil War South (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). My study of southern women and drunken Union soldiers benefits from conversations with Laura Mammina, whose own work in progress explores wartime interactions between northern soldiers and southern women.

⁵⁷ May 25, 1862, Kate Carney Diary: April 15, 1861-July 31, 1862 (Electronic Edition), Manuscripts Department, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁵⁸ Judith White Brockenbrough McGuire, Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War, 3rd ed. (Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph and English, 1889), 346-8.

the servants and setting them against the white people.”⁵⁹ From Andrews’s perspective, conditions deteriorated over the summer, as the town became increasingly “crowded with ‘freedmen’ every day.” To add to the chaos the women felt, Mary Semmes and Andrews had been “almost knocked down” when two intoxicated Union soldiers had – seemingly -- charged them in the street while “whooping and yelling with all their might.” Whether the men had purposefully targeted the women or were simply running wild is hard to know, but from the women’s perspective, the men were acting aggressively and whiskey was in large part responsible.⁶⁰

Although the Union military never developed a fool-proof policy for preventing drunken troops from tearing through cities, the measures they took reveal changing trends in American ideas about alcohol control. On one level, military authorities were simply attempting to maintain discipline. Yet the repeated emphasis on using the power of the state – albeit martial law – to protect women and children from depredations inflicted at the hands of drunken men, suggests changing patterns in the ways in which Americans viewed the role of government. In some ways, Union officers extended the responsibility of the state when they embraced antebellum temperance rhetoric that labeled women and children the victims of male drunkenness and used their authority to close shops and prevent men from harming vulnerable people.

⁵⁹ Eliza Frances Andrews, The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl, 1864-1865 (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1908), 259.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 365-66.

Ridding Southern Cities of Drunken Confederates

When it came to demanding the state's protection from drunken soldiers, Confederate women did not only appeal to the Union Army but also to Confederate civilian and military authorities. Just like Union soldiers, Confederate troops had a knack for finding whiskey whenever they were near a town of any size, and military authorities tried provost guards and punishing miscreants before determining that closing shops was the only way to keep liquor out of the hands of troops. Civilians demanded that the Confederate military and government protect them from drunken soldiers, and many called on state authorities to close grog-shops and prohibit distilling in order to rid society of intoxicated armies.

Despite widespread liquor scarcities, Confederate soldiers managed to scrounge it up in southern cities. After chasing a steamer up the Mississippi River, Confederate surgeon Junius Newport Bragg and the Camden Knights disembarked at Memphis for the night. Bragg had looked forward to being in the city, but quickly decided that it offered too many opportunities to become "jovially tight." One man, Jim Whitfield, was particularly desperate for whiskey, and Bragg counted him as "one of the most contemptible, lowest down, unprincipled scamps" he had ever known. The man had a family at home but was blowing his earnings on whiskey and incurring debts to buy additional drinks. According to Bragg, the man's "sponging," drinking, and neglect of his family made him insufferable.⁶¹ For many soldiers imminent military retreat served as an impetus to drink with abandon. When Confederate forces evacuated Atlanta in September 1864, General Samuel French reported that there was "confusion in the city, and

⁶¹ Junius Newport Bragg, Letters of a Confederate Surgeon, 1861-65, Edited by Helen Bragg Gaughan (Camden, AR: The Hurley Company, 1960), 18.

some of the soldiers in the town are drunk. Common sense is wanted.”⁶² In the spring of 1865 John Dooley complained of the same problem in Virginia. As Confederate soldiers approached Danville, the roads were chaotic – civilians with their belongings moving in and out of the city, stragglers everywhere. In the midst of the “confusion and panic,” Dooley’s buddy Jackson decided the time was right for a “treat” of apple brandy, and the soldiers wandered through the streets of Danville trying to locate liquor (albeit without much luck).⁶³

From the first months of war, Confederate officers took pains to limit drunkenness in their ranks. In August 1861, Private Robert Moore mentioned that in his camp near Leesburg, Mississippi, “two tents” were full of soldiers who had gone “to town without passes.” Many also “got drunk” while they were out.⁶⁴ Colonel S.A.M. Wood of the 7th Regiment Alabama Volunteers went so far as to relocate his regiment more than fifteen miles “to get out of the way of whisky.”⁶⁵ In March 1862, General Joseph E. Johnston had several divisions of his army encamped along the Rapidan River near Orange Court-House, Virginia, and assigned the 1st Kentucky Regiment with the powers to “regulate the town.” Men caught in town without official permission would be arrested, but more than that, the newly appointed provost-marshal would be charged with preserving “perfect order” by shuttering “all stores and shops where liquor is sold.”⁶⁶

⁶² Samuel Gibbs French, Two Wars: an Autobiography of General Samuel G. French... Mexican War: War between the States, a Diary: Reconstruction Period, his Experience: Incidents, Reminiscences, etc. (Nashville, TN: Confederate Veteran, 1901), 222.

⁶³ John Edward Dooley, John Dooley, Confederate Soldier: His War Journal, Edited by Joseph T. Durkin (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), 179-80.

⁶⁴ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, as Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A. Moore, Co. G. 17th Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Guards, Holly Springs, Mississippi (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 55)

⁶⁵ OR, Ser. I, Vol. IV, 249.

⁶⁶ OR, Ser. I, Vol. LI, Pt. 2, 504-5.

Prohibiting sales became common policy in many Confederate cities because officers thought it the only way to keep order. Less than two weeks after Virginia seceded the Richmond city council began cracking down. Every evening at ten o'clock, all establishments "where ardent spirits, porter, beer, or cider" was "sold or given away" would close and violators would be fined \$20.00 each day they stayed open too late.⁶⁷ But these measures were not strict enough for Captain George C. Gibbs, who, in September 1861, wanted to simply close grog-shops near the Confederate States Prison because he could not figure out any other way "to keep liquor away from the guard." His sentries had a habit of stepping away from their posts to fill their canteens. They returned drunk and allowed prisoners to escape. He pled with General John H. Winder to close the shops.⁶⁸ By March 1862, Confederates were putting more stringent prohibitory laws into place not only in Richmond but wherever soldiers were stationed. In Norfolk and Portsmouth, the sale of any intoxicating beverage was strictly prohibited. Beyond that, the army ordered all "places where liquor are kept for sale or use" closed and promised to arrest any person – man or woman – found to be drunk, disorderly, or disloyal.⁶⁹

The Confederate military closed shops with the blessings of many civilians, who felt threatened by drunken soldiers. In Montgomery, Alabama, locals were so disgusted with intoxicated soldiers that they demanded the guilty men "*be sent to the front*, and forced to remain there; for as long as they are permitted to remain in this city, they are perfectly useless in the service."⁷⁰ When hungry Confederates entered her home looking for food, Georgian Eliza Andrews determined that they "were drunk, or stragglers from some of the conscript regiments"

⁶⁷ "Local Matters: Closing the Liquor Shops," Richmond Daily Dispatch, April 24, 1861.

⁶⁸ OR, Ser. II, Vol. III, 718.

⁶⁹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. LI, Pt. 2, 491. General John Winder enacted prohibition in Richmond in late February 1862 when he placed the city under martial law. See, Arch Fredric Blakey, General John H. Winder, C.S.A. (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1990), 121-22.

⁷⁰ "Local Intelligence," Daily Mail (Montgomery, AL), January 6, 1864.

after they threatened to burn down the property.⁷¹ The soldiers were not behaving according to the imagined ideals of southern gentlemen. Judge W. P. Chilton, a congressman from Alabama, had his fill of sin and drunkenness by February 1862, and he called on the Virginia Legislature to “wipe out” liquor shops and distilleries, which were ruining soldiers and endangering women and children.⁷² Inhabitants of Charlottesville, Virginia, agreed, imploring Captain John Taylor to “declare martial law so far as selling liquor is involved” because “cases of drunkenness and fights are of such frequent occurrence that ladies are afraid to go into the streets.” Taylor asked Secretary of War George Randolph to give him the authority to close shops in order to prevent “poisoned whisky” from turning “the thoughtless soldier” into “a madman” and risking public safety.⁷³ In January 1862, Jefferson Davis adopted General Braxton Bragg’s stringent measures and put them into effect for the entire War Department. General Orders, No. 3 sought to keep all liquors from Confederate camps.⁷⁴ On March 1, 1862, Davis extended these regulations by issuing General Orders, No. 8, which declared martial law in Richmond, closed the liquor shops, and prohibited distilling within ten miles of the city.⁷⁵

Distilling and Prohibition in the Confederacy

While the military took the first steps to close shops in order to keep alcohol away from soldiers, many southerners called for state governments to enact sweeping prohibitions on distilling ardent spirits. State legislatures obliged. Politicians explained that such measures were

⁷¹ Eliza Frances Andrews, *The War-Time Journal of a Georgia Girl 1864-1865*, Edited by Spencer B. King, Jr. (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1908), 200.

⁷² “An interesting meeting,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, February 18, 1862.

⁷³ *OR*, Ser. II, Vol. III, 900.

⁷⁴ W. C. Corsan, *Two Months in the Confederate States: An Englishman’s Travels through the South*, Edited by Benjamin H. Trask (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), 35; *OR*, Ser. IV, Vol. I, 835.

⁷⁵ “By the President of the Confederate States of America. A Proclamation,” *Richmond Daily Dispatch*, March 3, 1862.

pragmatic, rather than moral: given the scarcity of food, distilling grain was simply too wasteful. But from the war's beginning Confederates actually couched prohibitory laws in moral terms. The southern states had a duty to feed the wives and children of soldiers. Distillers who used up precious grain deprived the Confederacy's most vulnerable citizens of food. Furthermore, distilled liquors endangered soldiers and threatened the war effort. Distillers, therefore, were disloyal to the Confederate cause. Necessity may have forced legislators' hands, but in the end they used the power of the state to regulate moral behavior.

At first, liquor regulation in the Confederacy progressed much like it had in the North, with states moving quickly to tax alcohol to raise revenue. Within six months of the war's beginning, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas imposed taxes on liquor, with Georgia taxing distillers up to \$300 per year, although the laws varied in their contents and enforcement from county to county.⁷⁶ Southern temperance reformers welcomed the tax laws, arguing that the distilleries were "springing up like dragon's teeth" and becoming a public nuisance. Reformers pointed out that distillers used up enormous quantities of grain and lined their own pockets while women, children, and even livestock, bore the burdens of war. But reformers went beyond practical considerations to argue that the "degrading and demoralizing affects [sic]" of liquor alone should have been "sufficient to justify a heavy tax."⁷⁷ Using the vivid imagery of the antebellum temperance movement the Spirit of the Age accused distillers of letting "down a *pump into hell*" and pouring "over our land, into our houses, over human hearts, over human souls a burning tide of sin and misery and anguish." Through the liquor flowed "widow's tears

⁷⁶ ...Ordinance upon distilled spirits (Raleigh, NC: 1861), Broadside; Laws of the State of Texas (1861), 52; "No. 92: An Act to authorize the Commissioners of the Town of Spring Place, in Murray county, to issue license for the retail of Spirituous Liquors, and to fix the amount of the license for the same, and to punish for selling without license," and "No. 93: An Act to amend the several laws theretofore passed incorporating the city of Rome, in the county of Floyd; and to enlarge the powers of the City council of the City of Rome, in relation to the granting of license to retail and sell liquors," Acts of Georgia (1862), 96-97.

⁷⁷ "The Memorial," Spirit of the Age, 13 (November, 20, 1861): 2.

and orphans' sighs" and money-grubbing distillers promoted "profaneness, indecency, pauperism, madness, suicide, misery, and woe." One could hardly call such men loyal Confederates.⁷⁸

Temperance reformers were the first to declare distillers a plague on the Confederacy, but by early 1862, food shortages prompted civilians and legislators to agree. Lincoln's blockade had an immediate effect on the southern food supply, and battles waged throughout the Confederate food-producing regions of Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee greatly reduced crops of corn and wheat.⁷⁹ Grain was in short supply. Prices rose. And distillers became more than a nuisance – they consumed valuable grain, and they sold whiskey (also made scarce by the blockade) at enormous prices. By early 1862, most southern states had determined that taxes and licenses were not enough. North Carolina adopted price controls -- \$.75 a gallon -- that would limit profits for distillers with the intention of making the business less lucrative.⁸⁰ Other legislation required distillers to register with magistrates in their counties.⁸¹ Even that was not enough.

The winter of 1862 found Virginians mounting a full-scale campaign against distilling. The movement began in the southwestern counties of the state, where food and whiskey shortages created a volatile environment because grain was scarce and distilling was immensely profitable. A gallon of whiskey that had sold for \$0.22 before the war now brought \$1.50 to \$3.50 – allowing distillers to rake in \$4,000 to \$5,000 per day. Southerners worried that corn would cost \$5.00 per bushel by summer if the government did not intercede.⁸² In Floyd County,

⁷⁸ "Another Distillery," (from the Greensboro Patriot), Spirit of the Age, 13 (January 8, 1862) 4.

⁷⁹ For scholarship on Lincoln's blockade and food shortages in the Confederacy, see Andrew F. Smith, Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2011); William Blair, Virginia's Private War: Feeding Body and Soul in the Confederacy, 1861-1865 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁸⁰ ...An ordinance to restrict the distillation of grain, and to raise revenue (Raleigh, NC: John W. Syme, 1862), 1-2.

⁸¹ ...An ordinance for the suppression of distilleries (Raleigh, NC: 1862), Broadside.

⁸² "The consumption of grain by distilleries – necessity of Legislation," Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 13, 1862; "The Richmond Markets, Feb. 13, 1862," Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 14, 1862.

along the Roanoke River, the “smoke of more than fifty distilleries blackens the horizon [sic]” as profiteers rushed to take advantage of the high prices. One Virginian estimated that the distilleries in Floyd County alone would consume enough grain to feed 600 families for a year.⁸³ Concerned citizens organized a public meeting and drafted a petition to send to the state legislature in Richmond. They argued that the commonwealth had a duty to “provide for the families of the absent [soldiers]” by protecting food supply from greedy distillers. They urged the state to prohibit the distillation of grain for the duration of the war.⁸⁴ Other counties in the southwest and the Shenandoah Valley sent similar petitions to the state.⁸⁵ These petitioners were not temperance reformers. In fact, the editor of the Staunton Spectator deemed Maine-Law-type prohibition “improper and odious.” This situation was altogether different. “In times of great public emergency,” he explained, “the sale of ardent spirits ought to be suppressed as a measure of public safety and military discipline.” Liquor hurt the soldiers by demoralizing the army, and distillers drove up grain prices, causing the poor to suffer.⁸⁶

The desperate situation in Virginia was reflected throughout the Confederacy, and state legislatures began passing laws in rapid succession. Tennessee outlawed distilling first.⁸⁷ North Carolina, Virginia, and Alabama followed in the spring of 1862.⁸⁸ In the fall, South Carolina, which had already placed a moratorium on new liquor licenses, made plans to criminalize the

⁸³ “Facts for consideration,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 17, 1862.

⁸⁴ “The whiskey business,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 14, 1862.

⁸⁵ The state received petitions from Roanoke, Shenandoah, Montgomery, Floyd, and Patrick counties. See, Journal of the House of Delegates of Virginia (1861), 81, 92, 109, 162, 128, 137.

⁸⁶ “Petitions-Distilleries,” Staunton (VA) Spectator, February 18, 1862.

⁸⁷ “Facts for consideration,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 17, 1862.

⁸⁸ ...An ordinance to restrict the distillation of grain (Raleigh, NC: 1862), Broadside; “An act to prevent the unnecessary Consumption of grain by Distillers and other Manufacturers of Spirituous and Maltliquors – passed March 12, 1862,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 17, 1862; “No More Whisky,” Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), April 8, 1862.

possession of ardent spirits.⁸⁹ North and South Carolinians reiterated Virginians' concerns. Distillation contributed to an "unnecessary consumption" of cereal grains, such as corn, wheat, rye, and barley.⁹⁰ In South Carolina, breadstuffs confiscated from unlawful distilleries were given to the soldiers' families who waited "helpless" and "suffering" while their "poor and patriotic men are exposed in defence of our homes."⁹¹ The moral implications were clear. By January 1863, Mississippi had joined the ranks of Confederate states to prohibit distilling, although the state would encourage citizens to produce and sell wine made from native grapes.⁹²

In Georgia, despite reluctance in the legislature, Governor Joseph E. Brown waged his own crusade. Because the farmlands of the Upper South had been trampled, Brown knew that the states of the Deep South – Georgia in particular – had to abandon cash crops and grow as much food as possible.⁹³ Because maximizing food production was the goal, Brown declared that "the distillation of corn into ardent spirits has grown to be an evil of the most alarming magnitude." Like the Virginians, Brown knew "that about seventy stills" in one county were "constantly boiling," daily wasting the grain that could have fed the county's entire population. But not only were potential food stuffs being wasted, the whiskey being manufactured instead was sent to soldiers where Brown believed it "degrades and demoralizes our troops and causes them to be slaughtered, and our flag to train in the dust before the enemy."⁹⁴ Flexing his executive muscles,

⁸⁹ ...A bill to prohibit the sale of spirituous liquors in small quantities during the war (Columbia, SC: 1862), 1-2; ...A bill to suppress the undue distillation of spirituous liquors from the cereal grains of this state (Columbia, SC: 1862), 1-3.

⁹⁰ ...An ordinance to restrict the distillation of grain (Raleigh, NC: 1862), Broadside; ...A bill to prohibit the distillation of ardent spirits from any of the cereal grains in this state (Columbia, SC: 1862), 1-2.

⁹¹ Journal of the Senate of South Carolina, 15.

⁹² "An Act to prohibit the distillation of spirits from grain, molasses, and sugar," Laws of the State of Mississippi (1862), 95-6; "An Act to encourage the manufacturing of Wine from the native grape," Laws of the State of Mississippi (1863), 146.

⁹³ "The chief danger of the South," Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 10, 1862.

⁹⁴ Joseph E. Brown, Governor of Georgia, "A Proclamation" (February 26, 1862), The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia, Edited by Allen D. Candler (Atlanta, GA: Charles P. Byrd, 1909), 2:202-3.

Brown sought to accomplish what the courts and legislature had failed to do: protect the state's food supply while also shoring up the production of war materiel. Arguing that the state government had the duty to use "its strong arm of power" to "protect the rights" and "promote the happiness" of its citizens, Brown ordered every distiller to cease manufacturing ardent spirits. But the governor was not solely interested in preserving grain. "Gun metal," he continued, was "composed of ninety parts of copper and ten of tin." By happy coincidence, the stills of Georgia were made of copper. Surely, Brown concluded, they could be put to more productive use if they were "manufactured into cannon...to be turned against the enemy." In this way Georgians would merit "God's blessing" for their crusade. If the copper continued to be used for distilling, however, Georgians could expect God's "Curse."⁹⁵

Confederates involved in distilling (both directly and indirectly) protested these measures. In Virginia, men from Rappahannock and Pittsylvania County expressed their concern that private citizens would not be able to distill excess grain for their own consumption under the new laws. Pointing out that men were never intended to "live by bread alone," one Virginian urged the legislature to use "common sense" when regulating alcohol. Farmers needed to drink it, and more than that, hogs grew the plumpest on slop left over after the distilling process. Allowing for the private distillation of whiskey, therefore, would help increase the food supply.⁹⁶ Even state senator James Whittle, who voted in favor of prohibition, would have preferred a law that allowed farmers to distill their own grain for personal use. Many of his constituents opposed the bill entirely.⁹⁷ In the southwest, supporters of the bill urged legislators to act, despite knowing that "there will be violent opposition to the measure" in rural counties. Politicians who

⁹⁵ Ibid, 2:204-5.

⁹⁶ "Distilling – how it is Useful," Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 20, 1862.

⁹⁷ James M. Whittle to Zach L. Finney, March 20, 1862, Accession 41447, Personal Papers Collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

failed to vote for prohibition could be expected to be accused of acting cowardly to “further some miserable personal aims” at the expense of a starving nation.⁹⁸

Speculators kept Georgia’s prohibition laws -- which were actually quite popular -- from ever being truly effective. United in their hatred of distillers, citizens declared speculative distilling to be an “evil greater than Yankee invasion” and “wickedly waste[ful].” Distillers were “bloodsuckers who fatten on the distresses of mankind,” who not only did not enlist to fight the Union Army, but also “aggravate[d] the poor soldier’s burden and suffering” by snatching food out of the mouths of women and children.⁹⁹ The “sober” and “intelligent masses” of Milledgeville sang the governor’s praises, and the people of Marietta approved of his proclamation “with great unanimity.”¹⁰⁰ Even planters in Sumter and Putnam counties, whose businesses the proclamation affected, endorsed Brown’s actions as a wartime necessity.¹⁰¹ Brown claimed that most distillers “acquiesced cheerfully.”¹⁰² The only Georgians causing disruptions were speculators, and they would continue to skirt enforcement efforts for the remainder of the war.

In November 1862, the legislature in Milledgeville extended Brown’s proclamation by prohibiting distilling, but the laws did not stop illegal production. When it came to prosecuting distillers, Brown urged the legislature to enact stiff penalties and force local officials to enforce

⁹⁸ “Facts for consideration,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 17, 1862.

⁹⁹ “Whiskey Distilleries,” Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), March 11, 1862; “Cultivate Wheat and Corn,” Southern Federal Union (Milledgeville, GA), April 8, 1862; “Justice to the Yankees,” Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), March 18, 1862; Rev. J. R. Thomas, “Our Future if Defeated in the Struggle,” from the Southern Confederacy, reprinted in Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), April 15, 1862.

¹⁰⁰ “Whiskey Distilleries,” Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), March 11, 1862; T. H. Moore, “Gov. Brown’s Correspondence with T. H. Moore, Esq.,” from the Atlanta Intelligencer, reprinted in Southern Federal Union (Milledgeville, GA), July 15, 1862.

¹⁰¹ “Sumter County,” Southern Federal Union (Milledgeville, GA), March 18, 1862; “Planters’ Meeting,” Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), April 1, 1862.

¹⁰² “Gov. Brown and Peach Brandy,” Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), July 15, 1862.

them.¹⁰³ But the laws were complicated and constantly changing. For example, in the spring and summer of 1862, Brown prohibited the distillation of peaches into brandy – a measure that hurt the state’s farmers who sought to preserve their produce and to make medicinal spirits. He revised the law to allow private distillation in cases where drying fruit would not suffice. Still, citizens wanted clarification.¹⁰⁴ Vague laws made it difficult for farmers to determine if they could brew lager beer or distill fruits, potatoes, and molasses privately, and more unscrupulous profiteers found that they could dodge the prohibitions on grain and still make a profit distilling everything else. By the spring of 1864, distilling laws were being “evaded in every way that ingenuity can devise,” local authorities hesitated to make arrests, and judges were uncertain that laws passed by the legislature gave them the authority to fully prosecute distillers. Echoing the Governor’s earlier suggestion, the Georgia Senate again proposed that the only way to truly suppress distilling was to seize the stills, converting them to the “implements of war.” Such a measure would put the destruction of stills under the jurisdiction of the military, rather than civilian authorities.¹⁰⁵

But working with the Confederate military created its own headaches for many states. The Richmond government had to strike a delicate balance between suppressing speculation and regulating the scarce food supply while also keeping the military medical departments stocked with alcohol. By 1864, the Confederate Congress had created a series of laws that made whiskey incredibly expensive and distilling difficult for states to regulate. Knowing that blockade runners could make significant profits if they smuggled luxury items into the starving Confederacy,

¹⁰³ Joseph E. Brown, Governor of Georgia, “A Proclamation” (February 26, 1862), The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia, 2:370-372.

¹⁰⁴ “No Peach Brandy,” Southern Federal Union (Milledgeville, GA), May 6, 1862; [no title], Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), May 6, 1862; [no title], Southern Federal Union (Milledgeville, GA), July 15, 1862; “Gov. Brown and Peach Brandy,” Southern Recorder (Milledgeville, GA), July 15, 1862.

¹⁰⁵ Journal of the General Assembly of Georgia (1864), 41, 46; Journal of the Senate of Georgia (1864), 7-8.

Congress passed laws in early 1864 that made it illegal to import most alcoholic beverages – including beer, rum, brandy, cider, and wine – for other than medicinal use.¹⁰⁶ The risk of confiscation and stiff fines deterred the smuggling of ardent spirits, but the Confederate government also had to act to prevent grain being consumed by distillers. Here the government had to negotiate a middle position, allowing grain to be distilled for medicinal purposes while forbidding its distillation for general consumption. In June 1864, the Confederate Congress passed an act to allow the Surgeon and Commissary Generals to contract with distillers for whiskey, brandy, and other spirits to be used in the army and its hospitals. Authorized manufacturers could set up distilleries and hire laborers, but were not allowed to distill more grain than specified by the terms of the contract with the army. Violators would face punishment from state authorities.¹⁰⁷

When it came to regulating these contracts for medicinal spirits, most state authorities had little idea of where their jurisdiction began and ended. In Georgia, Governor Brown was angry that military contractors had the right to make private arrangements for the production of alcohol while he was attempting to preserve food. Despite state-wide prohibition, Brown permitted the contracts, but by November 1862 he had determined that it was “very difficult to prevent abuses of the system.”¹⁰⁸ Specifically, Brown clashed with Captain S. G. Cabell, who had made a contract with the Confederate Medical Purveyor to distill medicinal whiskey in Georgia. Although Brown gave Cabell permission to work with one distiller in one location, Cabell forged copies of his agreement with Brown in order to do business with multiple

¹⁰⁶ An act to prohibit the importation of luxuries, or articles not necessary or of common use. (Richmond, VA: 1864), 1-11; Regulations prescribed for the government and directions of all officers of the revenue, to carry into effect the provisions of the act to prohibit the importation of luxuries, or of articles not necessary or of common use, approved February 6th, 1864 (Richmond, VA: 1864), 1-6.

¹⁰⁷ James M. Matthews, ed., The Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America (Richmond, VA: R. M. Smith, Printer to Congress, 1864), 271.

¹⁰⁸ “Governor’s Annual Message,” Confederate Union (Milledgeville, GA), November 11, 1862.

distillers, tripling the amount of whiskey in his possession. If that were not criminal enough, Cabell paid only \$1.50 per gallon of whiskey, which he then sold to the Confederate Army at \$2.50 a gallon.¹⁰⁹ This type of speculation flourished given the Confederate army's disorganized contract system, and it angered Georgians, who believed that the military was stealing their bread.¹¹⁰ Brown requested that the Confederate government centralize its distilling operations to one or a few locations in the state so it could be better controlled.¹¹¹

A little more than a year later, in early 1864, Brown continued to butt heads with Confederate Commissary-General J. F. Cummings, who was stationed in Atlanta. Despite the Governor's insistence that the northern portion of his state was completely unable to provide supplies (tax in kind) to the Confederate government, Cummings worked out contracts with area civilians to provide the Confederate government 3,000 gallons of whiskey each month (5 quarts of whiskey per bushel of corn) at \$4.00 a gallon. Cummings and General Joseph Johnston believed that the whiskey could alleviate soldiers' hunger pangs brought on by meat shortages. The new contracts, Cummings believed, would also limit abuses by requiring that all distilled liquors be turned over to the Richmond government, and he countered Brown's objections by pointing out that weevil infestations had damaged the corn being used for distilling – making whiskey did not take food from civilians, it merely salvaged corn that would otherwise have gone to waste.¹¹²

Virginians had their problems with the Confederate distillers as well. Although the General Assembly made provisions for government contracts in 1862, later in the war, Virginia's

¹⁰⁹ "A Whiskey Speculator – Tries to Impose on Gov. Brown and Disregard his Proclamation against the Manufacture of Whiskey," from the Atlanta Intelligencer, reprinted in the Confederate Union (Milledgeville, GA), November 4, 1862.

¹¹⁰ "Gov. Brown and the Whisky Speculation," Confederate Union (Milledgeville, GA), October 28, 1862.

¹¹¹ "Governor's Annual Message," Confederate Union (Milledgeville, GA), November 11, 1862.

¹¹² Major J. F. Cummings to Col. L. B. Northrop, February 13, 1864, The Confederate Records of the State of Georgia, 2:467-471.

legislators decreed that no whiskey be distilled in the commonwealth – not even by those under contract to the Confederate government. By January 1864, the Staunton Spectator predicted a battle between the Confederacy and the state of Virginia over the matter. As soon as state authorities caught their first distiller, Virginians would learn whether the state “has a right to regulate her own domestic police, or whether she is... a mere municipal corporation subject to the paramount authority of the Confederate Government.”¹¹³ In November 1864, the show-down occurred. Congress had stipulated in June that the Surgeon and Commissary Generals could distill ardent spirits for medical purposes, and that they would be allowed to erect distilleries. But when the Confederate army began distilling in Botetourt County, the sheriff shut down the operations and brought criminal charges against the officer managing the still. The incident elicited a furious response from Attorney General George Davis, who assured Secretary of War James Seddon that the state of Virginia did not have the power to usurp the authority of the Confederate government. The states were not allowed to interfere with the manufacture of medical supplies any more than they could “prohibit the manufacture of powder, arms, and all the munitions of war, and the enlistment of men.” If the federal government acknowledged state sovereignty on prohibition, then “the whole war power of the Confederate Government would prostrate at the feet of the State Legislatures.”¹¹⁴

While Virginia and Georgia tussled with the Confederate government over supplying whiskey, the state of Mississippi organized a central whiskey dispensary system that allowed them to control the distillation of grain, provide medicinal spirits for its citizens, and keep Confederate troops supplied with hospital stores. Although Mississippi’s legislature had

¹¹³ “An Important Question,” Staunton (VA) Spectator, January 26, 1864.

¹¹⁴ George Davis to James Seddon, 30 November 1864, Accession 26101, Personal Papers Collection, Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

prohibited distilling in 1863, a year later it amended the law to dismantle all distilleries in the state, but would allow Governor Charles Clark to establish two state-owned distilleries to manufacture and dispense medicinal spirits.¹¹⁵ The Mississippi legislature hoped the distilling bans, along with cooperation from neighboring Alabama to control rural distilling, could take full effect and preserve food.¹¹⁶ By August, Clark had set up a system of dispensaries that would facilitate the distribution of this state-produced alcohol.¹¹⁷ Each Mississippi county not occupied by Union forces appointed a dispenser of whiskey who used county tax money to distill whiskey and distribute it to the residents. By keeping careful records of prescriptions, as well as tables of spirits dispensed and prices, Mississippi kept tabs on alcohol distribution.¹¹⁸ Prescription records show that in addition to white men, white women and enslaved persons received prescriptions for whiskey, which was often dispensed by the quart. Moreover, through this system, the Mississippi Auditor's office controlled – to an extent – the amount of whiskey available to the Confederate army. Confederate soldiers' and officers' names appear regularly in the log books of the county dispensers, indicating that the state of Mississippi, not the Confederate army, held much of the whiskey.¹¹⁹ Likewise, Clark appointed Major William A. Strong a dispensary agent,

¹¹⁵ “An Act to prevent the distillation of spirituous liquors, and to declare the distilleries to be a public and common nuisance, and to authorize the same to be abated, and for other purposes,” Laws of the State of Mississippi (1864), 63-68.

¹¹⁶ Journal of the House of Representatives of Mississippi (1864), 14.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹¹⁸ Hundreds of receipts and expense reports are filed in Boxes 2704, 3414, 12850, 12851, and 12852, Whiskey Dispensary Records, 1861-1869, Mississippi Office of the State Auditor, Mississippi Auditor of Public Accounts, Series 333 (RG 29), State Government Records Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

¹¹⁹ Journal of the House of Representatives of Mississippi, Called Session at Columbus, February and March, 1865 (Meridian: J. J. Shannon and Co., State Printers, 1865), 35; Captain Abram Adams prescription, Noxubee County Folder (1 of 2); Captain D. G. Cooper prescription, Rankin County Folder (1 of 6); Rankin County Folder (6 of 6), Box 12850; J. C. Albion prescription, Winston County Folder (2 of 2), Box 12851, Whiskey Dispensary Records, 1861-1869, Mississippi Office of the State Auditor, Mississippi Auditor of Public Accounts, Series 333 (RG 29), State Government Records Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

and he produced 100 gallons of whiskey a day to send at least a portion of it to the Confederate forces. By 1865, Mississippi's state distilleries had sent 3777 gallons to the rebel army.¹²⁰

Once Mississippians had settled on a state dispensary system to control the production of whiskey, their main concern revolved around finding qualified men to run the operation. As had been the case historically in the United States (and in England, as well) those involved in alcohol distribution were supposed to be men of upstanding moral character.¹²¹ Mississippians faced an additional dilemma – during a civil war, the state could not afford to waste men fit for military duty to run distilleries. To guard against problems, local officials – generally the sheriff, judge of the probate court, and the probate clerk of the county – vouched for the applicant's character, assuring the governor that the applicants were “sober & reliable.” More significantly, perhaps, each applicant had to post a \$5000 bond to ensure that all whiskey was properly dispensed or destroyed and that all distilling implements and monies were returned to the state.¹²² It also conveniently ensured that state agents were financially solvent and upstanding businessmen who would not be tempted to speculate.

With its dispensaries, the state of Mississippi supplied Confederate armies, but also addressed its own pressing welfare needs. When drafting the initial legislation, Mississippi's law-makers provided that the revenue each county generated through the selling of medicinal

¹²⁰ Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi (1865), 50.

¹²¹ For scholarship on moral license holders and tavern keepers in American history, see David W. Conroy, In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Sharon V. Salinger, Taverns and Drinking in Early America (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

¹²² “Application Choctaw No. 32,” “Thomas Wolverton's, Clark County, Bond for Five Thousand Dollars,” “James Blair, Lowndes County, Bond for Five Thousand Dollars,” Choctaw, Chickasaw, Clark, Lowndes, and Neshoba Counties Folder; “Application, A. McDonald Simpson, No. 38 [Simpson County],” “Edwin Harper, Simpson Co., Approved Application, No. 64,” “Bond of D. T. Pardue, Lad. Moore, and A. G. Windham; Scott County, Miss,” Simpson, Scott, and Winston Counties Folder, Box 12852; see also Box 2704, Whiskey Dispensary Records, 1861-1869, Mississippi Office of the State Auditor, Mississippi Auditor of Public Accounts, Series 333 (RG 29), State Government Records Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

whiskey would be kept with the counties and used to provide relief for impoverished soldier families, especially those of soldiers killed or wounded.¹²³ Aside from aiding soldiers' families the dispensary system supposedly satisfied medical needs. Physicians writing prescriptions and vouchers for whiskey made special notes when the women needing the alcohol were "destitute soldiers' wives." One physician in Jones County authorized providing one "poor soldier's widow" with free whiskey.¹²⁴ By centralizing and limiting distilling, the state of Mississippi tried to simultaneously address food shortages, alcohol production, social welfare, and even medical treatment. Like other states and the military for that matter Mississippi made itself responsible for the well-being of its citizens, particularly vulnerable women and children.

Conclusion

In many ways, the regulatory measures that Union and Confederate governments placed on alcohol during the war were inconsistent and only partially effective. Nevertheless, the myriad laws passed in northern and southern cities and states reveal an increasingly powerful state comfortable with regulating behavior to protect society. Laws and military orders were often couched in pragmatic terms: excise taxes funded the war; shop closings kept soldiers sober and disciplined; prohibition preserved grain. But while pragmatism may have forced many Americans – especially white southerners – to embrace regulation and prohibition more enthusiastically than they would have in times of peace, civilians often extended the pragmatic

¹²³ "An Act to relation to Distilleries, and the Distillation of Ardent Spirits," Governor's and Auditor's Papers, 1861-1865, undated, Folder, Box 2704, Whiskey Dispensary Records, 1861-1869, Mississippi Office of the State Auditor, Mississippi Auditor of Public Accounts, Series 333 (RG 29), State Government Records Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

¹²⁴ G. M. Porter prescriptions, November 20 and 30, 1864, Tallahatchie County Folder, Box 12851; Vouchers for Harriet Valentine, M. H. Ainsworth, and Mrs. Margaret Thompson, Jasper County Folder; Voucher for Elisabeth McGee, Jones County Folder, Box 3415, Whiskey Dispensary Records, 1861-1869, Mississippi Office of the State Auditor, Mississippi Auditor of Public Accounts, Series 333 (RG 29), State Government Records Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS.

argument to encompass morality. And in doing so, they used the language of antebellum temperance reformers (albeit somewhat unintentionally). Alcohol was dangerous primarily because it hurt women and children – robbing them of their financial security and domestic stability. But before the war, reformers targeted husbands and encouraged them to experience a personal moral conversion. The war created new male threats – distillers, speculators, and drunken soldiers – and the state provided the only means for dealing with them through regulation.

Interestingly enough, while politicians and military officials experimented with regulation, they also stumbled upon what temperance reformers would increasingly consider the ultimate impediment to total prohibition: medicinal alcohol. As the struggles of Virginia and Georgia illustrate, once prohibitory measures made allowances for medicinal distilling, there was no way to completely enforce prohibition. Joseph Brown was primarily concerned with preserving his stores of grain, but temperance reformers were becoming more and more convinced that medicinal liquor use among soldiers and civilians was turning respectable Americans into drunkards and thwarting efforts at national progress.

Chapter 5
“Will not the Prevention be Worse than the Disease?”:
Medicinal Alcohol and Its Threat to Temperance

Temperance reformers had much to worry about during the war – drunken soldiers, fatigue rations, and ornery distillers – but that did not stop them from adding medicinal alcohol to their list. After the Army of the Potomac issued orders for the regular distribution of prophylactic whiskey and quinine, the American Temperance Union reacted with (its usual) horror. Reformers knew that Union and Confederate armies used medicinal alcohol to restore physical vitality and guard soldiers against diseases stemming from exposure and camp conditions. Even if alcohol provided potential medical benefits – and temperance reformers doubted this – these did not outweigh the risks associated with introducing young men to rum. “Will not the prevention be worse than the disease?,” asked worried teetotalers. Malaria, typhoid, and typhus were harmful, but reformers concluded that many a father would “infinitely prefer that his son should be brought home a victim to typhoid” than for the boy to return from war a “miserable slaving drunkard.” Reformers perhaps overestimated the average northerner’s zeal for abstinence. But they offered a solution: cold water.¹ Confederates agreed. Although their rhetoric was less hyperbolic, southerners encouraged soldiers to “take more pains to get water” because “drinking spirits” was “injurious” to good health.²

¹ “Spirit Ration in the Army,” Journal of the American Temperance Union and the New York Prohibitionist 25 (July 1862): 106.

² Catherine Marsh, A Sketch of the Life of Capt. Hedley Vicars, the Christian Soldier (Raleigh, NC: s.n. 1863), 19. This tract was a retelling of the biography (in shortened form) of British imperial soldier Vicars, who relied on cold water to survive the Crimean War. Another tract similarly cites British experiences in the Crimean War to argue that liquor endangered southern soldiers, see Physician, Liquor and Lincoln (Petersburg, VA?: between 1861 and 1865), 1-2.

By taking the position that cold water was more beneficial than alcohol, reformers set themselves at odds with Union and Confederate medical departments. Throughout the war, the armies regularly used alcohol as a preventative measure and a treatment for diseases and wounds. The soldiers themselves relied on traditional remedies that included alcohol. While alcohol had its uses, abuse of supposedly medicinal spirits ran rampant through Union and Confederate armies: physicians and nurses guzzled medical stores and soldiers became intoxicated from their whiskey rations. At the same time, civilian temperance reformers were increasingly concerned that medicinal alcohol constituted the most serious threat to the temperance movement. Northerners in particular believed that the use of alcohol to treat soldiers actually led to illness and immorality. While southern reformers championed the beneficial effects of abstinence, Confederates remained more concerned with overcoming chronic medical supply shortages – including alcohol – than promoting teetotalism.

The debate over the use of alcohol by the medical departments took place during a transformative period in American science and medicine. In the 1860s, the American medical community was in a state of flux. Although medical practice was becoming professionalized – the American Medical Association had been founded in 1847 – physicians treating patients received widely varying degrees of education and training. Scientific treatments were increasingly popular, and American physicians worked in tandem with British and other European medical communities to find more effective means of fighting diseases. Despite some progress, on the eve of the Civil War, American doctors lacked an understanding of germ theory and had insufficient means for controlling or preventing the spread of infectious and contagious diseases. As the scientific medical community evolved, Americans relied largely on traditional

theories and remedies to treat illness.³ Among these widely-held theories was the notion that alcohol could be used to prevent and treat a number of diseases by energizing the body.

American household recipe books contained instructions for mixing bitters, cordials, and wines, and farm families distilled grains and fruits to keep on hand for use as stimulants as well. At the same time that many families kept their cupboards stocked with medicinal wines, physicians (urban and rural) prescribed tonics with high alcohol content, a practice that led to dependence and drinking among many men and women.⁴

Temperance reformers had long feared that prescribing alcoholic tonics undermined their movement and increased drunkenness in the respectable (middle) classes (especially among women). By the 1860s, reformers were using scientific language to convince these respectable Americans that drinking harmed their health. Citing scientific research, temperance activists argued that alcohol had debilitating effects and only cold water could prevent disease. They were not alone. Advocates of everything from vegetarianism to water-cure also increasingly cited scientific evidence – from supposed experts – to prove the health benefits of certain diets. These various (and interrelated) movements promoted the consumption of bland foods and drinks that

³ For recent scholarship on the Civil War and the development of modern medicine, see Margaret Humphreys, Marrow of Tragedy: The Health Crisis of the American Civil War (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), Shauna Devine, Learning from the Wounded: The Civil War and the Rise of American Medical Science (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). Kathryn Shively Meier argues that underdeveloped medical practices left soldiers responsible for their own care in the war's early years and that they relied on traditional remedies to prevent and treat their illnesses. See, Nature's Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). For scholarship on Confederate medicine, see H. H. Cunningham, Doctors in Gray: The Confederate Medical Service (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1958).

⁴ A collection of recipes published in 1867 illustrates the reliance of most Americans on alcohol as a household remedy. The author collected the recipes over a thirty year period, and many contain titles including words such as "cure," "medicine," and "cough-mixture." See, John Marquart, Six Hundred Receipts, Worth Their Weight in Gold, including Receipts for Cooking, Making Preserves, Perfumery, Cordials, Ice Creams, Inks, Pains, Dyes of all Kinds, Cider, Vinegar, Wines, Spirits, Whiskey, Brandy, Gin, Etc., and How to Make Imitations of All Kinds of Liquors. Together with Valuable Tables. The Collections, Testing, and Improvements on the Receipts extending over a Period of Thirty Years (Philadelphia, PA: John E. Potter and Company, 1867), 23-27, 32-40, 43-48, 247. W. J. Rorabaugh, The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 12-13.

would reportedly increase longevity (and righteous living), and all favored, in some way, the abstinence from certain foods, such as meat or alcohol, that they believed would over-stimulate the body and lead to ill health.⁵ Because temperance reformers believed that alcohol over-excited the body, they argued that the prescribing of alcohol as a medicinal stimulant constituted, perhaps, the greatest threat to the success of the temperance movement. Medicinal alcohol was physically debilitating, but it also led to drinking among the otherwise sober classes and undercut temperance.⁶

Supplying Medicinal Alcohol in the Union and Confederate Armies

From the war's beginning, the medical departments of the Union and the Confederacy recognized alcohol as an invaluable resource that could be used for everything from stimulating a man suffering from wounds to protecting soldiers from diseases such as malaria. Melding traditional remedies with evolving scientific thought, army surgeons developed guidelines for using medicinal alcohol. Union and Confederate medical departments instituted policies for distributing rations regularly to soldiers, but just like with fatigue rations, medicinal rations were subject to the ebb and flow of supply. Medical departments resorted to a variety of means to keep their hospitals well-stocked. Armies regarded alcohol as a valuable medical resource, but sometimes teetotalers within the ranks thwarted policy and destroyed liquor, irritating comrades who believed that whiskey had medicinal value.

⁵ Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860 (Revised Edition) (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 147-173; Adam D. Shprintzen, The Vegetarian Crusade: The Rise of An American Reform Movement, 1817-1921 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

⁶ W. J. Rorabaugh argues that temperance advocates had been encouraging Americans to stop drinking to promote their health since the late eighteenth century. See, The Alcoholic Republic, 41-47.

Almost as quickly as the war began, surgeons recognized that alcohol had benefits as a stimulant and a prophylactic. Whiskey did more than simply combat the effects of exposure and fatigue. Michael Flannery has shown that nineteenth-century physicians understood alcohol to act as a stimulant – a medication that increased “vital activity” in the body. That alcohol and other narcotics had a dulling effect on the senses was understood to be only a side effect, in a sense. If physicians recognized that alcohol had valuable pain-relieving properties, they did not focus on those in their manuals. Most Civil War surgeons, specifically, valued alcohol for its perceived ability to energize the body.⁷ When it came to determining which alcohol provided the most stimulating effects, Confederate surgeon Edward Warren urged that physicians should take into account “the fancy of the patient,” but he was of the opinion that “pure” whiskey was best because it was “less irritating to the stomach.” The problem – at least for the Confederacy – was that whiskey distilling was largely prohibited in order to conserve grain. Brandy became the favored stimulant. French brandy was popular, but apple brandy was more available in “the present condition of the Country,” as its distillation was not being widely prevented. The drink was “the purest, most palatable” stimulant available.⁸

In Confederate hospitals, brandy was used to treat a number of diseases ranging from skin infections to fevers. Surgeon Julian J. Chisholm’s manual for Confederate hospitals prescribed the use of brandy along with a nourishing egg mixture to clear up erysipelas by “restoring strength.”⁹ Both Chisholm and fellow surgeon Edward Warren believed that alcohol could likewise be used to stave off gangrene. Warren argued that “the free use of Quinine, Iron,

⁷ Michael A. Flannery, Civil War Pharmacy: A History of Drugs, Drug Supply and Provision, and Therapeutics for the Union and the Confederacy (New York: Pharmaceutical Products Press, 2004), 36-39.

⁸ Edward Warren, An Epitome of Practical Surgery, for Field and Hospital (Richmond, VA: West and Johnson, 1863), 70.

⁹ John Julian Chisholm, A Manual of Military Surgery: For the Use of the Surgeons in the Confederate Army: With an Appendix of the Rules and Regulations for the Medical Department of the Confederate Army (Richmond, VA: West and Johnson, 1861), 199.

and Brandy” would have the effect of “sustaining the system” while the “poisonous ichor” was destroyed through cauterization.¹⁰ Chisholm noted that a “stimulating diet” that included some combination of wine, brandy, and opium would combat the infection. Opium, he added, would have the added benefit of relieving pain. He did not indicate whether the alcohol would also have a numbing, pain-relieving, effect.¹¹ Chisholm attacked typhoid and typhus fevers similarly, arguing that brandy was “constantly required” to counteract the “debility” and “depressing effects” of these camp diseases.¹²

Medical professionals in the Union Army found alcohol equally useful – particularly in preventing malaria. In September 1861, Medical Director and Surgeon Charles S. Tripler admitted that the Army of the Potomac was feeling its way in combating disease. The Regulations of the Army made no provisions for providing prophylactic whiskey or quinine, but Tripler claimed that whiskey and quinine mixtures had “generally favorable” effects in preventing malaria in the regiments where they were distributed. Tripler ordered quinine and whiskey be kept in the medical purveyor’s stores. Surgeons in several regiments subsequently reported significantly shorter sick lists. The only problem, Tripler believed, was that there was “prejudice and aversion” among the soldiers when it came to taking a daily quinine and whiskey ration. Because of this, he thought it would not “have been practicable to have forced it upon the whole army.”¹³

Having thousands of soldiers take a daily whiskey ration might have seemed impractical so early in the war, but word spread quickly that whiskey and quinine were quite effective in

¹⁰ Edward Warren, An Epitome of Practical Surgery, 129-30.

¹¹ John Julian Chisholm, A Manual of Military Surgery, 219-220.

¹² *Ibid*, 14-15.

¹³ The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (70 vols. in 128; Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. I, Vol. V, 83-84.

preventing disease. By November 1861, General William S. Rosecrans was distributing “whiskey and quinine bitters” along with coffee to soldiers preparing to march near Gauley Mountain in western Virginia.¹⁴ Shortly after the battle of Shiloh, General Henry W. Halleck worried that the ground near Pittsburg Landing along the Tennessee River was making soldiers ill. The sick lists became “enormous,” and Halleck ordered Grant and Buell to move their camps to higher ground. Upon the recommendation of a doctor he also had quinine and whiskey rations distributed, and conditions improved.¹⁵ By the summer of 1862, Charles Tripler’s successor, Surgeon Jonathan Letterman had made the distribution of medicinal rations the official policy of the Army of the Potomac. After the battle of Fair Oaks in June, so prevalent was malaria that “the surgeon-general ordered each soldier to be furnished with a small quantity of whisky and quinine, mixed, every morning before going on daily duty.” The process was orderly and disciplined. The men were lined up by regiment and company and each soldier received his ration when his name was called. Although some men declined their whiskey, everyone took the quinine. One chaplain who “neglected” to take either found himself incredibly ill.¹⁶

Later in the war, the regular issuing of quinine and whiskey to ward off malaria and similar illness in swampy areas became common place in Union and Confederate armies. The regimental surgeon of the 25th Massachusetts ordered the distribution of whiskey rations when his men were sent to an “isolated post” in North Carolina. The men were far away from fresh food, but the physician also worried about the stagnant river water. Whiskey was the safer option.¹⁷ In August 1863, “working parties” in the 16th Army Corps headquartered near

¹⁴ OR, Ser. I, Vol. V, 261.

¹⁵ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XVI, Pt. 2, 62.

¹⁶ William Corby, Memoirs of Chaplain Life: Three Years with Irish Brigade in the Army of the Potomac, Edited by Lawrence Frederick Kohl (New York: Fordham University Press, 1992), 82-83.

¹⁷ David L. Day, My Diary of Rambles with the 25th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry (Milford, MA: King and Billings Printers, 1884), 95-96.

Memphis, Tennessee, were required to take a daily half gill of bitters – a combination of sulphate quinia, sulphate cinchona, whiskey and quinine.¹⁸ The swampy lands of the Virginia Peninsula prompted many Union officers to take similar preventative measures – issuing “whiskey and quinine” rations to “obviate local malarial influences” affecting men digging drainage ditches near Petersburg.¹⁹ Elsewhere on the peninsula worried commanding officers did likewise – some even doubled whiskey rations.²⁰ By June 1862, Confederate division commanders throughout the Department of Northern Virginia were authorized to issue spirit rations whenever their men camped near swamps.²¹

Alcohol’s stimulating properties were not only perceived to be useful in preventing and fighting camp diseases, but surgeons also believed that alcohol provided relief to wounded men. Again, in these cases, military physicians focused on alcohol’s ability to stimulate – or reinvigorate the body – more than they focused on liquor’s numbing or intoxicating properties. So essential was brandy to field surgery that Chisholm advised regimental surgeons and their assistants to carry it in their knapsacks any time soldiers were on the move or engaged. When men were wounded, brandy was essential to “revive those exhausted from hemorrhage.”²² In addition to mitigating the effects of blood loss, wine and brandy could also combat the effects of shock – which rattled soldiers even when their wounds were not otherwise serious – by “restor[ing] nervous energy.”²³ A little brandy could even strengthen a weakening pulse after a head injury, although Chisholm emphasized that caution was imperative. He believed too many

¹⁸ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXIV Pt. 3, 577. [General Orders, No. 105]

¹⁹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLII, Pt. 1, 192.

²⁰ Alfred Bellard, Gone for a Soldier: The Civil War Memoirs of Private Alfred Bellard, Edited by David Herbert Donald, (Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1975), 74, 77; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXVI, Pt. 3, 74.

²¹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XI, Pt. 3, 577.

²² John Julian Chisholm, A Manual of Military Surgery, 114, 110-11. For carrying brandy among battle supplies, see also “General Orders, No. 53,” April 5, 1863, OR, Ser. I, Vol. XIV, 883.

²³ John Julian Chisholm, A Manual of Military Surgery, 128.

stimuli could worsen a head wound.²⁴ When it came to field amputations, brandy was such an important part of the process that Surgeon Warren listed it twice among the instruments with which surgeons must be provided.²⁵ In these operations, alcohol seems to have worked in concert with anesthesia.²⁶ When performing both primary and secondary amputations, a small dose of whiskey or brandy had the effect (presumably) of stimulating the heart after an anesthetic had been administered, and surgeons were instructed to repeat the dose (an ounce) when the patient's pulse became weak.²⁷ The real purpose of liquor, Warren explained, was to mitigate the effects of the "Shock attending amputation."²⁸ In cases where primary amputation was unwarranted, patients, again, were to be stimulated with "cool water, then wine, brandy or food if possible."²⁹

Because of alcohol's important role in wartime medicine, keeping it stocked in hospitals was paramount. As with most issues involving supply, the Union Army had superior resources, especially in Virginia. In September 1862, U. S. Army Medical Inspector Richard H. Coolidge assured the Surgeon-General that essential supplies were reaching wounded troops in Centreville. Among the hospital stores being requisitioned were whiskey, brandy, and wine.³⁰ As the war continued, Union hospitals in Virginia were kept supplied with ardent spirits, although reports from the spring of 1864 indicate that supplies varied from corps to corps.³¹ Like Confederates, Federals believed that alcohol was essential to treat wounded men. In the Army of the Potomac, wagons of whiskey were often sent to the front from the commissary to the field hospitals.³² Surgeon and Medical Director Charles S. Tripler also suggested that medical officers

²⁴ Ibid, 249.

²⁵ Edward Warren, An Epitome of Practical Surgery, 93, 242.

²⁶ Chloroform was the preferred anesthetic. See, John Julian Chisholm, A Manual of Military Surgery, 128-29.

²⁷ Edward Warren, An Epitome of Practical Surgery, 98-99.

²⁸ Ibid, 168.

²⁹ Ibid, 85-86.

³⁰ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XIX, Pt. 2, 260.

³¹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXVI, Pt. 1, 214, 223, 237.

³² OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXV, Pt. 1, 398.

for the Army of the Potomac carry on their person “a small canteen of whisky or brandy.”³³ Even the medical director of temperance-minded General Oliver O. Howard’s 11th Corps recognized the necessity of providing whiskey to wounded men. During an attempt to reopen the Tennessee River near Brown’s Ferry, Surgeon D. G. Brinton noted that the acting medical director sent for a barrel of whiskey – when he learned that there were wounded soldiers.³⁴ So essential were spirits during the Appomattox Campaign that the surgeons-in-chief of the 2nd and 3rd Divisions tossed the food stores out of two ambulances that were headed to the front and restocked them with supplies to treat wounded men, including whiskey.³⁵

In the Union army, whiskey was so well-supplied by both the medical and subsistence departments that surgeons and nurses indicated that shortages were temporary, and, when compared to those faced by Confederates, relatively minor. As George E. Cooper, Surgeon and Medical Director of the Department of the Cumberland, explained, after the evacuation of Atlanta, Confederate soldiers seized a railroad in the rear, cutting off access to supplies. From the medical department’s perspective, Cooper thought the effect was negligible, the “only article which ran short was whiskey, and this was procured in ample quantities from the subsistence department.” Of course, he noted that the subsistence whiskey was of a poorer quality but nevertheless “good enough for all practicable purposes.”³⁶ Union nurse Sally Gibbons Emerson noted that whiskey remained plentiful even when other supplies ran short. While working on board the Union steamer Lizzie Baker, Emerson and her fellow nurses supplied wounded Union

³³ OR, Ser. I, Vol. V, 102.

³⁴ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXI, Pt. 1, 100.

³⁵ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLVI, Pt. 1, 695; There is an additional example where the 3rd US Colored Troops are accused by Acting Ensign James H. Berry of not providing for his men, but Lieutenant D. P. Yates and Colonel I. G. Kappner maintain that the sailors of the steamer were rescued and cared for, and noted that the injured received “medical attendance, and all whisky, coffee, meat, and bread.” So, like the other examples, whiskey is provided right alongside rations and medical care to fortify wounded. See, OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLVIII, Pt. 1, 222.

³⁶ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLV, Pt. 1, 107.

and Confederate soldiers “with ice-water, coffee, milk, punch, farina, bread, crackers, or whiskey, according to their needs.”³⁷ Even when supplies dwindled a few days later and the hospital staff was consuming nothing but a few eggs, some crackers, and punch, the wounded soldiers still subsisted on coffee, lemonade, and whiskey.³⁸

Although commissaries and medical departments generally kept medical rations on hand, some commanding officers took steps to ensure that whiskey remained available, even if official channels dried up. Just as they did with fatigue rations and recreational liquor, the Union Army relied on civilian traders to provide additional alcohol. In many cases, sutlers who were otherwise prohibited from selling liquor could make exceptions for medicinal spirits. In the District of Harpers Ferry, for example, a September 1864 regulation forbade officers from supplying any vendor a permit to sell or provide any “spirituous liquors, except for medicinal purposes,” to the soldiers. Even in cases of medical necessity, alcohol could only be distributed in “moderate quantities”: “Supplies shall not be in larger quantities than can be consumed in thirty days.” Elsewhere in the Army of the Potomac, “traders in the counties of West Virginia east of the Alleghany Mountains” were forbidden to sell liquor, unless they were selling specifically to the Army of the Potomac, and permits to transport the liquor would only be provided to be “sent to medical purveyors or army surgeons for medicinal purposes.” Officers of all post detachments were ordered to seize all the liquor that not intended for medicine.³⁹

While the Union Army mobilized many resources, Confederate hospitals were plagued by systemic shortages. When it came to supplying surgeons with necessary medicinal spirits, the Confederate government and its military officials agreed – in theory – with Surgeons Warren and

³⁷ Sarah Hopper Emerson, ed., *Life of Abby Hopper Gibbons: Told Chiefly through Her Correspondence* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1896), 2:89.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2:91.

³⁹ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. XLIII, Pt. 1, 75.

Chisholm. By 1862, the Confederate Army had issued regulations regarding the dispensation of medicinal liquor.⁴⁰ Although various Confederate states adopted their own policies, the text from South Carolina's regulations indicates that when it came to prescribing whiskey, the Confederate and the state governments were on the same page about its potential benefits.⁴¹ The states and the central government might have agreed that whiskey served a medicinal purpose, yet when it came to manufacturing alcohol, the Confederate government butted heads with many governors. Because state legislatures had passed various prohibitions on distilling in an effort to save grain, the Confederate government experienced shortages of many liquors, especially whiskey. Apple brandy might have seemed plentiful in parts of Virginia, but by 1864, the Confederate Senate had proposed a bill that would make it "lawful for the Surgeon General or the Commissary General to make contracts for the manufacture and distillation of whiskey, brandy, and other alcoholic and spirituous liquors for the supply of the army and hospitals upon such terms as may be conducive to the public interests." This amounted to licensing and would trump any law (state or Confederate) that prohibited distilling. The bill went even further, giving the Surgeon and Commissary Generals the authority to establish their own distilleries to manufacture whiskey for the medical department and employ civilians to work in them.⁴²

Instructions from the surgeon-general went further, providing physicians and their stewards with information about how to acquire alcohol from the natural resources of the southern states. When it came to alcohol, the rich indigenous plants certainly held potential, and

⁴⁰ Regulations for the Medical Department of the C. S. Army (Richmond, VA: Ritchie and Dunnivant, Printers, 1862), 11, 47. For scholarship on Confederate medical supply, H. H. Cunningham, Doctors in Gray, 134-62, for alcohol, see 151-2.

⁴¹ R. W. Gibbes, M. D., Physician and Surgeon General, Regulations for the Medical Department of the Military Forces of South Carolina (Columbia: South Carolina Steam Printing Office, 1861), 5, 8.

⁴² "A Act to authorize the manufacture of spirituous liquors for the use of the army and hospitals," The Statutes at Large of the Confederate States of America, Edited by James M. Matthews (Richmond, VA: R. M. Smith, 1864), 271.

Resources of the Southern Fields, a medical botany guide published by the Confederate Surgeon-General, instructed southern physicians on how to extract alcohol from grapes, birch sap, agave, apples, barley, blackberry, cherry, and spruce. Instructions for distilling, brewing, and wine-making were included as well.⁴³ That the Confederacy was desperate to find substitutes for medical supplies is evident not only in the pages of Resources of the Southern Fields, but also in correspondence between surgeons. The effects of the blockade coupled with the great need for prophylactics to combat malaria created chronic shortages of quinine, as well as morphine and calomel. Prices rose and civilians smuggled the drugs to the Confederate army, but shortages persisted. Confederate surgeons believed a tonic created by mixing whiskey with native barks might substitute for quinine. This made the shortage of whiskey, which could be produced domestically, even more acute.⁴⁴

Hospital staff generally tried to dispense whiskey judiciously. In 1864, circulars to the Departments of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida stipulated that whiskey rations would not be given for “trivial complaints” and could only be given to men whose prescriptions noted their names, regiments, and specific diseases. Even with prescriptions, men could only get six to eight ounces at a time.⁴⁵ Confederate nurse Kate Cumming explained how similar policies played out in the field hospitals of the Army of Tennessee. The staff measured every ounce of alcohol and daily recorded each purchase and distribution. When it came to liquor of any sort, it was only

⁴³ Francis Peyre Porcher, Resources of the Southern Fields and Forests, Medical, Economical, and Agricultural, Being also a Medical Botany of the Confederate States; with Practical Information on the Useful Properties of the Trees, Plants, and Shrubs (Charleston, SC: Steam-Power Press of Evans and Cogswell, 1863). See, for example, 65, 157, 160, 162, 166, 222, 266, 280, 386, 522.

⁴⁴ OR, Ser. IV, Vol. II, 1024; Margaret Humphreys, Marrow of Tragedy, 238-39; Michael A. Flannery, Civil War Pharmacy, 182.

⁴⁵ Circular...[concerning issue of alcoholic stimulants], (Charleston, SC: 1863); Circular...[concerning the administration of alcoholic stimulants], (Charleston, SC: 1864).

distributed to a ward if the hospital druggist ordered it.⁴⁶ Although Confederate hospital staffs controlled access to whiskey within their own walls, keeping any sort of supply on hand could be problematic, especially late in the war. On at least two occasions, Cumming mentions that whiskey had to be moved as Union troops advanced on the hospitals. It was assumed that the enemy would burn the hospitals, and alcohol was among the valuable resources that the hospital staff moved to protect.⁴⁷

By the late stages of the war, chronic alcohol (and quinine) shortages created heated disagreements and confusion. In January 1864, Commissary-General L. B. Northrop and Major and Commissary of Subsistence H. C. Guerin had a misunderstanding involving shortages of whiskey. It seemed that a Captain Witherspoon stationed in Charleston casually mentioned to Surgeon Chisholm that “he had some whisky on hand.” Thinking that the Commissary Department in Charleston, South Carolina, had whiskey, Northrop ordered that five barrels be supplied to the medical department in Virginia. Guerin then found himself in a tight spot: he was under orders to supply five barrels of whiskey, but unlike the medical department, which was allowed to manufacture its own stimulants, the subsistence department was prohibited from distilling whiskey or other spirits. The Commissary Department also lacked the funds to buy the five barrels at the market rates for \$55-75 per gallon. Was Guerin supposed to pay the exorbitant prices for whiskey? Impress it? Or disobey the orders?⁴⁸ In Virginia acute alcohol shortages prompted Surgeon General Samuel Preston Moore to accuse physicians of wasting their limited resources. In a late 1864 circular to all medical directors, Moore called attention to the “abuse practiced by medical officers in the administration of alcoholic stimulants to patients and

⁴⁶ Kate Cumming, *Kate: the Journal of a Confederate Nurse*, Edited by Richard Barksdale Harwell (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998), 203.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 185, 210.

⁴⁸ *QR*, Ser. I, Vol. XXXV, Pt. 1, 555-56.

authors, for trivial complaints.” As the supply of alcohol became increasingly precarious and a “matter of deep concern,” Moore prohibited the prescribing of alcoholic stimulants “except in such cases as imperatively demand[ed]” it. Medical officers should instead treat soldiers with “more judicious and economical” medications.⁴⁹ By 1865, the Confederate government estimated that it needed at least \$4 million to mitigate alcohol shortages for six more months of war.⁵⁰

In both the Union and the Confederate armies, civilians attempted to supplement the medical departments’ supplies. These volunteers’ efforts indicated that many middle-class Americans (unlike many temperance reformers) considered alcohol a necessary stimulant. The Union Army had a well-established network through the United States Sanitary and Christian Commissions. Volunteers kept soldiers supplied with food and spirits, at times running afoul of northern temperance organizations that strongly objected to whiskey in hospitals or convalescent homes. Despite some temperance reformers’ – and the American Temperance Union’s – official stance on abstinence, volunteers’ behavior in the USSC and USCC indicate that northern Protestant reformers were anything but united on their views about medicinal whiskey.⁵¹ Union soldier Mason Whiting Tyler told his parents in October 1864 that the Sanitary and Christian Commission volunteers in Winchester, Virginia, had supplied more than two thousand wounded

⁴⁹ Circular no. 10...[relating to abuse of administration of alcoholic stimulants], (Richmond, VA: 1864).

⁵⁰ Confederate States of America, Department of the Treasury, Report of the Secretary of the Treasury. Nov. 7, 1864 (Richmond, VA: The Department, 1864), 39.

⁵¹ Clifford S. Griffin briefly explores the conflict between the various volunteer societies who promoted temperance and the U. S. Sanitary Commission, which provided medicinal rations, in Their Brothers’ Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1960), 248-255. For more scholarship on the USSC, see William Quentin Maxwell, Lincoln’s Fifth Wheel: The Political History of the United States Sanitary Commission (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1956); Judith Ann Giesberg, Civil War Sisterhood: The U.S. Sanitary Commission and Women’s Politics in Transition (Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press, 2000).

Union soldiers with “hot soup, coffee, tea, and hot whiskey punch.”⁵² Even far from the front lines, northern volunteers seemed comfortable providing spirits to ailing soldiers. Iowan Annie Wittenmyer would become an active member of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union in the years following the war. During the conflict, however, her temperance principles did not prevent her from requesting and sending wine to Iowa soldiers convalescing in the state’s military hospitals. Her Christian Commission notes regularly included orders for wine.⁵³

There are many similar examples among the Confederates. According to Emma Holmes, Charleston citizens sent more than \$5,000 in donations to their wounded soldiers in Virginia hospitals in the early winter of 1863. Mayor Charles Macbeth gave the funds to Rev. R. W. Barnwell, who “spent \$1,000 in purchase of good French brandy, Madeira & Sherry, for the use of those patients who needed more delicate stimulants than the whiskey furnished by [the] government.” Holmes believed Barnwell to be a “soldier’s friend” and hoped that “showers of blessing” would be “poured upon him from every part of the Confederacy.” Holmes did not indicate that the Rev. Barnwell compromised the soldiers’ physical or spiritual health by providing medicinal spirits (although, clearly, wine was seen as less problematic than whiskey).⁵⁴

⁵² Mason Whiting Tyler, Recollections of the Civil War: with Many Original Diary Entries and Letters Written from the Seat of War, and with Annotated References, Edited by William S. Tyler (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1912), 298.

⁵³ Surgeon M. W. Robbins, Articles Necessary for the Hospital, 4th Regiment Iowa Volunteers, December 19, 1861, Document 39, Folder 6, Box 1; Annie Winterborham to Annie Wittenmyer, Jan 20, 1862, Document 51, Folder 7, Box 1; C. D. Allen to Mrs. Strong, February 29, 1862, Document 63, Folder 8, Box 1; Mrs. M. A. Allison to Annie Wittenmyer, May 2, 1862, Document 85, Folder 10, Box 1; Anna Me. P. Dillon to Annie Wittenmyer, September 21, 1862, Document 130, Folder 13, Box 1; From the Glasgow Ladies Soldiers’ Aid Society, April 21, 1862, Document 187, Folder 17, Box 1; A list of the articles in the box of Hospital Stores sent by the ladies, April 22, 1862, Document 190, Folder 17, Box 1; Wa. M. Milford to Annie Wittenmyer, July 12, 1862, Document 207, Folder 19, Box 1; Rantau [?] to Annie Wittenmyer, no date, Document 207, Folder 2, Box 17; Mrs. N. L. Price to Mrs. Wittenmyer, June 26, 1863, Document 123, Folder 12, Box 2; Annie Wittenmyer Papers, 1861-1901, Manuscripts Collection, Des Moines Historical Library, State Historical Society of Iowa, Des Moines, IA.

⁵⁴ Emma Holmes, Diary of Miss Emma Holmes, 1861-1866, Edited by John F. Marszalek (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 229.

Like civilians, regimental officers displayed varying attitudes toward medicinal whiskey. Confiscated alcohol was supposed to be sent directly to the hospitals, and Confederate officers tried to see to it that the valuable whiskey made it there. When Confederate soldier William Daniel Dixon and his comrades found “2 demi johns and a number of bottles of wiskey [sic] besides 2 boxes of brandy cherries” while searching the premises of the camp bake house, they sent the liquor directly to the hospital (and arrested the baker for selling the liquor at 20 cents a glass).⁵⁵ Confederate Colonel Thomas L. Rosser reacted similarly after confiscating some “blockade goods” from the U.S. Gunboats Satellite and Reliance in August 1863. He let his men pick over most of the items and take what they needed, but the whiskey he “brought up and turned over to the medical department, having given a small quantity to the surgeons of the county, who certified that the community greatly needed it.”⁵⁶

Despite its obvious medical value, however, plenty of officers decided to simply destroy any liquor they found. Union Colonel D. H. Hughes of the 28th Regiment Iowa Infantry came across forty-nine barrels of whiskey that were being held in a swamp in rebel territory near Cape Girardeau, Missouri. That the whiskey was found alongside quinine and morphine indicates that it was destined for a Confederate hospital, but Hughes not only confiscated the liquor, he also destroyed all but three barrels (which he gave to his guides). Its medicinal value for the medical department did not seem to outweigh the trouble of transporting it. In their march through rebel-held parts of Missouri, Hughes and his men destroyed more than 100 barrels of whiskey.⁵⁷ Though this undoubtedly seemed expedient to officers, such decisions angered fellow soldiers who viewed it as waste. Writing from Union Camp Pleasant Hill in Kentucky in September

⁵⁵ William Daniel Dixon, The Blues in Gray: The Civil War Journal of William Daniel Dixon and the Republican Blues Daybook, Edited by Roger S. Durbam (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2000), 91-92.

⁵⁶ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXIX, Pt. 1, 76.

⁵⁷ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXII, Pt. 2, 287.

1861, Friedrich Bertsch of the 9th Ohio Infantry could not understand why General Jacob Cox “destroyed with holy indignation several barrels of whiskey found.” German-American Bertsch opposed temperance and prohibition in general and advocated moderate consumption instead of teetotalism. In his opinion, which he shared with the Cincinnati Volksfreund, the whiskey would have provided “the best medicine for many in this season,” and he could not see how the fear that some soldiers might become drunk could outweigh the suffering of other men deprived of medicinal whiskey. “Intelligent allocation,” rather than temperance, should be the military’s policy on whiskey. Forced abstinence was simply “unjust.”⁵⁸

The Abuse of Alcohol and Its Consequences

Bertsch’s notion of “intelligent allocation” certainly seemed reasonable on paper, but varying regulations and fluctuating supplies made controlling access to alcohol nearly impossible. Even when commanding officers went to great lengths to keep medicinal spirits from thirsty soldiers, preventing the careless use of alcohol proved difficult. Both sides dealt with the chronic abuse and waste at the hands of hospital staffs, and beyond the medical department, the problems created by alcohol multiplied. Some enlisted men and officers attempted to steal or falsely requisition whiskey from the hospital stores. But more troublesome were alcohol’s intoxicating effects. Military records and personal accounts contain numerous tales of sickness caused by alcohol prescriptions and overindulgence. Its ability to wreak havoc on the health of the army presented medical departments and commanding officers with many headaches.

⁵⁸ Joseph R. Reinhart, editor and translator, A German Hurrah!: Civil War Letters of Friedrich Bertsch and Wilhelm Stangel, 9th Ohio Infantry (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2010), 129.

Unfortunately, one of the greatest risks associated with medicinal alcohol was drunken physicians. Ideally, medical departments sought physicians who were of sound moral character.⁵⁹ In 1862, the Confederate Secretary of War provided for the release of any man from the medical corps who was unprofessional or lacking in “moral habits.”⁶⁰ Members of Union and Confederate medical corps enumerated specific moral habits in their evaluation of surgeons: men should be sober themselves but should also make certain that scarce whiskey rations reached patients. De Witt C. Peters, Assistant Surgeon in the U. S. Army, noted that one doctor tending to prisoners of war in Richmond was “a very kind man” who “did all in his power to promote the health and comfort of the sick. His careful planning ensured that the sick prisoners had “a sufficiency of whisky” that was “not being drank up by outsiders so much.”⁶¹ Like the good surgeon in Richmond, Kate Cumming sang the praises of Dr. Redwood at Levert Hospital in Mobile, Alabama, whose penchant for “strict discipline” was so infamous that jokes circulated throughout the region that the careful doctor refused to provide any ailing surgeon with a whiskey ration “until he put his name down as a patient.”⁶² In the 55th Massachusetts, sober surgeon Burt Wilder kept the whiskey stores in his tent and only issued the appropriate doses of whiskey when ordered to do so.⁶³

At least early in the war, military authorities seemed determined to weed out drunken members of the medical corps, but this proved difficult, especially as the war dragged on.

⁵⁹ This is not unlike Mississippi’s stipulation that whiskey dispensers be morally upstanding nor the early American notion that all men who dealt in liquor – especially tavern-keepers – ought to be moral citizens. See, David W. Conroy, *In Public Houses: Drink and the Revolution of Authority in Colonial Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 57-156; Sharon V. Salinger, *Taverns and Drinking Early America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 151-209.

⁶⁰ *Regulations for the Medical Department of the C. S. Army*, 13-14.

⁶¹ *OR*, Ser. II, Vol. VII, 119.

⁶² Kate Cumming, *Kate*, 255.

⁶³ Burt G. Wilder, *Practicing Medicine in a Black Regiment: The Civil War Diary of Burt G. Wilder, 55th Massachusetts*, Edited by Richard M. Reid (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2010), 145-46, 77.

In April 1863, a Confederate inquiry into the treatment of Union prisoners at Castle Thunder in Richmond, Virginia, led to the removal of a “Mr. Brand” from his post as hospital steward due to “moral incompetency” after he developed a “habit of appropriating the hospital liquor to his own private use.”⁶⁴ But the problem was endemic. In fact, limerick-writing veteran Don Redro Quarendo Reminisco portrayed regimental surgeons in the Union army as anything but creatures of “moral habits.” Instead, he labeled them “Impostors” and “mere charlatans... Who scarce knew how to draw a tooth, or measure out quinine.” These men who were “fond of happy cheer, And not opposed to brandy, wine, and mayhap, lager bier” were the ones “who go to Uncle Sam to gain positions, As stewards of the hospitals, and surgeons and physicians.”⁶⁵ His intimation is that most men joined the medical corps to avoid service in the ranks. And as more men were conscripted, medical departments could not afford to be incredibly selective when choosing men to work in swelling hospitals.

As a result, hospital workers regularly complained about drunken doctors. While on board a Union steamer, Burt Wilder remarked that “too many of the doctors use too much” whiskey. Teetotalers were few and far between.⁶⁶ Some workers blamed the long hours. Union nurse Sally Gibbons Emerson supposed that the doctors and contrabands working non-stop on the crowded steamer Lizzie Baker could only “be kept up with whiskey.” She herself was living on crackers and punch.⁶⁷ Perhaps exhaustion played a role in the over-reliance on alcohol, but more often nurses groused about physicians who simply took advantage of access to hospital stores. Surgeon Carl Uterhard, serving with the 119th New York Infantry Volunteers knew that

⁶⁴ OR, Ser. II, Vol. V, 904.

⁶⁵ Don Redro Quarendo Reminisco, Life in the Union Army: or Notings and Reminiscences of a Two Years' Volunteer (New York: H. Dexter, 1863), 95.

⁶⁶ Burt G. Wilder, Practicing Medicine in a Black Regiment, 221, 214.

⁶⁷ Sarah Hopper Emerson, ed., Life of Abbey Hopper Gibbons, 2:90.

“Unbelievable [sic] amounts of money are being spent on things to nurse the sick and wounded, but no patient ever sees any of it. Large shipments of *Whiskey*, for example, are sent to the sick soldiers every month, but the respective regimental doctors drink it all with their friends.” The regimental surgeon in the 119th New York – Uterhard’s superior – “behaved so badly” that a group of doctors brought him up on charges of “incessant drunkenness and incompetence in his operating.” Uterhard hoped a subsequent court-martial would lead to the man's discharge from the army. Even so, Uterhard took no chances, pilfering what he needed to treat his patients from the incoming supply of goods and hiding it away before the regimental surgeon ever had a chance to get his hands on it.⁶⁸

The male nurses and stewards working in the hospitals were often as bad as the surgeons. When the Army of the Potomac was near Fairfax, Virginia, in August 1862, General Herman Haupt became exasperated that many “of the nurses who came on last night were drunk and very disorderly.” The problem, it seemed, was that the War Department had issued a broad call for volunteer nurses to care for wounded Union soldiers after the second Battle of Bull Run. These newly-minted nurses came from the ranks of northern men who had not yet bothered to enlist. Or, as Haupt put it, they were members of the “drunken rabble.”⁶⁹ Once these men were employed in the medical corps, they had a knack for finding liquor to support their drinking habits. Soldiers and patients alike reported that hospital stewards were drunk when they were supposed to be on duty or that they took whiskey intended for the patients. This was particularly true in cases where the patients also happened to be prisoners of war. Both Union and

⁶⁸ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home, translated by Susan Carter Vogel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 161.

⁶⁹ Herman Haupt, Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt Giving Hitherto Unpublished Official orders, Personal Narratives of Important Military Operations, and Interviews with President Lincoln, Secretary Stanton, General-in-Chief Halleck, and with Generals McDowell, McClellan, Meade, Hancock, Burnside, and Others in Command of the Armies in the Field, and His Impressions of These Men (Milwaukee, WI: Wright and Joys Co., 1901), 118, 126-27.

Confederate prisoners accused their stewards of intoxication. At times, stewards intercepted liquor stores intended for their prisoners.⁷⁰ At a parole camp in Maryland, stewards ordered extra whiskey stores for themselves. In April 1863, Commissary-General of Prisoners, Colonel W. Hoffman noticed that although the hospital had but 122 patients, the staff had purchased \$995 in stores that included “twelve barrels of ale and one barrel of whiskey.” No explanation about how the spirits were being used “for the benefit of the sick” accompanied the report, and Hoffman concluded that the purchases were “extravagant.”⁷¹

Female nurses repeatedly noted male staffers’ proclivity for sneaking liquor and drinking excessively, and some women even pondered if men, in general, lacked the moral fortitude to care for wounded soldiers. While she tended wounded Confederates in the Taliaferro factory in Lynchburg, Virginia, in May 1864, Elizabeth Blackford expressed her disgust that “the majority” of the doctors were not doing their duty. The men had “free access to the hospital stores and deem their own health demands that they drink up most of the brandy and whiskey in stock.” As a result, the doctors and surgeons were “fired up most the time” and treating the “suffering” soldiers with “a cruel and brutal indifference.” The abuses were, in Blackford’s mind, “a disgrace to their profession and to humanity.”⁷² Phoebe Yates Pember reported how the wounded men in her care “began to make serious complaints that the liquor issued did not reach them.” Pember concluded that “any passer-by in the wards” could be stealing the whiskey after it left

⁷⁰ Frederick Hess, Letters to Tobitha: A Personal History of the Civil War, Letters by Frederick Hess, Edited by David Primrose (New York: iUniverse, 2006), 186; Eugene Forbes, Diary of a Soldier; and Prisoner of War in the Rebel Prisons (Trenton, NJ: Murphy and Bechtel Printers, 1865), 38; When political prisoner Lawrence Sangston had his private stores of blackberry brandy confiscated by a Colonel Burke he was furious. His medicinal brandy bottle was found empty the next morning “with several others on the wood pile outside the fort.” All the confiscated medicinal spirits had been consumed by the prison staff. See, The Bastiles of the North (Baltimore, MD: Kelly, Hedian and Piet, 1863), 53.

⁷¹ OR, Ser. II, Vol. V, 562.

⁷² Susan Leigh Blackford, compiler, Letters from Lee’s Army, or Memoirs of Life In and Out of the Army of Virginia during the War Between the States, Edited by Charles Minor Blackford III (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 261.

her quarters. She absolved (rather naively) the female nurses, as the “liquor would be no temptation to them.” Pember suspected the male staff members and began employing only women to deliver whiskey to the wards. This solved her problem.⁷³ Pember’s actions reflect the notion that she and plenty of other women believed: that women were better nurses than men because they were more moral.⁷⁴

Intoxicated male doctors prompted many female nurses to invoke military protocol to restore discipline in the hospitals. In April 1865, Mary Phinney von Olnhausen, who served as a nurse in Beaufort, North Carolina, had an especially trying time with a drunken doctor, an “ignorant, bad man without a particle of principle or judgement [sic].” This doctor had a knack for sleeping until noon, leaving von Olnhausen alone in her ward with fifty patients for nearly three days before an additional surgeon arrived to “rescue” her and help care for the patients. The besotted surgeon continued to wreak havoc at the hospital, deciding late one night to go “on a lark” with local “artisans, navy officers, [and] niggers who were impressed with a guard to be made to sing.” The drunken men ran through town, “screaming and shouting,” before returning in the middle of the night and waking “all the patients.” The traumatic and exasperating

⁷³ Phoebe Yates Pember, Southern Woman’s Story: Life in Confederate Richmond (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 47-48. Pember’s assumption that women were more reliable (and more sober) than their male counterparts had at least one notable exception. One English nurse – a veteran of the Crimean war with fourteen years of hospital experience – was reputedly unqualified to do her job and nearly immediately removed from her ward “dead drunk and swearing like a trooper.” See, Mary Phinney, Baroness von Olnhausen, Adventures of an Army Nurse in Two Wars, Edited by James Phinney Munroe (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1903), 44-45.

⁷⁴ Northern and southern women participated in hospital work during the war. Some women chose to view their work as nurses as a patriotic extension of their domestic relief work. In the Confederacy, women nurses faced hostility from men who believed that hospitals were too gruesome for women. Nurses in the South also confronted organizational and moral chaos from their male colleagues. For scholarship on nursing, see George C. Rable, Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989) 121-128; Drew Gilpin Faust, Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 92-113; Barbara Cutter, Domestic Devils, Battlefield Angels: The Radicalism of American Womanhood, 1830-1865 (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 154-95; Nina Silber, Daughters of the Union: Northern Women Fight the Civil War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 194-221.

experiences left von Olnhausen “more down on whiskey than ever.”⁷⁵ But von Olnhausen and other hospital workers she knew reached their limits when putting up with disorder and abuse. A hospital cook – Mrs. Bickerdyke – was also harassed by a drunken “Dr. S. of Alexandria,” who was prone to inspect her kitchen while drunk. When the intoxicated man “found fault with everything,” the cook “took him by the nape of the neck, led him out, called a guard, and told them to take this drunken man to headquarters and she would have him court-martialled [sic].”⁷⁶ She had no further problems with Dr. S.

Because whiskey was readily available, patients were nearly as susceptible to abusing alcohol. That convalescing men were often bored (perhaps even more so than soldiers in camps) and therefore prone to intemperance was not lost on government officials.⁷⁷ Soldiers were not merely punished, but pains were taken to redirect their energies before their problems grew more serious. Inspectors for the Confederate Surgeon General’s Office were required to make certain that “noise, profanity, intemperance and waste [were] forbidden and punished,” but they were also instructed to check that hospitals had chaplains, religious services, current newspapers, and libraries.⁷⁸

Conscientious physicians and hospital stewards tried to control the flow of whiskey as much as possible by only dispensing it with written prescriptions. After visiting with wounded and “much exhausted” soldiers near Winchester, Confederate physician David Bagley requested “two bottles of whiskey” to be used as stimulants. Confederate surgeon James D. Robison refused because only soldiers treated by the surgeons directly could receive any sort of

⁷⁵ Mary Phinney, Baroness von Olnhausen, Adventures of an Army Nurse in Two Wars, 182-187.

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 193-94.

⁷⁷ Margaret Humphreys, Marrow of Tragedy, 170-1.

⁷⁸ Surgeon-General’s Office, Confederate States of America, Guide for Inspection of Hospitals and for Inspector’s Report (Richmond?: s.n., between 1861 and 1865), 2.

medication, including whiskey.⁷⁹ A sneaky officer at Castle Thunder prison in Richmond tried to pull rank to obtain spirits from the medical department to liven up a dinner party. At first, Captain Alexander sent an enslaved boy to the hospital steward's room to get "a bottle of whisky." When this request was denied – per the steward's standing orders about needless distribution – he sent repeatedly for the steward, ultimately telling him a false story about having a man with a broken leg in immediate need of liquor. When the steward still declined to waste alcohol on a dinner party, the captain had him "put in the cell for refusing to prescribe for a patient."⁸⁰ Keeping close tabs on the medical stores did not always end abuse. In a military hospital near Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, in November 1862, paroled patients were causing weekend disturbances. The surgeons tried to prevent local dealers from selling liquor to their patients. Unfortunately, the soldiers managed – as soldiers did – to get their hands on the "tanglefoot" while they were on parole. For their part, Franklin County's annoyed citizens perceived the root of the problem to be not the surgeons, but the civilian sellers "who furnish the whiskey to persons under their care." They were warned that they would be "held to a strict accountability in the future."⁸¹

The problem was that even when physicians and nurses took precautions, soldiers could become intoxicated on medicinal rations, exacerbating issues of chronic drunkenness in the ranks. Physicians may have prescribed alcohol for its stimulating properties, but men tended to notice its numbing and intoxicating effects more acutely. Some soldiers seemed prone to intoxication from even small amounts of alcohol. As Simon Cummins explained to his concerned

⁷⁹ David Bagley to James D. Robison, undated, and James D. Robison to David Bagley, undated, James D. Robison with David Bagley Letters, Section 19, Conrad (Holmes) Papers, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

⁸⁰ OR, Ser. II, Vol. V, 881.

⁸¹ "The 'Row,'" Valley Spirit (Franklin County, PA), November 12, 1862.

parents, when he had his occasional swallows, he could “feel it in my head some.”⁸² Other soldiers noticed this as well. Mason Whiting Tyler suffered not only “from a severe attack of fever and ague” in August 1864, but also complained of being unable to fully perform his duties because of the additional “crazing effects of whiskey and quinine taken to counteract the fever.”⁸³ Even the “half a teaspoonful” given to exchanged and emaciated prisoners after they left Andersonville was enough to make Robert Ransom “drunk.” After taking his dram, he was “in no pain whatever.”⁸⁴ Patients sought its numbing effects, and one of Burt Wilder’s soldiers went “out of his head and threatened to attack” the medical officer after he was not given additional whiskey.⁸⁵

That men could become dependent on alcohol was well-known. Edward Warren reminded field surgeons to watch for the effects of “the abuse of spirituous liquors, opium, and tobacco” when they evaluated patients for pain.⁸⁶ While Warren was speaking scientifically, field surgeons in both armies were well aware that they had to factor in alcohol and drunkenness when examining patients. Officers outside of the medical departments were no less aware of the connections between alcohol and various health problems. General William Dorsey Pender lost a comrade, Colonel R. H. Gray of the 22nd North Carolina, to drunkenness. Although Pender lauded Gray as “a fine soldier, and a nice gentleman,” drinking killed him, and Pender lamented that he had not known of the troubling behavior in time to intervene.⁸⁷ Drunkenness did not always result in death, but other soldiers reported sickness from over-indulgence of liquor among

⁸² Simon Burdick Cummins, Give God the Glory: Memoirs of a Civil War Soldier, Edited by Melvin Jones (Melvin Jones, 1979), 79.

⁸³ Mason Whiting Tyler, Recollections of the Civil War, 268-69.

⁸⁴ Robert Ransom, Andersonville Diary: Escape and List of Dead, With Name, Co., Regiment, Date of Death and No. of Grave in Cemetery, (J. L. Ransom, 1881), 95.

⁸⁵ Burt G. Wilder, Practicing Medicine in a Black Regiment, 145-46, 77.

⁸⁶ Edward Warren, An Epitome of Practical Surgery, for Field and Hospital, 19.

⁸⁷ William Dorsey Pender, The General to His Lady: The Civil War Letters of William Dorsey Pender to Fanny Pender, Edited by William W. Hassler (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 210.

officers. Shortly after the fall of Vicksburg, several generals had a party at headquarters that resulted in General Frank Blair's being "dead-drunk" and General Thomas Ewing becoming "so drunk that he vomited all over the floor."⁸⁸ In September 1863, Quaker pacifist Cyrus Pringle was disturbed by similar behavior after he was arrested and placed in a guardhouse with drunken soldiers. At some point during the night, Pringle was "awakened by the demoniac howlings and yellings of a man" who "was drunk, and further seemed to be labouring under delirium tremens. He crashed about furiously." The guard could not even quiet him by using "handcuffs, and chain and ball."⁸⁹

Soldiers' Personal Use of Alcohol

The risks associated with alcohol did not keep soldiers from regarding it as essential. In addition to the rations supplied by their surgeons, plenty of soldiers went to great lengths to keep "medicated." Wounds were horrific, childhood diseases spread through the camps, and, especially early in the war, field hospitals were incapable of providing much care. As a result, many soldiers and officers resorted to folk remedies and alcohol played a vital part in the process. They tended to use alcohol to revive themselves, even if they did not always articulate how they perceived alcohol to work as a stimulant in the same way that physicians did. Men simply believed that poor weather and exhaustion made them sick, and they drank brandy and whiskey to treat various illnesses. They also carried canteens full of whiskey into battle and relied on family back home to keep them supplied with wines and spirits.

⁸⁸ S. O. Bereman, "Civil War Journal of S. O. Bereman," Garth Hagerman Photo/Graphics, accessed August 31, 2012, <http://garthagerman.com/fambly/bereman7.php>.

⁸⁹ Cyrus Guernsey Pringle, The Record of a Quaker Conscience: Cyrus Pringle's Diary (New York: Macmillan and Co., 1918), 45-46.

Treating diseases ranging from measles to head colds with liquor was commonplace. Confederate soldier Elijah P. Petty used “about 4 fingers of brandy” and a bath in a spring to treat a fever brought on by a “severe cold” and a “very sore and painful” ripped fingernail that was undoubtedly infected. The brandy and bath readied Petty for “the full discharge of my duty and more.”⁹⁰ Fellow Texan Theophilus Perry sounded desperate when he could not find brandy or whiskey to treat a cough that had been afflicting him for several weeks. He hoped to buy some rum to “make a little flip or egg-nog” for use as an expectorant.⁹¹ He and his wife, Harriet, were in the habit of using ardent spirits to treat a variety of illnesses. Harriet wrote to her husband in October 1862 that she and their young daughter were both quite ill. The toddler had been teething, and had been so sick through the process that she had become more “feeble & thinner than [her mother] ever saw her.” Although the child had “no appetite for anything,” her mother gave her “a dram” of whiskey “three times a day” from a local supplier. Harriet was sure that the whiskey would improve the child’s appetite, and even remarked that the little girl was “very fond of it and asks me during the day for a ‘good dram.’”⁹²

Plenty of soldiers shared Perry’s reliance on the medicinal qualities of alcohol. In July 1861, Friedrich Bertsch noted that “the total lack of wine and whisky” left many soldiers at Camp Middle Fork near Beverly in western Virginia stricken with diarrhea. Without liquor, the soldiers did nothing but drink “all kinds of water” and sleep in a leaky henhouse.⁹³ Edmund DeWitt Patterson recalled that he passed out “from excessive heat” on a march to Chancellorsville, Virginia, and was brought back from being “almost dead” by someone

⁹⁰ Elijah P. Petty, Journey to Pleasant Hill: The Civil War Letters of Elijah P. Petty, Walker’s Texas Division, C. S. A., Edited by Norman D. Brown (San Antonio: University of Texas Institute of Texan Cultures, 1982), 81.

⁹¹ M. Jane Johansson, ed., Widows by the Thousand: The Civil War Letters of Theophilus and Harriet Perry, 1862-1864 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 214.

⁹² *Ibid*, 47-48.

⁹³ Joseph R. Reinhart, editor and translator, A German Hurrah!, 51.

“pouring brandy down” his throat.”⁹⁴ After a round of picket duty in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, Minnesotan James Madison Bowler caught a severe cold and “paid \$1.00 for a pint of whisky to make cherry bitters,” in hopes of curing his nagging cough, sore throat, and dysentery.⁹⁵ Mississippian Robert A. Moore blamed a rainy march for landing him on the sick list with the measles. He purchased some brandy and ginger and concocted a brandy-infused ginger tea, which “made the measles [sic] go a little easier.”⁹⁶ Even when weather did not cause illness, soldiers noticed that it exacerbated the symptoms. Yankee officer Augustus D. Ayling also found that a “day of cold and east wind and rain” made his recovery from typhoid fever and chronic diarrhea all the more difficult. Before going to bed, the lieutenant “took a good big drink of wine and got several naps before morning.”⁹⁷

Troops used alcohol to sleep off colds and fevers, but they also knew that whiskey would come in handy if they were wounded. Throughout the war, medical officers and the soldiers themselves carried canteens of whiskey in battle. Union surgeon John Gardner Perry patched up General Frank Barlett with a few stitches and “a good horn of whiskey” after a bullet “severed an artery in the scalp.” The general was back in his saddle heading toward the front almost immediately.⁹⁸ Out during the night “picking up the wounded” after the Battle at Belmont, Missouri, in November 1861, Confederate L. P. Yandell carried “opium, brandy, and water,”

⁹⁴ Edmund DeWitt Patterson, Yankee Rebel: The Civil War Journal of Edmund DeWitt Patterson, Edited by John G. Barrett (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966) 1, 101.

⁹⁵ Andrea R. Foroughi, ed., Go If You Think It Your Duty: A Minnesota Couple's Civil War Letters (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2008), 92.

⁹⁶ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, as Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A. Moore, Co. G, 17th Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Guardes, Holly Springs, Mississippi (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 38.

⁹⁷ Augustus D. Ayling, A Yankee at Arms: The Diary of Lieutenant Augusts D. Ayling, 29th Massachusetts Volunteers, Edited by Charles F. Herberger (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1999), 58-59, 61.

⁹⁸ John Gardner Perry, Letters from a Surgeon of the Civil War, Compiled by Martha Derby Perry (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, and Co., 1906), 170.

with which he “alleviated their torture.”⁹⁹ But many soldiers did not bother to rely on medical officers and instead packed their own alcohol into battle.¹⁰⁰ James M. Williams, an officer in the 21st Alabama infantry kept “a small flask of liquor,” but when it came time to march, he shared it with his soldiers when he saw them “becoming faint.”¹⁰¹ His practice was not uncommon; plenty of officers and soldiers shared alcohol from their canteens.¹⁰² General George McClellan, at one point in August 1862, “had a sudden attack of indisposition, became very pale,” and asked fellow General Herman Haupt to fetch him some brandy. The drink revived him.¹⁰³

Most men based their notions of alcohol’s medicinal value on home remedies, and plenty relied on their families to keep them supplied. While fighting in Virginia, Mississippi Private David Holt stopped to visit “the home of [his] forefathers.” Holt was sick, and his Uncle Jim decided to “make one addition” to the treatment prescribed by Holt’s doctor. The soldier’s uncle had in his cellar “a barrel of fine old rye” – the rye had been grown on his farm and his neighbor had distilled it into whiskey for him. A daily dose, taken with sugar, would ward off sickness.¹⁰⁴

The deeply pious Jones family of Georgia went to great trouble to ensure that family members remained well-stocked with brandy and wine throughout the conflict. Whether they were using it to treat wounds or chest pains, brandy, ale, and wine (blackberry or Madeira) were

⁹⁹ “Document 133: The Battle at Belmont, MO, fought November 7, 1861, Rebel Accounts of the Battle, L. P. Yandell’s Account, Columbus, November 10,” The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc., Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 3 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), Doc 298.

¹⁰⁰ OR, Ser. I, Vol. V, 102.

¹⁰¹ James M. Williams, From That Terrible Field: Civil War Letters of James M. Williams, Twenty-first Alabama Volunteers, Edited by John Kent Folmar (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1981), 98.

¹⁰² Robert Goldthwaite Carter, Four Brothers in Blue, or Sunshine and Shadows of the War of the Rebellion: A Story of the Great Civil War from Bull Run to Appomattox (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 392; William J. Crossley, Extracts from My Diary, and from My Experiences while Boarding with Jefferson Davis in Three of His Notorious Hotels, in Richmond, Va., Tuscaloosa, Ala., and Salisbury, N.C., from July, 1861, to June, 1862, (Providence, RI: Stone and Farnham Printers, 1903), 9.

¹⁰³ Herman Haupt, Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt, 98.

¹⁰⁴ David Holt, A Mississippi Rebel in the Army of Northern Virginia: The Civil War Memoirs of Private David Holt, Edited by Thomas D. Cockrell and Michael B. Ballard (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 118.

an integral part of their medicinal habits.¹⁰⁵ The family even added spirits to external compresses, mixing together brandy and mustard to treat typhoid fever, while also applying brandy-soaked cloths to a swollen throat.¹⁰⁶ Although the Joneses were firm supporters of sobriety among soldiers and lauded Stonewall Jackson for keeping liquor out of reach of the troops, when it came to their health, the reverend and his family relied on brandy and porter, per their doctor's advice. When the supply ran low in Georgia, Jones appealed to his son, a colonel in the Confederate army, to send brandy to the family. They not only consumed small amounts daily, but also used "it as an external stimulant," applying whiskey or burnt brandy and cloves to treat illness.¹⁰⁷ Later, Mary Jones returned the favor, making certain her son was stocked with "a bottle of blackberry [spirits] prepared for medicinal use," which she shipped through the distributing commissary along with candles, sweet oranges, ham, and butter. The wine, she explained, was "excellent for all *bowel affections*—prepared with *brandy*, consequently a *strong article*."¹⁰⁸ In short, Mary Jones assumed like many soldiers wine and brandy could combat camp dysentery.

The Joneses were not alone in their use of medicinal alcohol despite their temperance principles. Alcohol's medicinal qualities were so valuable that even a few of the formerly temperate found themselves backsliding. After Union soldiers awoke one December night in 1862 to find water filling their tents, the men, including their Captain Vandervender (who had been "an earnest seeker" up until this point), decided to combat the dampness by drinking. William Taylor Stott, teetotalling Baptist and officer in the 18th Indiana was horrified by his

¹⁰⁵ Robert Manson Myers, ed., *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 208, 210, 279-81.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 363, 384, 387-88.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 857, 861, 906, 915-17.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 1096.

comrade's fall from grace.¹⁰⁹ Like Stott, General Irvin McDowell remained resolutely temperate, even when under a surgeon's care. After he fell off his horse one day while reviewing troops in 1862, the "staff surgeon endeavored to get some brandy into his mouth, but his teeth were rigidly set and the effort was unsuccessful." When McDowell regained consciousness, he proudly noted that "brandy could not be forced down his throat," even when he was not in control of his faculties.¹¹⁰ Surgeon Daniel M. Holt also expressed an absolute preference for cold water, exclaiming that there was "Nothing more refreshing—nothing more conducive [sic] to health and comfort, nothing more inspiring." Even in the field near Fairfax Courthouse, Holt put his faith in "*Cold water* any time before whisky for me or my men."¹¹¹ But avoiding whiskey in a hospital was not easy, even for temperance supporters. After he wound up in the 6th Corps Hospital in City Point, Virginia, Simon Burdick Cummins let his mother and sisters know that he did not "want a drop of liquor sent" so his "box shall not smell of rum." Three months later, Cummins was taking a few "swallows of whiskey" provided by the commissary to make himself feel a bit better. He assured his parents that he was "down on strong drink & now more so than ever" and that he had "not drank a dozen swallows since I have been in the field." Still, a few swallows now and then took the edge off the exposure for the recovering soldier.¹¹²

The Temperance Movement Responds

With the abuse of alcohol so prevalent in the ranks, many temperance-minded Americans, soldier and civilian, worried that medicinal liquor created more problems than it

¹⁰⁹ William Taylor Stott, *For Duty and Destiny: The Life and Civil War Diary of William Taylor Stott, Hoosier Soldier and Educator*, Edited by Lloyd A. Hunter (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2010), 195.

¹¹⁰ Herman Haupt, *Reminiscences of General Herman Haupt*, 63.

¹¹¹ Daniel M. Holt, *A Surgeon's Civil War: The Letters and Diary of Daniel M. Holt*, Edited by James M. Greiner, Janet L. Coryell, and James R. Smither (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1994) 112.

¹¹² Simon Burdick Cummins, *Give God the Glory*, 71, 79.

solved. As temperance reformers understood it, alcohol had no medicinal value as a stimulant. Rather, they believed it could lead to additional harm for patients by weakening their health while compromising their formerly held temperance principles. Although the risk was great enough for the civilian population, soldiers in the ranks might be even more susceptible to abusing medicinal alcohol. The temptations of camp life, illnesses, and the dispensing of alcohol in hospitals all posed considerable dangers.

Reformers – particularly members of the American Temperance Union – went to great lengths to cite expert, scientific, opinions about the uselessness of alcohol as a medicine. Often quoting the testimony of temperance-minded British physicians and scientists, reformers spent the early 1860s arguing that physicians who relied on the supposed healing powers of liquor were superstitious quacks.¹¹³ At a temperance convention in Maine in April 1861, the “best authorities” went on record “in favor of limiting” the use of ardent spirits to “a few extreme cases, where the questions of life or death warrants the expedient” and where the liquor was dispensed only at “the hands of the skilful [sic] and conscientious physician.” When more careless doctors prescribed whiskey “as a common remedy,” on the other hand, they contributed to the ruin of society by leading many well-intentioned and trusting patients down the road “to miserable and fatal habits of intemperance.” What followed the careless prescribing of alcohol was “increase[d] drunkenness” as many people took to swigging whiskey in an attempt to cure “every even slight ailment.” This “superstition,” reformers argued, “was the greatest obstacle facing “the temperance reformation than any other cause.”¹¹⁴ When abstainers decided “that alcohol is good as medicine,” they, “like Samson,” lost their “strength and power.”¹¹⁵ Reformers

¹¹³ “Medical Reaction against Stimulants,” *JATU* 24 (March 1861): 46; “Poison in Liquors,” *JATU* 24 (April 1861): 49.

¹¹⁴ “Medical Use,” from the *Maine Journal* quoted in the *JATU* 24 (April 1861): 63.

¹¹⁵ James Black, “The True Temperance Platform,” *JATU* 27 (July 1864): 100.

went further, citing an unnamed “eminent” American “whom the bottle has destroyed” after he “fell into intemperance under medical prescription,” and the wine he used “as a daily tonic...became his conqueror.”¹¹⁶

But even among temperance reformers, there was confusion about whether or not alcohol carried any health benefits. A man who had long been the secretary of a temperance society wrote to the American Temperance Union to ask specifically if he could continue to use the brandy and “bitter ale” prescribed by his physician without violating his pledge or endangering his health. From his perspective, the alcoholic stimulants had left him feeling quite a bit better. But medical experts associated with the JATU would have none of it and accused the man’s doctor of “dangerous quackery.” There was no legitimate reason to drink alcoholic stimulants, the Journal maintained, and brandy and ale would never improve his weak health.¹¹⁷ And the confusion and quackery spread beyond the readers of the Journal of the American Temperance Union to include doctors as well. One anonymous (and perhaps fictitious) “physician in New York” was admonished publicly on the pages of the JATU for selling “a medicine whose essential ingredients are alcohol and sugar” and making “a large fortune” by duping his patients. Even more egregious – the supposed physician was a member of his local temperance society and gave generous donations to temperance causes. Undoubtedly, at least “one-tenth of the profit he makes in selling sweetened alcohol to the temperance people” was being donated back to the cause.¹¹⁸ Marsh and others on staff at the JATU might have expressed horror, but the physician’s actions illustrate the profound confusion revolving around the use of medicinal spirits. Even

¹¹⁶ “Alcohol as a Medicine,” JATU 28 (April 1865): 52.

¹¹⁷ “Medical Practice,” JATU 25 (February 1862): 20.

¹¹⁸ “Temperance Quack Doctors,” JATU 27 (September 1864): 133.

among professed teetotalers, alcohol seemed a suitable safeguard against illness, and in that regard, it did threaten reformers' goals of total abstinence.

Temperance reformers did not simply advise Americans to suffer stoically through their illnesses. Instead, reformers (and a growing alternative health community) recommended that Americans adopt regimens filled with exercise and cold water as preventatives and curatives. "There is much difference between strong drink and strengthening drink," cautioned members of the ATU, and people who wanted to adopt healthy routines should know the difference: water was key.¹¹⁹ Sick clubs provided the testing grounds for American and British temperance reformers' hypotheses about the benefits of water over whiskey. In 1861, the JATU reported enthusiastically that two English sick clubs – one teetotaling, one not – showed striking differences in the health of their patients. Among those who imbibed alcohol to treat their illness, twenty out of every 1,000 members were sick each year for longer than seven weeks. Among the abstainers, only thirteen out of every 1,000 were taken ill, and even those for only three weeks on average. Water, then, put people back into good health more quickly than whiskey, as far as reformers were concerned.¹²⁰ A professor of chemistry noted further that consuming only water had freed him from headaches, "nervous irritation," and thirst; it also led to increased "clearness of mind."¹²¹ The promotion of cold water led reformers to redirect their efforts. As the ATU explained, the war against alcohol was no longer simply a struggle to save the lower classes from the abuse of liquor, but instead, reformers needed to redouble their efforts to convince the "respectable" classes to put down their bottles entirely. Amassing evidence that the moderate consumption of alcohol increased an individual's mortality by "one-third and sickness one-half,"

¹¹⁹ "Liquor as a Medicine," JATU 24 (June 1861): 95.

¹²⁰ "Liquor as a Medicine," JATU 24 (June 1861): 95.

¹²¹ "The Testimonies of Experience," JATU 26 (September 1863): 131.

reformers urged middle-class Americans (who had assured their insurers that they fell into the category of “moderate” consumers) that they risked damaging their organs if they continued to consume liquor, wine, and beer.¹²²

The preference for water over alcohol spread among a subset of educated northerners throughout the war years. Even beyond the American Temperance Union, adherents to the water-cure method espoused the benefits of total abstinence. In 1863, when a new series of The Herald of Health and Water-Cure Journal began circulating, readers were exposed to the idea that the medical profession posed the greatest threat to national (and international) temperance reform. In its first issue, doctor and editor R. T. Trall implored renowned American reformer Edward C. Delevan to redirect the entire focus of the temperance movement. “Whatever importance may be attached to the moral, the religious, the social, and the economical arguments in favor of total abstinence from alcoholic beverages, there is yet one thing needful,” argued Trall, “this is the recognition of the *physiological* or *scientific basis*” for temperance.¹²³ Up until this point, Trall believed, the temperance movement had “condemn[ed] alcohol as a thing inimical to the life-principle in the temperance hall,” while at the same time “recognize[ing] the relation of alcohol to the living organism to be *useful, medical, restorative*.” This did not make sense and undercut the movement. As long as alcohol was used medicinally, Americans would continue to become intoxicated and addicted. Trall’s plan was straight-forward; he would debunk the science behind prescribing alcohol medicinally while converting the 40,000 members of the American medical profession (as well as influential British physicians) to his theories. Trall did not believe alcohol worked as a stimulant, in the medical sense. The excitement – or intoxication – caused by

¹²² F. Vivian, President of Torquay Temperance Society, “Medical Action of Alcohol: From the Torquay Directory,” JATU 27 (February 1864): 19.

¹²³ “The Temperance Cause,” Herald of Health and Water-Cure Journal 1 (January 1863): 13.

alcohol did not restore vitality. People needed rest instead of whiskey. And although Trall saw no reason to support the temperance movement on moral grounds, he considered Delevan and his followers to be pragmatic allies. As long as physicians prescribed whiskey, dram shops would remain open and prohibitory laws would be largely ineffective. More than that, the mistaken notion that alcohol could restore vitality explained “why ‘whisky rations,’ and sometimes double rations, are forced on our soldiers now in the field; why the officers of our army are dying of grog-doctored typhoid fever faster than they are falling by rebel bullets and bayonets; and this is why all the power of our government can not or does not prevent the mercenary sutlers from robbing and murdering our country’s defenders with the alcoholic poison.”¹²⁴

This notion that medicinal spirits directly harmed soldiers and the war effort was not lost on the American Temperance Union. Temperance reformers believed that the war created a new sense of urgency, as the many men who were mobilized would be subjected to illness and also consume more alcohol. The members of the American Temperance Union were particularly concerned about northern soldiers fighting in southern climes for the first time. Military officials, they knew, would institute whiskey rations to stave off the effects of malaria, yellow fever, and other illnesses, but reformers again cited British sources that argued water was always better than alcohol, even in warm climates, because it replenished the body while whiskey only caused “mischief.”¹²⁵ Reformers seemed not to take into account that there might only be swamp water to drink.

¹²⁴ “The Temperance Cause,” Herald of Health and Water-Cure Journal 1 (January 1863): 16. For additional discussion of the alliance with Delevan and the temperance movement against the medical profession, see also “Popular Lectures in the College,” Herald of Health and Water-Cure Journal 1 (January 1863): 23; “Showers of Compliments,” Herald of Health and Water-Cure Journal 1 (February 1863): 72; “The Muddle of the Teetotalers,” Herald of Health and Water-Cure Journal 1 (March 1863): 105; “The Herald for the Doctors,” Herald of Health and Water-Cure Journal 1 (May 1863): 209.

¹²⁵ “Water the Drink for Soldiers,” JATU 24 (September 1861): 131.

To reach the soldiers directly, the ATU and others embarked on a tract-distributing crusade. “The Wounded Soldier,” published in October 1862, told the story of a young man who survived a bout of typhus because he relied on water rather than whiskey. It warned – while citing the “highest medical authorities” – that “intoxicating liquors produce such a state of the system, so in active diseases and gun-shot wounds, prevents the necessary curative effect of medicines and medical treatment.”¹²⁶ The following year, “The Sick Soldier,” celebrated the sober-minded Tom, who recovering from sickness and fatigue in a camp hospital used “the invigorating morning breeze” and a plumped up pillow to send him “into reveries of home and friends” instead of relying on “such ignoble aid as strong drink.” Tom, and other soldiers, had been sacrificed by their parents for God and country, and they had to resist “evil” even in sickness, to return themselves to good health so that they could continue to do their duty.¹²⁷ By its own admission, the American Temperance Union ran up against accusations that it was taking whiskey out of the hands of exhausted soldiers. Responding to the notion that they were depriving soldiers of the right to drink, reformers argued that they were saving lives. They did not forbid soldiers to drink; instead, the tracts “open[ed] their eyes to the evils of liquor drinking; which shall cause them to dash the vile stuff that is offered to them to the earth.” The “faithful temperance admonition” had “saved our whole nation from going to destruction” by keeping “thousands” of Americans – soldier and civilian – from ending up in “the drunkard’s grave.”¹²⁸

In the Confederacy, southerners sounded somewhat less zealous about the dangers of medicinal alcohol. For southern civilians (like their northern counterparts) alcohol remained a common treatment for various ailments. During his travels in 1861, William Howard Russell

¹²⁶ “The Wounded Soldier: A New Tract for the Army,” JATU 25 (October 1862): 145.

¹²⁷ “The Sick Soldier. Thoughts of Home: A New Tract for the Army,” JATU 26 (July 1863): 101.

¹²⁸¹²⁸ “The Soldier Needs and Must Have Liquor,” JATU 27 (January 1864): 8.

found himself fatigued from the heat when a Virginia physician prescribed him a powder to be mixed with mint-juleps. A nervous Russell followed the instructions but noted that he passed the entire month of August “in a state of powder and julep, which the Virginian doctor declared saved my life.”¹²⁹ In Texas, medicinal spirits were popular among women and children. Anita Dwyer Withers, who lived in San Antonio, used brandy to treat “a slight chill and fever.”¹³⁰ Mississippian Jason Niles likewise believed that “a little French Brandy operated like a charm” against cholera morbus.¹³¹

Though the Confederacy lacked a well-organized national temperance organization, evidence shows that southerners, in much the same way as northerners, wrestled with when and how to properly use alcohol to treat their illnesses. Prolific diarist Edmund Ruffin recorded his own struggles with total abstinence. By no means was Ruffin a teetotaler – in fact, he was not “under any pledge or rule to abstain” – and at times, he consumed small amounts of liquor to support his “feeble constitution.” For the most part, though, Ruffin believed that liquor was best kept out of the home, where it would not tempt house guests and young people to form bad habits. For himself, Ruffin decided that “[it] was easier for me to resort to entire abstinence, (which indeed I never found difficult beyond the first few days--) than to the limited & harmless use.” In his old age, his children implored him to “drink a glass of toddy every day” to preserve his health, and ultimately, he consented. But as he drank his daily toddy, he expressed his exasperation. He predicted that his single drink would, over time, evolve to two or three drinks per day. Equally annoying, he noted that the war had driven up the cost of whiskey

¹²⁹ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South* (T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863), 479.

¹³⁰ February 4, 1862 and August 10, 1862, *Diary of Anita Dwyer Withers, May 4, 1860 – June 18, 1865* (Electronic Edition), Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

¹³¹ September 6, 1862, *Diary of Jason Niles* (Electronic Edition), Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

extraordinarily. Although a gallon of whiskey had cost a mere fifty cents before the war, when Ruffin began imbibing in 1863, he was aghast to find that the spirits cost \$32 per gallon.¹³²

Ruffin's opinion that a daily whiskey habit was simply a bad idea was reflected on the pages of the Raleigh-based Spirit of the Age, a reform-minded paper partially devoted to temperance. It occasionally reminded readers during the war years that unlike wine, which was a "whirlwind of fire," water was "pure" and "ever refreshing—invigorating to the wearied body, fevered brain, and thirsty tongue." Water was provided by God and replenished "the whole system—mental and physical."¹³³ Less preachy, in some ways, than the American Temperance Union, but also quite clear was the southern stance on alcohol and health: a teetotaling life was the healthiest choice, and ardent spirits not only wreaked emotional and moral turmoil but also offered no relief in times of illness. Beyond not offering any health benefits, the Spirit further blamed alcohol for leading young men to "self murder," a "double death" that transformed "a fair, robust frame," to "a shrinking, suffering, living corpse, with nothing of vitality but the power of suffering and with everything of death but its peace."¹³⁴ Southern reformers undoubtedly believed that alcohol left Confederate men walking around in corpse-like stupors, but they devoted less effort to arguing that whiskey specifically endangered soldiers. Nevertheless, their efforts to organize volunteers to provide moral activities to pass the time for soldiers convalescing in Confederate hospitals indicate that some southerners were concerned about boredom-induced debauchery.¹³⁵

¹³² Edmund Ruffin, The Diary of Edmund Ruffin, Edited by William K. Scarborough, vol. 2, The Years of Hope, April 1861 – June 1863 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972-1989), 673-75. One South Carolina family reported that in Beaumont in 1863 prices for a gallon of whiskey were quite high, at \$17.00 a gallon, but still significantly cheaper than a week's worth of beef, which cost civilians about \$30.00 to \$40.00. Letter, June 21, 1863 (electronic edition), Personal Correspondence, 1861-1865, Elliott and Gonzales Family Papers, Manuscripts Department, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

¹³³ "Water," Spirit of the Age 13 (November 20, 1861), 1.

¹³⁴ "The Use of Intoxicating Drinks," Spirit of the Age 14 (March 16, 1863), 1.

¹³⁵ "The Sick Soldiers," Spirit of the Age 13 (September 25, 1861), 2.

In much of the Confederacy, though, teetotalers did not need to spill ink declaring the dangers of alcohol because there was little alcohol to be had. Ruffin's point that high prices made medicinal spirits impractical was a sentiment shared by many. A wine shortage in Georgia in 1864 left Kate Carney and an enslaved woman substituting a less-effective cordial for their ailing neighbor.¹³⁶ John Bratton lamented the shortages plaguing the Confederacy in a letter to his wife, Bettie, in 1864. After their supply brandy "had given out," the "whiskey did not answer the purpose" of treating illness. They were desperate, and money should be of no concern. The trick, though, would be to find a blockade runner to sell "two or three bottles of fine French Brandy."¹³⁷

The blockade made spirits harder to come by, but many southerners relied on neighbors to keep their homes stocked with medicinal spirits. Selling was not without its risks. In early 1862 James Oscar Wren of Fairfax, Virginia, found himself in hot water with the Confederate army after he inadvertently moved back and forth across rebel picket lines. General J.E.B. Stuart suspected him of selling liquor, although Wren maintained that he was not a dealer – that he only "kept liquors and sold some to his neighbors as medicine." The difference, from Stuart's point of view, was significant, as it implied disloyalty, of sorts, and Stuart was himself abstemious. Wren had to find others to confirm that he was "a man of good character" who had "voted for secession" before he could continue on his way.¹³⁸ Whether it was because alcohol was rare or because it threatened the well-being of the soldiers, the population, and the nation, reform-

¹³⁶ July 3, 1862, Kate Carney Diary (electronic edition), Manuscripts Department, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

¹³⁷ John Bratton, Letters of John Bratton to his Wife, Edited by Elizabeth Porcher Bratton (privately published, 1942), 155.

¹³⁸ OR, Ser. II, Vol. II, 1487-88.

mindful civilians (and a few military officials) believed that medicinal alcohol carried significant risks.

Conclusion

The debate over the use of medicinal alcohol illuminates the increasingly widening gulf between northern temperance reformers and the Union army. From a practical standpoint, a healthcare regimen that relied largely on fresh water was nearly impossible to maintain, and medical departments could not afford to give up alcohol as a treatment while encamped in swampy places where malaria ran rampant. But while temperance reformers were seemingly out of touch with military thinking and battlefield conditions, their concerns about medicinal alcohol's detrimental effects on soldiers and civilians foreshadowed the course of the post-war temperance movement. For decades, temperance reformers had been concerned with the moral health of the nation – concerns that were only heightened when civil war broke out and saving the Union included preserving morality. While sobriety had, in reformers' opinions, always been a key component of loyalty and national duty, the transition to scientific language in the American Temperance Union and other groups shows an increasing tendency to link the moral health of the nation to its physical health. In the post-war decades, physical prowess would become a central tenet of American masculinity, and for middle-class American men, a carefully selected diet that promoted virility would gain increasing popularity.¹³⁹ But even in the 1860s, members of the American Temperance Union were promoting a vision of American men (and women) who abstained completely from alcohol in order to better their physical and not just their

¹³⁹ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Adam D. Shprintzen, *The Vegetarian Crusade: The Rise of An American Reform Movement*, 147-203.

moral health. A good citizen, then, was a sober, respectable, productive, and healthy voting adult.

But even as wartime temperance thought modernized and promoted a national vision of moral, healthy Americans, the Confederacy's experiences with medicinal alcohol contained ominous signs for the post-war prohibition movement. Because alcohol was vitally important to the Confederate medical department, the new nation experienced an internal clash over alcohol's regulation. Throughout the Confederacy, distilling and selling were prohibited to combat wartime food shortages and to protect women and children from marauding soldiers. But at the same time that state authorities and the Confederate military worked to enforce prohibition, the central government also made arrangements to manufacture alcohol for medicinal use. As Georgia governor Joseph Brown and others pointed out, it was impossible to prohibit manufacturing while also relying on alcohol as a medicine. Sixty years later, the federal government would experience this same phenomenon.¹⁴⁰ In short, when, in the 1860s, temperance reformers argued that medicinal alcohol was the greatest threat to prohibition, they were absolutely right.

¹⁴⁰ Michael R. Veach argues that the federal government's need to keep stocks of distilled liquors available for medical usage in the 1920s and 1930s undercut prohibition. See, Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey: An American Heritage (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 77-90.

Chapter 6
“This Rum and Slave Benighted Country”:
Loyalty, Slavery, and Liquor

In January 1860, more than a year before the war began, reformers at the Annual Meeting of the State Temperance Society of Connecticut worried about the worsening political crisis. A presidential election loomed, and political parties increasingly divided along sectional lines. At the meeting, Reverend John Marsh preached a sermon entitled “Saving the Union,” in which he predicted that if the conflict over slavery brought “fighting and bloodshed...King Alcohol will have much to do with it.”¹ The notion of a crusade to save their nation was not new to temperance reformers. Steeped in evangelical beliefs, antebellum teetotalers had long striven to rescue the nation from vice (and from hell) in order to usher in the millennium.² But, during the secession crisis, saving the Union took on a more literal meaning for northern reformers (as it did for many Americans).³ For Marsh and other temperance reformers, the best method for saving the Union from secessionists was to save the population from the sin of intoxication.

¹ “Saving the Union,” Rev. John Marsh, D.D. (Editor), “Important Inquiry Answered: A sermon for Connecticut, preached by request in the Centre Church, New Haven, the Sabbath evening previous to the Annual Meeting of the State Temperance Society, Nov. 16,” Journal of the American Temperance Union and The New-York Prohibitionist 23 (January 1860): 11.

² Clifford S. Griffin, Their Brothers’ Keepers: Moral Stewardship in the United States, 1800-1865 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1960), 81-98.

³ For scholarship on the evolving conceptions of “Union,” as well as its relationship to slavery and emancipation both during and after the war, see Melinda Lawson, Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002); Chandra Manning What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007); Gary W. Gallagher, The Union War (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011); David W. Blight, Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2001); Barbara A. Gannon, The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011); John R. Neff, Honoring the Civil War Dead: Commemoration and the Problem of Reconciliation (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005); Caroline E. Janney, Remembering the Civil War: Reunion and the Limits of Reconciliation (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

Southern temperance reformers too believed that drunkenness was the greatest threat to their society, but after the election of Abraham Lincoln, they worried that their northern brethren were becoming distracted. In January 1861, a Mississippi subscriber to the Journal of the American Temperance Union and the New York Prohibitionist sent a letter “so fiery that,” if published, “it would burn up” the paper on which it was printed. The Mississippian, while not generally averse to mixing temperance and politics, was livid about the journal's endorsement of Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin. He wanted nothing more to do with a paper that “elevate[d] cut-throats to office.”⁴ His anger was not isolated. A secession movement was brewing among the southern Sons of Temperance. By March 1861, Virginia divisions were working to withdraw from the National Division of the organization. Their reasons were straightforward: Washington had been taken over by “Satanic imps” (Republicans) and “Mars Abe” who adopted a “coercive course of policy” that threatened southern interests. The Sons of Temperance were too closely allied with the Republicans, the Virginians believed and had heard “of negroes being initiated and fellow-shipped, and elected to office in the Yankee States.”⁵ Temperance reformers throughout the South agreed with the Virginians that the movement had become too closely intertwined with abolition. By May 1861, the meeting of the National Convention of the Sons of Temperance – scheduled for June in Nashville, Tennessee – was canceled.⁶ Over the remaining months of 1861, southern states seceded from the National Division, and in December, South Carolina proposed that the temperance reformers organize

⁴ “Our Southern Brethren,” JATU 24 (February 1861): 25.

⁵ “Correspondence of the Richmond Dispatch, affairs in Lynchburg,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 8, 1861; Virginians continued to discuss slavery at their temperance meetings throughout the months of March and April, see “Proceedings of the Baltimore annual Conference. Ninth day,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 22, 1861; “Martial Spirit,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, April 18, 1861.

⁶ [no title], Richmond Daily Dispatch, May 25, 1861.

their own Confederate Convention and hold a meeting in Augusta in May 1862.⁷ Separation would purify the southern temperance movement by ridding it of the evil and distracting abolitionist threat.

Despite the sectional schism of temperance organizations, northern and southern reformers were similarly convinced that the manufacture and consumption of ardent spirits had serious ramifications for the war effort. Drunken soldiers and wasteful distillers posed tangible threats, but reformers went further, conflating drunkenness with a host of disloyal behaviors. Northern reformers accused secessionists of drunkenness. Southerners countered that tipping abolitionists were the problem. Their views gained traction among the civilian populations. During the war, secessionists, abolitionists, Republicans, Democrats, Copperheads, speculators, immigrants, draft dodgers, African Americans, and white southerners were all accused of drunkenness by people who considered them to be their enemies. Drunkenness and disloyalty became synonymous.

Many Americans needed little to convince them that drunkenness hampered the war effort. In the context of mobilization, antebellum values of self-control and frugality took on new, nationalistic importance. Historians have argued that northerners and southerners displayed their patriotism through their behavior: enlisting, volunteering, or otherwise supporting the war. In the Confederacy where many commodities grew scarce, individuals who lived luxuriously or profited from hardship were accused of disloyalty. Northerners were similarly suspicious of those who attempted to speculate or dodge military service. Accusations of corruption flew.⁸

⁷ "Still Seceding," Richmond Daily Dispatch, December 16, 1861; [no title], Richmond Daily Dispatch, December 17, 1861.

⁸ Melinda Lawson argues northern nationalism was predicated on proper displays of patriotism and loyalty by its citizens as they voted and volunteered for the war effort, see Patriot Fires. Drew Gilpin Faust argues a similar case for Confederates and also contends that individuals who attempted to speculate or otherwise use wartime shortages to their personal gain were considered immoral threats to the war effort, see Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1984). Historians have also argued

Drinking conjured images of frivolity, profiteering, urban unrest, and political corruption. The middle-class (largely white) value of sobriety now served as an indicator of loyalty. This had profound ramifications for immigrants and African Americans, who were largely considered outsiders by native-born white Americans. Irish and German Americans faced accusations of drunken cowardice throughout the war. Many African Americans tried to prove their patriotism by adopting middle-class values of self-control and sobriety.

But even as “drunkard” became a suitable epithet for disloyal individuals, temperance reformers were never able to escape the shadows of slavery. Distraction or not, both northern and southern reformers had to reckon with slavery and its role in the war. Confederate teetotalers maintained that discussions of abolition and racial equality undermined temperance work. Northerners, much to the chagrin of the southern counterparts, attempted to incorporate slavery into their larger moral crusade. Northerners argued that emancipation was merely the first step in a two-part process of saving the Union. Drawing on temperance imagery developed by reformers in the antebellum decades, they considered slavery to the rum bottle a greater curse than chattel slavery. Saving the Union would not be complete until drunkenness had been eradicated through legal prohibition.

Liquor is the Greatest Enemy

The notion that alcohol was an enemy resonated with soldiers and civilians. Liquor was so tempting to soldiers that northerners and southerners alike believed it could be strategically

that fears of corruption that existed in antebellum political culture became acute during the war, as both Unionist and Confederates believed that politicians who used the war for their own political or economic advancement undercut the cause. See, George C. Rable, *The Confederate Republic: A Revolution against Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Michael Thomas Smith, *The Enemy Within: Fears of Corruption in the Civil War North* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2011).

placed and used as a weapon. Americans worried that their own soldiers would succumb to its temptations and would lose battles or turn into marauding guerrillas who threatened their own civilians. But even as Unionists and Confederates worried that whiskey might bring down their own armies, they also looked for evidence that their enemies were drinking. Soldiers, some believed, drank alcohol when they lacked the necessary patriotism. Drunken enemy soldiers signified low morale and a meaningless cause.

After the Battle of Manassas in 1861, reformers in Raleigh and Richmond warned that “King Alcohol” – a more “intimate enemy” – might accomplish what the Yankee could not: vanquishing the Confederacy. They defined “national sin” as “the gross and continued swilling of liquors, largely adulterated, and which, even when pure, contain too much alcohol to be compatible with the sound mind in the sound body.”⁹ That its consumption led to foolish behavior and that its sellers and supporters worked against the government seemed obvious, but Confederates could point to a larger danger connected to alcohol– its pure and adulterated forms. Few laws existed in the mid-nineteenth century to regulate the ingredients of distilled and fermented beverages. While most distilleries and breweries were small family operations, rogue distillers took various short-cuts during the manufacturing process to create cheap, adulterated beverages.¹⁰ At best, consumers purchased rot-gut spirits; at worst, they died. During the war, a belief that liquor might be mixed with unknown substances and, therefore, poisonous, formed the basis for their concerns about its harmful effects. Military and political enemies could employ poisoned whiskey as a weapon. Southern men were warned that they were not simply heading

⁹ “Our Intimate Enemies,” from the Richmond Examiner, reprinted in The Spirit of the Age 8 (September 11, 1861): 1.

¹⁰ Temperance reformers discuss the danger of liquor poisoned during the fermenting and distilling process in their own literature. See, Rev. Dr. E. Nott, “No. 13: Temperance Lecture No. XI,” Temperance Essays, and Selections from Different Authors (Albany, NY: Van Benthuysen’s Steam Printing House, 1865), 187-88; Michael R. Veach, Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey: An American Heritage (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2013), 45-61.

off to fight northern men, but also “*yankee rum*,” “*Ohio buckeye whiskey*,” “*Cincinnati whiskey*,” and the “counterfeit Cognacs” of New York and Philadelphia. The implications were two-fold. Being near the northern border would expose innocent young southerners to northern vice. More than that, the reference to “counterfeit Cognac” implied a particular deviousness. Southern temperance reformers were convinced that their northern enemies would concoct extraordinarily potent and even poisonous beverages “especially for the work of sending death and destruction among Southern men.” Alcohol itself could become a weapon in the war.¹¹

Northerners expressed similar worries. After an engagement in Pike County, Kentucky, in November 1861, one Union soldier recalled that rebels in the area had felled numerous trees across the road to make it difficult for the Federal troops to pass through the area. While the soldiers removed the trees, they “came across two barrels of apple brandy,” which commanding officer Major Alexander McCook immediately ordered destroyed for fear his men might be poisoned. In fact, the soldiers were “almost certain they were, as the rebels had been inquiring for arsenic along the road.”¹² McCook’s suspicion was no isolated fear.¹³ In February 1862, forty-two Union soldiers and officers “were poisoned in Mud Town,” Missouri, after “eating rebel food or drinking rebel liquor.” One officer died. General Samuel R. Curtis concluded that the poisoning was almost certainly intentional.¹⁴ These instances explain, to some degree, why so many commanders were bent on destroying confiscated spirits despite wails of protest from their tired and thirsty men.

¹¹ “Patriotism and Temperance,” *The Spirit of the Age*, 12 (8 May 1861): 2.

¹² “Account by a Participant,” *The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events with Documents, Narratives, Illustrative Incidents, Poetry, Etc.*, Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 3 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), Doc 341.

¹³ During the Rappahannock Expedition, Union sailors were warned when they entered the town of Tappahannock in April 1862 that they should not drink any liquor because it had been poisoned. When the town’s inhabitants offered it, the soldiers refused. See, “Document 132: Rappahannock Expeditions, Correspondent, April 16, 1862,” *The Rebellion Record*, vol. 4 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), Doc 474.

¹⁴ OR, Ser. I, Vol. VIII, 68.

Even untainted liquor could become an army's deadly enemy, northerners and southerners believed. By the summer of 1861, plenty of Confederates were convinced that liquor would be the downfall of the infant nation. If the "Black Republicans" really wanted to subdue the Confederacy quickly, the Richmond Daily Dispatch recommended that they start by removing the blockade "so far as lager beer and whiskey are concerned." Knowing "that intoxicating beverages do more mischief to mankind than any other agency of evil," the editor concluded that the North could do the Confederacy no "greater injury than to let in the liquor." By cutting off the supply, the North was transforming the Confederacy into "a great Tee-total Maine Liquor Law Temperance Society" – inadvertently saving "the souls and bodies of the whole Southern people." And while the North was accidentally fortifying the South with cold water, the Confederates hoped that Union Secretary of State William Seward would "draw the corks of his lager beer bottles" and "roll over a few of his brandy casks." From their perspective, the victor of the war would be the side which drank the least.¹⁵

As the war continued, liquor continued to wreak havoc on the armies. Pious Confederates feared that too many soldiers were not sober (and, by extension, not victorious). That "fiend of intemperance" (which was worse in the army) had "slain more of our brave soldiers than has the sword of our enemy." The future of the Confederacy, "a nation just entering on its young life," was at stake. During the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the Confederate States of America, the delegates concluded that "the moral character not only of those who sit in its high places, but of its population at large, is of the very first importance." Sober soldiers (and citizens) could bring "glory" to the new nation, but drunkards would bring nothing but

¹⁵ "Blockade of Liquor," Richmond Daily Dispatch, August 6, 1861. For an additional example, A. B., "[correspondence of the Richmond Dispatch]," Richmond Daily Dispatch, February 5, 1862.

“shame.”¹⁶ Northerners shared their concerns. In northern Missouri, Union General Clinton B. Fisk urged his subordinate officers to consider that liquor was “a great enemy.” They would have to “treat it as you would a guerrilla.”¹⁷

Civilians and military authorities certainly noticed a link between alcohol and guerrilla warfare. Confederate General Joseph Shelby complained about bands of rogue drunken soldiers, roaming the countryside in central Arkansas engaged in “cotton speculating, horse stealing, [and] illicit and pernicious trading with the Federals.” They were supposed to be guarding civilians from Union soldiers, but instead they were joy-riding through the countryside, inflicting additional damage on Arkansan families, all while “sweltering in the hot fumes of Memphis whiskey.” Shelby was determined to sober them up, restore order, and “kill...like excommunicated felons” any soldier who refused to be whipped into shape.¹⁸ But even Shelby was not immune from accusations that his raiders behaved worse than Yankees when drunk. When his own intoxicated officers turned their soldiers into a disorganized mob that ravaged the Arkansas countryside, Confederate Colonel Cyrus Franklin complained to President Jefferson Davis. As Franklin saw it, the “cause” suffered whenever civilians, particularly women, were “insulted or robbed” by drunken raiders who “transferred to the Confederate uniform all the dread and terror which used to attach to the Lincoln blue.”¹⁹

Northerners too deplored drunkenness and barbarity and argued that secessionists were predisposed to both. John B. Farr, a man arrested in January 1862 and tried for disloyalty, was a violent secessionist and a member of a band of guerrillas headquartered in Dranesville, Virginia.

¹⁶ Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the Confederate States of America, vol. 1 (Augusta, GA: Steam Power Press Chronicle & Sentinel, 1862), 37, 27.

¹⁷ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XLVIII, Pt. 1, 1253

¹⁸ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIV, Pt. 1, 924-25.

¹⁹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXII, Pt. 2, 1058-60.

Farr and his cronies robbed and murdered Union soldiers, leaving them “unburied on the field to be eaten up...by the rebels’ hogs,” all while “being made jolly with whisky.” The report went further, describing the acts as “savage barbarity,” “bestial joy,” and “sacrilegious.” Although Farr claimed to be a Unionist, reports of these inhuman acts against Union soldiers, committed while he was in the midst of “intoxicated madness,” proved that he was disloyal.²⁰

Many Americans believed that alcohol caused men to fight unethically, but both northerners and southerners also thought that soldiers who fought under the influence were careless and cowardly. During the Peninsula Campaign, correspondents with the New York Herald “noticed” – and reported enthusiastically – “that the secesh prisoners were all *drunk* - a fact which was observed in the battle of Gaines’ Hill [sic] last Friday.”²¹ If the rebels were already relying on bottled courage after only a year of fighting, certainly the Union would soon be victorious. At Cold Harbor in 1864, Levi Bird Duff commented that attacking rebels had undoubtedly been made drunk before being “repulsed with heavy loss.” There was no other way the men could have been convinced to make such an attack. Their morale was too low (the Federals presumed).²² Confederate soldiers who attacked Federal gunboats while “excited by liquor” were so deranged that they charged foolishly and “were shot down like sheep.”²³

Confederates offered similar blasts against the Yankees – commenting that whiskey made them poor shots and prone to surrender. Palmetto Sharpshooters fighting near Spotsylvania on May 6, 1864, found themselves being attacked by a Union regiment “so crazy and drunk they

²⁰ OR, Ser. II, Vol. II, 1289-91.

²¹ “McClellan’s Army,” The New York Herald, July 9, 1862.

²² Levi Bird Duff, To Petersburg with the Army of the Potomac: The Civil War Letters of Levi Bird Duff, 105th Pennsylvania Volunteers, Edited by Jonathan E. Helmreich (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2009), 200.

²³ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIV, Pt. 3, 153.

never hit a man” but instead surrendered as soon as the Confederates fired on them.²⁴ In other cases, Confederate captors noted that their northern prisoners “had canteens of mean whisky” in their possession. They assumed that the booze had been issued to help the men “get up a little Dutch courage.”²⁵ Confederate Reverend Moses Drury Hoge thought he noticed similar tendencies among Grant’s men. Not only were they drunk when they were captured, but many of the Yankees “surrender with their guns loaded declaring they would rather come to Richmond as prisoners.” Unlike Confederates, who were imbued with “self-sacrificing spirit” of “self-possession” and “Noble heroism,” the Yankees’ literal self-sacrificing tendencies could be credited not to patriotic zeal but to the overindulgence of liquor, which made them abandon their cause.²⁶

If some soldiers supposedly laid down their weapons when they were drunk, Federals and Confederates both claimed that their enemies would only fight if they were bribed with alcohol. The Richmond Whig published revised “Yankee Doodle” lyrics in 1861 that mocked Union soldiers for always being drunk on brandy – or some combination of brandy and gunpowder – during battles.²⁷ The gunpowder and whiskey cocktail proved a common myth on both sides. Kentucky Unionist Frances Peter had heard that Confederates “crazed” by drink would “rush into the thickest of the fray, screaming and yelling and fight[ing] like fiends, regardless of any danger, and seemingly uncon[s]cious of any.”²⁸ In Atlanta, Chauncey Herbert Cooke observed

²⁴ Richard Lewis, Camp Life of a Confederate Boy, of Bratton’s Brigade, Longstreet’s Corps, C.S.A.: Letters written by Lieut. Richard Lewis, of Walker’s Regiment, to His Mother, during the War, Facts and Inspirations of Camp Life, Marches, &c. (Charleston, SC: The News and Courier Book Presses, 1883), 95.

²⁵ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXX, Pt. 1, 924-25.

²⁶ Moses Drury Hoge to William G. Crenshaw, 3 June 1864, Section 2, Crenshaw Family Papers, 1807-1977, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA.

²⁷ “Another Yankee Doodle,” The Rebellion Record, Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 3 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), P 8-9.

²⁸ Frances Peter, A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky: The Diary of Frances Peter, Edited by John David Smith and William Cooper, Jr. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 170-71.

that the Confederates who charged Union batteries under heavy fire were “crazed with gunpowder and whiskey given them to make them brave.”²⁹ Peter and Cooke all reached the same conclusion about their enemy’s bravery: only a man “crazed” by liquor would be foolish enough to fight for the Confederacy. Frances Peter went even further, concluding that the typical rebel soldier had to be completely “ignorant.” No man in his right mind would sign up to fight for the rebels willingly, and the gunpowder whiskey a Confederate soldier drank from his canteen made him “a perfect slave to his officers.” Using the language Federal officials had used to describe guerrillas, Peter asserted that drunkenness robbed Confederate soldiers of their independence and manhood and made them unthinking “abused creatures” who were tricked into fighting for a bad cause. The proof of their cowardice and their enslavement became especially apparent upon their deaths. According to Peter, the “proof” was that “the bodies of the rebel soldiers killed in battle turn black, or lurid purple in face and sometimes all over.”³⁰

So closely associated with cowardice was drunkenness that most soldiers bristled at any intimation that their courage and “superhuman” edge came from whiskey. Yankee soldier Charles Wright Wills offered a sharp retort when he found out that Confederates reported that the Federals “were all drunk and fought more like devils than men.” His fellow soldiers were in “splendid spirits,” and despite their exhaustion, they had “made the woods ring with their Fourth of July cheers.” Patriotism, not drunkenness, had shored up their fighting spirit.³¹ Brigadier-General Robert S. Granger noted a similar phenomenon near Athens, Alabama, when the men of the 18th Michigan and 102nd Ohio drove back an entire brigade of Nathan Bedford Forrest’s

²⁹ Chauncey Herbert Cooke, *Soldier Boy’s Letters to His Father and Mother, 1861-5* (? : News-Office, 1915), 89.

³⁰ Frances Peter, *A Union Woman in Civil War Kentucky: The Diary of Frances Peter*, 170-71.

³¹ Charles Wright Wills, *Army Life of an Illinois Soldier: Including a Day by Day Record of Sherman’s March to the Sea: Letters and Diary of the Late Charles W. Wills, Private and Sergeant 8th Illinois Infantry, Lieutenant and Adjutant 7th Illinois Cavalry, Captain, Major and Lieutenant Colonel 103rd Illinois Infantry*, Compiled by Mary E. Kellogg (Globe Print Co., 1908), 273.

men. After the surrender, Confederates had “accused of the officers of making their men drunk, insisting that no men would fight with such desperation unless under the influence of liquor.” This was not true, claimed Granger. Confederates had simply never witnessed men who fought as “boldly” and “determinedly” in the face of danger as the brave Union soldiers.³²

Profiteers, Politicians, Draft Dodgers, and Liquor Dealers

But King Alcohol was more than an enemy of the soldier. Civilians believed that alcohol lurked behind every devious unpatriotic activity on the home front. At a time when individuals were urged to show their support for the war through self-sacrifice, anyone who appeared to be profiting from the conflict or dodging service was suspected of drunkenness. Civilians noted that alcohol was always bound up with illicit trading. Likewise, they believed so strongly that alcohol threatened the democratic process that they accused rivals of using alcohol to gain political advantage. This pervasive nativist tendency to conflate drunkenness and disloyalty left many Irish and German immigrants angrily defending their patriotism.

On the northern home front, reformers argued that women had a duty as patriotic citizens to promote temperance. Writing to the president of the Woman’s National Covenant in May 1864, Edward Delavan maintained that “pledging to abstain from all alcoholic drinks, whether pure or adulterated, imported or domestic” was an expression of “lofty patriotism” akin to the women of the Revolutionary era who boycotted tea.³³ In an accompanying report Alonzo Potter, the Episcopal Bishop of Pennsylvania, explained that respectable women had a duty to stop using all sorts of alcoholic beverages to set an example for people of “all grades and conditions

³² OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXIX, Pt. 2, 530.

³³ Edward C. Delavan, “No. 9: Letter to the President of the Woman’s National Covenant,” Temperance Essays, and Selections from Different Authors, 129-30.

of life.” According to Potter, affluent women (and men) who continued to drink in the name of “fashion” – wine was popular at dinner parties – did more to hinder the effectiveness of anti-trafficking laws than anyone. And thus, they became responsible for the poverty and crime that degraded American society. The United States was mired in a fight against intemperance, and respectable women had a patriotic duty to make sure that “not one drop of the blood of [the drunkards’] ruined souls be found at last spotting *our* garments” during the final judgment before Christ.³⁴

Confederates did not place the burden of sobering up society solely on the shoulders of its women, but they shared the belief that liquor threatened their infant nation’s very survival. As a part of their efforts to mobilize the southern white population and encourage civilians to accept deprivations as part of their patriotic duty, Confederate politicians, clergymen, and newspaper editors blasted unscrupulous civilians working as profiteers.³⁵ In the midst of the secession crisis, Thomas Atkinson, Bishop of North Carolina, lamented that the southern states had not withstood the temptations that accompanied prosperity – drunkenness, fraud, bribery, and speculation, among other things. As men prepared “to march to the uncertain issues of the siege, or the battle-

³⁴ Alonso Potter, D. D., LL. D., “On the Drinking Usages of Society,” contained in “No. 9: Letter to the President of the Woman’s National Covenant,” Temperance Essays, and Selections from Different Authors, 130-33. The Reverend Eliphalet Nott, president of Union College, emphasized the importance of women turning their homes – their “empires” – into moral realms that would save children, and thus society, from the downward spiral to hell. The focus of Nott’s address was the consumption of wine, which had pitted middle-class Americans against temperance reformers for decades. Plenty of people could support license laws and temperance efforts directed toward keeping beer and whiskey out of the hands of urban workers, but most Americans were reluctant to take the pledge of total abstinence if it meant that they could not enjoy wine at their dinner tables. Wine was “sanctioned” in the Bible, so what could the problem be? According to Nott and others, the problem was that wine could be adulterated and distilled, and supposedly moderate drinking would soon degenerate to guzzling brandy followed by the inevitable trip to the poorhouse. Women, then, had a responsibility to “remove, at once and forever, temptation from the saloon, the drawing-room and the dining table.” By throwing out the wine, women protected their sons and husbands from becoming drunkards, and would therefore enable the temperance movement to gain some headway against the last bastion of intoxication: middle-class drinkers. See, Rev. Dr. E. Nott, “No. 13: Temperance Lecture No. XI,” Temperance Essays, and Selections from Different Authors, 187-198.

³⁵ Drew Gilpin Faust, Confederate Nationalism, 41-57.

field,” southerners needed to fight the temptation to sin. Such tests of faith came from God.³⁶ Virginia Reverend James B. Ramsey echoed Atkinson’s sentiments, reminding Confederates of 1 Corinthians 6:10: that sinners, including “drunkards” and “extortioners,” could not “inherit the kingdom of God.”³⁷ On their list of extortionists Confederates included smugglers, blockade runners, cotton speculators, and barkeepers. Not coincidentally, all were involved in some aspect of the liquor traffic. Almost as soon as the war began, saloon-keepers in Richmond raised prices, much to the consternation of the Dispatch. For “two cents worth of distilled corn juice and a lump of rice, well shaken in a tumbler,” barkeepers were charging an exorbitant 15 cents. The only possible good that might arise would be an inadvertent victory for the temperance cause.³⁸ Of more serious consequence were Confederates engaged in what Jefferson Davis referred to as “the villainous traffic” of blockade-running, liquor trafficking, and cotton speculating. Blockade runners not only brought “rum and gin” into the country instead of “arms or munitions of war,” but they also drove up cotton prices, which encouraged southern farmers to plant the lucrative cash crop in place of much needed grains.³⁹

But Confederate pleas for civilians to change their ways did not keep many southerners from engaging in illicit trading with equally profit-minded northerners.⁴⁰ By 1863, cotton speculators plied the Mississippi River between Memphis and Helena, Arkansas, where the Union government exchanged clothing, food, and whiskey for cotton. The cotton was much needed, but the whiskey and provisions were going, by the barrel load, to Confederate guerrillas

³⁶ Right Reverend Thomas Atkinson, Bishop of North Carolina, Christian Duty in the Present Time of Trouble: A Sermon Preached at St. James’ Church, Wilmington, N. C., on the Fifth Sunday after Easter, 1861 (Wilmington, NC: Fulton and Price, Steam Power Press Printers, 1861), 9-10.

³⁷ Reverend James B. Ramsey, Lynchburg, VA, No. 3 How Shall I Live? (Richmond, VA: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, between 1861 and 1865), 2.

³⁸ “Aid from the enemy,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, July 15, 1861; “Definition of Billiards,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, July 14, 1862.

³⁹ OR, Ser. IV, Vol. II, 487.

⁴⁰ Michael Thomas Smith, The Enemy Within, 154-174.

and other “public enemies.”⁴¹ In 1864, General Benjamin Butler faced similar problems controlling illicit commerce in Virginia. Northern traders were “smuggling or communicating with the enemy,” using oyster boats to transport copious amounts of whiskey. Despite Butler’s order that private vessels engaged in illegal liquor traffic and smuggling should be confiscated and their captains sentenced to hard labor, Union officers found that their comrades were far “too lenient toward blockade-runners and secessionists who keep good liquor.”⁴²

What compounded the problem was that many northern businessmen and politicians were quite involved in wartime speculating. In response, many northerners alleged that their political opponents were in cahoots with unscrupulous liquor dealers. In April 1863, the American Temperance Union warned that “rum” – rather than slavery – riled “the bad passions of men against law and order, destroys all moral sensibilities, and fits the villainous for carnage and the rending of the nation.... There is not a grogshop in the North that is a supporter of government. There is not a press which advocates secession that does not advocate the trade of rum.”⁴³ Other northerners made the connection between liquor and Copperheads more explicit. In April 1863 in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, the Republican Transcript’s war correspondent labelled Copperheads “the lowest, meanest, dirtiest, draggled, whisky drinking, card-playing, horse-racing, hell-defying...characters...arrayed against their country.” The rival Democratic Valley Spirit did not take the charges lying down, countering that the correspondent was a “blatant and slanderous abolitionist” who was likely to “find a considerable quantity of copperhead boot-leather inserted somewhere about the lower end of his spinal column” the next time he rode into

⁴¹ OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXII, Pt. 2, 15.

⁴² Benjamin Franklin Butler, Private and Official Correspondence of Gen. Benjamin F. Butler, During the Period of the Civil War (Springfield, MA: Plimpton Press, 1917), 3:347; OR, Ser. I, Vol. XXXVI, Pt. 2, 832-33.

⁴³ JATU 26 (April 1863): 56.

town.⁴⁴ But two years later, Hoosiers echoed the Transcript's remarks, charging local Copperheads with becoming "gloriously drunk" at news of the war's end and "cursing black Republicans, preachers, and the damned nigger." In this case, alcohol loosened the tongue and revealed treachery.⁴⁵

The problem went well beyond treasonous talk. Northerners linked Democrats, immigrants, and alcohol with draft resistance. After the war began, native-born northerners grew increasingly suspicious of German and Irish immigrants who did not enlist at the first call for volunteers.⁴⁶ After Congress began conscripting men in the spring of 1863, Republicans charged that Democrats in New York City plied Irish immigrants with alcohol to spark violence. In the weeks following the Union victories at Gettysburg and Vicksburg in 1863, working-class men in New York City, Boston, and other cities, violently resisted the draft. For four days in July, working men, many of whom were Irish immigrants, rioted against the federal government, which they believed was conscripting them to fight in a war not of their making.⁴⁷ While working in Bellevue Hospital in New York City, John Vance Lauderdale encountered "a drunken man" who shared with him "the sentiments of the mob." New Yorkers were "infuriated" because "a poor man had to be drafted and go to the war, but a rich man could pay his money and stay home." Lauderdale knew that certain members of the press (presumably Democrats) encouraged

⁴⁴ "The Blood-thirsty Knight," Valley Spirit (Franklin County, PA), April 15, 1863.

⁴⁵ "Wheatland Correspondence," Weekly Vincennes Gazette, April 15, 1865.

⁴⁶ For scholarship on northern German-American enlistment and the perception among nativists that Germans did not volunteer quickly enough, see Stephen D. Engle, "Yankee Dutchmen: Germans, the Union, and the Construction of Wartime Identity," in Civil War Citizens: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in America's Bloodiest Conflict, Edited by Susannah J. Ural (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 11-55; Christian B. Keller, Chancellorsville and the Germans: Nativism, Ethnicity, and Civil War Memory (New York: Fordham University Press), 24-30. For Irish American enlistment, see Susannah J. Ural, "'Ye Sons of Green Erin Assemble': Northern Irish American Catholics and the Union War Effort, 1861-1865," in Civil War Citizens, 99-129; Christian G. Samito, Becoming American under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship during the Civil War Era (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009), 103-133.

⁴⁷ For broader historical context surrounding the New York Draft Riots, see Iver Bernstein, The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

the rioters, whose grievance he suggested were legitimate. Still, he argued, people had been “made furious by liquor” and so many thieves and rabble-rousers wreaked so much havoc with the city that Lauderdale feared venturing outside.⁴⁸

Rioters might have considered their violent actions to be a justifiable rebellion against an unfair system that favored the wealthy, but Union officers diverted from the front lines in Pennsylvania to enforce the draft considered the violence subversive. Colonel Robert Nugent of the 69th New York Volunteers estimated that he would need more than 15,000 additional men to restore law and order because the rioters – some of whom were “thieves and gamblers that infest this metropolis” – were joined by Democrats and had been made even more unruly “by the copious supply of liquor.” The problem, in Nugent’s view, was not simply that such men could not control themselves, but rather that they had been egged on by liquor deviously supplied by the Democratic Party. Nugent echoed the view of many middle-class Americans on this point. He (and others) thought the laboring classes incapable of independent political action and instead suspected that Democratic politicians, who actively opposed the Lincoln Administration, were “at the bottom of this riot.” Not even New York’s Governor Horatio Seymour could be trusted. Nugent questioned the “loyalty” of the state’s leaders, accusing them of using liquor to incite working-class resistance against the federal government.⁴⁹ William Wheeler, on the other hand, placed the blame on the shoulders of Irish rioters, rather than on Democrats. He remarked that while he had not paid much attention to the events, he still “wished that they would send me with my Battery to the city for a couple of weeks” because he “would much rather fire canister into those drunken Irish rowdies, than into the secesh brethren.” He explained that Confederates,

⁴⁸ John Vance Lauderdale, *The Wounded River: The Civil War Letters of John Vance Lauderdale, M.D.*, Edited by Peter Josyph (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1993), 162-63.

⁴⁹ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. XXVII, Pt. 2, 903-4.

“although deluded” politically, Confederate men, he concluded, were not as dangerous as drunken Irishmen.⁵⁰

Most northerners did not fantasize about shooting immigrants instead of rebels, but many expressed deep reservations about immigrants’ political allegiances. Heavy drinking supposedly corrupted the democratic political process.⁵¹ As the heavily contested 1864 election neared, both Democrats and Republicans accused each other of drunkenness. Wisconsin soldier Guy C. Taylor told his wife that “you cannot find a Irish man nor a drunkard scurisely but what is a McClynon man.”⁵² But McClellan supporter Daniel Robinson Hundley accused Republicans of buying votes. While casting a vote in Illinois, Hundley “witnessed the desecration of the ballot-box – drunken foreigners voting, who could not speak a word of English, and whose tickets were changed in my presence without their knowledge – as well as made sick from the fumes of tobacco-smoke, lager beer, whisky, etc.”⁵³

The notion that Irish and German Americans were unpatriotic threats to democracy spilled over into Union and Confederate camps. In 1861, English visitor William Howard Russell portrayed Irish Americans as lazy opportunists whose allegiances depended on the size of their paychecks and who shirked their duties whenever possible.⁵⁴ To many nativists, Irishmen made unreliable and unruly soldiers. When Texan John Camden West was too injured to write a

⁵⁰ William Wheeler, Letters of William Wheeler of the Class of 1855, Y. C. (privately published, 1875), 417.

⁵¹ Lydia Child worried about “drunken foreigners” at the polls. See, Lydia Maria Francis Child, Letters of Lydia Maria Child with a Biographical Introduction by John G. Whittier and Appendix by Wendell Phillips (Boston, MA: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1883), 153.

⁵² Guy C. Taylor, Letters Home to Sarah: The Civil War Letters of Guy C. Taylor, Thirty Sixth Wisconsin Volunteers, Edited by Kevin Alderson and Patsy Alderson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012), 107. Two years before the election, Levi Bird Duff, who strongly disliked McClellan, had charged him with looking “like a German of ample means who makes free use of Lager & the pipe.” Duff seems to have tied together immigrants, alcohol, and anti-McClellan sentiment earlier than others. See, Levi Bird Duff, To Petersburg with the Army of the Potomac, 54.

⁵³ Daniel Robinson Hundley, Prison Echoes of the Great Rebellion (New York: S. W. Green, 1874), 176-77.

⁵⁴ William Howard Russell, My Diary North and South (T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863), 284-85, 345.

letter to his wife, an Irish comrade helped him out. But West noted that he was “afraid that the Irishman will get drunk and lose this, so I have no heart to write you as fully as I would wish.” Nevertheless, the soldier completed the transcription and sent the letter to West’s wife.⁵⁵ Charles Wainwright encountered an Irish American soldier so drunk one evening in Alexandria that the man had to be bound and sent to the city guard. Once there, he stripped and had to be knocked unconscious so the guard could dress him again.⁵⁶ The Carter brothers from Massachusetts had a similar experience shortly after they enlisted. On their train ride through Pennsylvania, they and the other passengers were annoyed by “a burly, drunken Irishman, overflowing with bad whiskey and pugilistic ambition.” The man was so intoxicated he was bent on harassing everyone in the cars until the brothers grabbed him, knocked him out, emptied his flask, and left him to sleep it off.⁵⁷

White southerners feared that Irish Yankees had a particularly violent streak. Confederate civilian Mary Mallard likened Irish soldiers in the Army of the Tennessee to guerrillas. As General William T. Sherman’s men marched toward Savannah in 1864, she found her Montevideo home under threat from men in Kilpatrick’s Cavalry. Mallard specifically described a “stalwart Kentucky Irishman” who spoke “in a very rough voice” as he demanded to know where whiskey was kept. These men then searched the premises from top to bottom.⁵⁸ Confederate soldier Edmund DeWitt Patterson worried that the “drunken Irishman” who stumbled upon his wounded body during the Battle of Seven Pines would bayonet him after presenting a “most fiendish look” and threatening to put him “out of [his] misery.” In Patterson’s

⁵⁵ John Camden West, *A Texan in Search of a Fight* (Waco, TX: Press of J. S. Hill & Co., 1901), 68.

⁵⁶ Charles S. Wainwright, *A Diary of Battle: The Personal Journals of Colonel Charles S. Wainwright, 1861-1866*, Edited by Allan Nevins (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1962), 89.

⁵⁷ Robert Goldthwaite Carter, *Four Brothers in Blue, or Sunshine and Shadows of the War of the Rebellion: A Story of the Great Civil War from Bull Run to Appomattox* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), 76-77.

⁵⁸ Robert Manson Myers, ed., *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1972), 1222-24.

mind, the intoxicated Irish American soldier would not spare the life of a rebel prisoner. Only after a native-born officer stepped in was Patterson convinced he would not be murdered.⁵⁹

South Carolinian J. J. McDaniel did not notice any particular penchant for violence among Irish Yankees at Fredericksburg. He observed, though, that Meagher's men, "half drunk with liquor," tried foolishly to overtake the rebel batteries. Instead, the "liquor had led them into the 'slaughter pen.'" And as they fled through the streets, McDaniel hoped that their lopsided bloody defeat would "be the fate of all the beastly, drunken, thievish foreigners who pollute our Southern soil in the company of their employers, the Yankees."⁶⁰ Like native-born Union soldiers, McDaniel doubted that the Irish were capable of any purely patriotic bravery.

German American soldiers and civilians encountered similar prejudice. That German soldiers had a taste for alcohol – particularly lager beer – was simply assumed. An account of a raid against Confederates near Webb's Cross Roads in Kentucky offered several stereotypical descriptions of German behavior. Upon storming the fortification, the Union forces discovered a barrel of apple brandy. Quickly, twelve German-American soldiers filled their canteens despite warnings that the alcohol might have been poisoned by Confederates. "I tells you vat I do," responded one soldier, "I trinks some, and if it don't kill me, den you trinks."⁶¹ The manner with which the author describes the soldiers' drinking – reckless and hasty – along with the supposed dialogue illuminates his perceptions of German soldiers as less careful and more prone to drunkenness. Union physician John Vance Lauderdale offered similar criticisms. German

⁵⁹ Edmund DeWitt Patterson, Yankee Rebel: The Civil War Journal of Edmund DeWitt Patterson, Edited by John G. Barrett (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 49-50.

⁶⁰ J. J. McDaniel, Diary of Battles, Marches and Incidents of the Seventh S. C. Regiment (privately published, 1862), 18-19.

⁶¹ "Incidents of Webb's Cross-Roads," The Rebellion Record, Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 4 (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1862), P 75.

Americans, in his mind, were “an indifferent race” who “care[d] for no other happiness” than “tobacco and beer.”⁶²

Native-born soldiers’ accusations that their German American counterparts had a proclivity for drunkenness stemmed, at least in part, from jealousy. Because lager beer was so central to German culture and dining habits, enlisted men in largely German regiments received extra rations of lager beer and permission to drink.⁶³ The New York Times noted that German soldiers stationed at Camp Jessie in Virginia were rewarded with glasses of lager after a day of hard work.⁶⁴ At other times, German-American soldiers relied on both patriotic citizens at home to send whiskey and beer to the camps and their own knack for finding saloons.⁶⁵ In many ways, German-American soldiers’ drinking patterns mimicked their native-born counterparts’. But Union soldiers seethed when German regiments received extra beer. In May 1863, Lewis Bissell wrote to his father that German soldiers alone were allowed lager beer at Fort Lyons, Virginia. The sober Bissell listened to the “Dutchmen” singing “like so many black birds chattering” because, presumably, they consumed “a good deal of lager beer.” Union officers could stroll into the fort at will and drink the beer, but the enlisted men encamped outside the walls were prohibited from entering. This “makes the men mad,” Bissell noted with considerable understatement.⁶⁶

⁶² John Vance Lauderdale, The Wounded River: The Civil War Letters of John Vance Lauderdale, M.D., 85.

⁶³ Christian B. Keller, Germans at Chancellorsville, 32-34.

⁶⁴ The article notes that at first, some soldiers declined the beer, but assumes that because they were German, they only turned it down temporarily. See, “The Mountain Department: Gen. Fremont in the Field – The Obstacles which he has Overcome – Camp Jessie – New-Creek (VA),” New York Times, May 10, 1862.

⁶⁵ Joseph R. Reinhart, editor and translator, A German Hurrah!: Civil War Letters of Friedrich Bertsch and Wilhelm Stangel, 9th Ohio Infantry (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press, 2010), 37; Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., Germans in the Civil War: The Letters They Wrote Home, translated by Susan Carter Vogel (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 310.

⁶⁶ Lewis Bissell, The Civil War Letters of Lewis Bissell, Edited by Mark Olcott (Washington: Field School Educational Foundation Press, 1981), 118.

German Americans countered accusations that they were unpatriotic, draft-dodging drunks. Perhaps ironically, some shared the notion that excessive drinking threatened the war effort, but they argued instead that native-born Americans were careless drinkers. Wilhelm Franchsen, a Wisconsin soldier, explained. The “common man” in the United States “goes into a saloon, drinks a lot, and pays for drinks for other people who have to drink with him but don’t have anything to do with him otherwise.” The ensuing drunkenness usually led “to killing and murder.” Franchsen was frustrated with the sensational partisan press, “the arrogant *Yankees*,” and the native-born Americans’ penchant for treating immigrants with “less respect than a Negro.” Rather than endangering sacred white American traditions like sober Sundays, Franchsen thought that the German community “had done the most to cultivate Americans,” and he viewed the northerners he encountered as drunken scoundrels.⁶⁷

German men also responded to the notion that they did not enlist in the military quickly enough. For some men, the concerns about fighting seemed to be almost entirely pragmatic: they had businesses to run and families to support. Emile Dupre paid a friend to serve as a substitute so he could stay with his wife in New York City. Philadelphian Carl Hermanns expressed relief to his German parents that he had not become an American citizen yet and could not be drafted. The teacher was tired of the “wretched war” by 1862, and he loathed the “*Conskription*” that snatched fathers “away from their families.”⁶⁸ Albert Augustin was similarly nervous about the possibility of leaving his wife when he informed his family in August 1861 that a “horrible war has broken out between North and South...and soldiers are being signed up every day.” Augustin and his wife were saloon keepers in Champaign, Illinois, and Augustin

⁶⁷Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., *Germans in the Civil War*, 141. Maureen Ogle argues that these rapid-fire drinking patterns forced German brewers to adapt their recipes to suit American chugging, so to speak. See *Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer* (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Inc., 2006), 85.

⁶⁸ Walter D. Kamphoefner and Wolfgang Helbich, eds., *Germans in the Civil War*, 44, 115.

worried that he might have to leave her alone in a strange country and fight because he lived so close to enemy territory. His anxiety did not seem to be tied to a lack of patriotism, as he noted that “every single citizen...is willing to give his last drop of blood for freedom” as he wished for “eternal damnation to the slave traders!”⁶⁹

Confederate saloon-keeper John Gottfried Lange expressed a similar patriotism, even as he complained that excise taxes and wartime prohibition interfered with his business.⁷⁰ The verbose diarist and German immigrant expressed his frustration with martial law that kept him from supporting his family with his lager-beer saloon in Richmond. Until the secession crisis, Lange’s business had prospered, and although he occasionally had run afoul of Sunday laws, he and his wife became increasingly assimilated into Richmond’s cultural life. Lange expressed his patriotism openly, dressing as a continental guard for Carnival balls and after John Brown's raid in 1859 serving beer and snacks to Virginia militiamen. When Virginia seceded, Lange treated his customers with free beer and penned impassioned letters criticizing northern wage labor. “Old and young were called upon to help defend the fatherland,” remembered Lange, a devoted Confederate, and he himself, although too old to join the regular army, volunteered to serve in the home guard. Patrolling the streets of Richmond, Lange lambasted the myriad “Germans who had fought at home for their freedom in 1848” but now fought for the Union “to suppress our freedom and our states rights.” In Lange’s view, Confederates fought firmly within the tradition

⁶⁹ Ibid, 77, 79.

⁷⁰ Andrea Mehrländer argues that Germans in wartime Richmond were, much like the northern counterparts, targets of discrimination. Native-born Confederates charged them with disloyalty. See, “‘With More Freedom and Independence than the Yankees’: The Germans of Richmond, Charleston, and New Orleans during the American Civil War,” *Civil War Citizens*, 57-97.

of the 1848 nationalistic revolutions in Europe. White southerners were fighting against tyranny.⁷¹

Lange's business took repeated hits throughout the war, as supplies of beer dwindled, the war disrupted customers' routines, and prohibitory measures and license fees cut into profits. Through it all, Lange remained an active member of the home guard, and fought to provide for his family, even though he found it increasingly hard to make ends meet. After the first battle of Bull Run, Lange joined in the patriotic fervor sweeping through Richmond. Schoolchildren used his saloon to collect and cut rags for use as bandages. When local laws allowed, Lange and other Germans sold beer to soldiers. When the war finally ended, the German-Confederate had to rebuild his business mostly from scratch in a city under Union occupation. Strict laws governed sales to soldiers and African Americans, but Lange remained a proud Confederate, who at times clashed with Federal authorities and insisted on hanging a portrait of Jefferson Davis on the wall of his saloon. Even when Union officers patronized his saloon, Lange openly avowed that he "had been a rebel."⁷²

Lange and his Unionist counterparts in the North passionately denied that they were unpatriotic drunks. Like other businesses, saloons supported the war effort by refreshing soldiers or, perhaps more importantly, participating in wartime volunteer activities. They insisted that their trade in ardent spirits did not force native-born Americans to guzzle alcohol. In short, Germans maintained that they brought responsible drinking habits to American society, and they insisted that they were loyal citizens who made important contributions.

⁷¹ John Gottfried Lange, *Memoirs, "The New Name or the Shoemaker in the Old and the New World, Thirty Years in Europe and Thirty Years in America,"* Volume I, Typescript translated into English, Virginia Historical Society, Richmond, VA, 171-192, 194, 197, 199, 203, 206.

⁷² John Gottfried Lange, *Memoirs*, 211-12, 226, 275, 280, 285.

Alcohol, African Americans, and Respectability

When it came to proving loyalty, African Americans faced similar obstacles. Many white northerners and southerners assumed that African Americans were naturally predisposed to abuse alcohol. Southern whites, especially, worried that liquor would incite rebellion among enslaved people who were normally docile when sober. In the antebellum South, access to liquor was a marker of freedom and whiteness. Occasionally, white masters offered liquor to their enslaved workers as a reward for a successful harvest or for a Christmas celebration, but in those cases, the meaning was clear: that drinking was a privilege generally belonging to white people that could be given to people of color only as a reward for good behavior.⁷³ White northerners, for their part, worried that emancipation would lead to drunken chaos in black neighborhoods. Reformers believed that rescuing the newly freed population from the perils of drunkenness would become their burden. But African Americans resisted the notion that they were unable to control their consumption of alcohol. Black men knew they had proven their citizenship on the battlefield, and evidence indicates that black soldiers resisted alcohol's temptations more successfully than their white counterparts. The middle-class black community, for its part, lauded sobriety, and black temperance reformers, like their white counterparts, argued that abstinence was a marker of progress.⁷⁴

White southerners had often harbored fearful images of African Americans threatening the racial social order as soon as they became drunk. Less than a year before the war in September 1860, Louisianan Sarah Lois Wadley expressed this fear after one enslaved man, Jim

⁷³ Eugene D. Genovese, Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made (New York, Vintage, 1976, c1974), 577-8, 643-44.

⁷⁴ For scholarship on moral reform and citizenship in the African-American community, see Rita Roberts, Evangelicalism and the Politics of Reform in Northern Black Thought, 1776-1863 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010). For scholarship on military service and citizenship, see Christian G. Samito, Becoming American under Fire, 45-102, 134-171.

Burke, became especially “insolent” after “many of the negro men had gotten drunk.” Burke was generally “an excellent servant” when he was sober, but in the midst of his drunken spree the overseer took a stick and beat him until he ran off into the woods.⁷⁵ The fear of drunken mobs of African Americans hung over the port city of Savannah, Georgia, as well. Echoing the concerns of the northern temperance reformers, the men of the Jones family complained that the Savannah police were not enforcing the “Sunday ordinance” and as a result, the city’s “rum shops are filled with Negroes drinking at all hours of the day and night. Gambling is rampant,” and to restore order the city needed “an effective mayor” who could force the police to keep control over the liquor dens. To solve the problem, young Charles Jones ran for the office himself, becoming mayor of Savannah in 1860. But the problem was not simply that gambling and drinking disrupted peaceful Sabbaths for the sober-minded.⁷⁶ After his election, Charles Jones wrote to his mother that “the present political status of the county” made the “conduct of the Negro population” particularly troubling. Free black sailors and other “scoundrels” were “attempting to induce [the enslaved population] to leave the state.” The rules governing the black population – free and enslaved – were not being enforced, and as a result, “they have forgotten their places— are guilty of gambling, smoking in the streets, drinking, and disorderly conduct in general.” Rum-sellers – all of “foreign birth” – were “demoralizing” and “ruining” the enslaved population with their intoxicating beverages.⁷⁷

Once the war came, preserving the institution of slavery necessitated keeping whiskey out of the hands of an increasingly restless enslaved population. When visiting southern plantations early in the war, William Howard Russell noted the strange relationship between

⁷⁵ September 23, 1860, Sarah Lois Wadley Diary, August 8, 1859 – May 15, 1865 (Electronic Edition), 63, Manuscripts Department, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

⁷⁶ Robert Manson Myers, ed., The Children of Pride, 524.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 624.

enslaved men and whiskey. On one plantation, many enslaved people were raising poultry on their own time and selling eggs and meat to white masters. This additional income was “spent in purchasing tobacco, molasses, clothes, and flour,” but not liquor. Russell noted that alcohol, despite being slaves’ “great delight,” was prohibited. So even while other luxuries were permitted, whiskey – that marker of masculine privilege – was kept out of reach.⁷⁸ Drunkenness seemingly threatened the order of the plantation household. South Carolinian Mary Chesnut recounted one instance where Caroline Preston had to wrest the butcher knife from the hands of her drunken footman, who “was keeping everybody from their business” by “threatening to kill any one who dared go into the basement.” As the rest of the kitchen staff ran about, “screaming and shouting,” Preston approached the footman, who “was bellowing like a bull of Bashan,” took the knife from him, locked him in an “empty smoke-house,” and returned to her dinner guests, having restored order to her kitchen. Her ability to prevent the drunken brute from destroying her dinner party earned her the title of “heroine” in upper-crust Richmond.⁷⁹

But as traumatic as a spoiled dinner party might have seemed in 1862, by the war’s later years, southern slaveholders had bigger worries. Although fears of slave insurrection had plagued the white southern mind for decades, Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation, coupled with the encroachment of the Federal army, had white southerners on the home front in a constant state of panic. Since the war’s beginning, many enslaved people had been taking advantage of the absence of male masters to chip away at the slave system. Some worked more slowly, others ran off to Union lines, but throughout the South, slavery was crumbling, and white

⁷⁸ William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 258.

⁷⁹ Mary Boykin Miller Chesnut, *Mary Chesnut’s Civil War*, Edited by C. Vann Woodward (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981), 348-9.

women left on plantations were largely powerless to stop it.⁸⁰ Whites believed that whiskey exacerbated these problems by making slaves more likely to cause disorder, at best, and foment violent uprisings, at worst.

Across the Deep South, whiskey and the Union Army were the harbingers of both disorder and freedom. In April 1864, Confederate Captain William Burgwyn and his father had their slaves hide the wine stores from “the Yankees in case they should ever get to the plantation.” The barn seemed the safest place, but someone stole the wine, and the Burgwyn men spent an afternoon interrogating slaves in a vain attempt to figure out who had nicked it.⁸¹ If enslaved populations did not manage to grab the wine for themselves before the Union soldiers arrived, once Federal forces were in the area, white southerners assumed all hell would break loose. In 1864, Virginian Judith McGuire worried that the arrival of Union forces and the availability of alcohol would inspire her slaves to make a run for freedom. When Union soldiers invaded McGuire’s plantation, the enslaved people found the mix of whiskey and “Abolition preachers” too much to resist. When the northern soldiers finally left, McGuire remarked somewhat sarcastically that all the enslaved people had “gone to Canaan, by way of York River, Chesapeake Bay, and the Potomac.” Of course, from her perspective, the aspirations of freedom brought about by Union soldiers and alcohol were nothing more than delusions. McGuire pitied her former servants whom she had once regarded “as humble friends and members” of her family. While they had “gone with blissful hope of idleness and free supplies,” once they

⁸⁰ Drew Gilpin Faust, Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 53-79; George C. Rable, Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 114-121; Stephanie McCurry, Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 218-262.

⁸¹ William H. S. Burgwyn, A Captain’s War: The Letters and Diaries of William H. S. Burgwyn, 1861-1865, Edited by Herber M. Schiller (Shippensburg, PA: White Mane, 1994), 154.

sobered up and found themselves in the cold North, they would live in poverty and disease, and “many of them [would] die without sympathy.”⁸²

White southerners may have believed that alcohol led their slaves down the road to ruin, but at the same time, they feared free African Americans might use alcohol to assert their freedom. Late in the war, plenty of enslaved southerners had all but concluded that slavery was doomed, and in Montgomery, Alabama, a “crowd of colored gentlemen” took “possession of a grog shop” one January night. These men consumed large amounts of whiskey, according to the Daily Mail, and an altercation broke out with the City Marshal. The enslaved men were arrested and convicted of unlawful assembly and received thirty-nine lashes.⁸³ That white southerners feared drunken black men was evident in the South Carolina Lowcountry as well. In March 1865, Charlotte Ravenel and her neighbors in St. John’s Parish became caught in the middle of raids between local scouts and Union soldiers. “Four Yankee negroes” who had drunk “a quantity of wine” roused up support among “a good many plantation negroes.” Armed and “mounted on anything they could find,” the men rode through the parish “in a drunken state,” raiding plantation homes.⁸⁴

The image of the drunken black Yankee soldier weighed heavily on many white southern minds. After the battle of Brice’s Crossroads in June 1864, the Atlanta Appeal sprang to the defense of Confederate soldiers who had routed the Union soldiers and had killed black troops rather than taking them prisoner. From the Atlanta paper’s perspective, the Union soldiers serving under General Samuel Sturgis, deserved “their instant execution.” As Sturgis and his

⁸² Judith White Brockenbrough McGuire, Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War, 3rd ed. (Richmond, VA: J. W. Randolph & English, 1889), 278-9.

⁸³ “Local Intelligence,” Daily Mail (Montgomery, AL), January 6, 1865.

⁸⁴ Charlotte St. J. Ravenel, Two Diaries from Middle St. John’s, Berkeley, South Carolina, February-May 1865; Journals kept by Miss Susan R. Jervy and Miss Charlotte St. J. Ravenel, at Northampton and Pooshe Plantations, and Reminiscences of Mrs. (Waring) Henagan (Pinopolis, SC: St. John’s Hunting Club, 1921), 37-38.

men moved through Tennessee and Mississippi, local whites reported gruesome atrocities committed by the “drunken brutes” who sought to avenge the massacre of their comrades at Fort Pillow. Confederates charged the “negro mercenaries” with raping white women, using descriptive words such as “a dozen fiends,” “savage lusts,” and “remorseless fiends in human shape.” Their beastly inhumanity wreaked havoc on the “poor frightened people” who became their victims. The “sufferings” of the white southerners, according to the Appeal, was “such as never before were inflicted upon human creatures.” The black men’s beastly behavior, instigated by white officers, left “humanity...appalled.”⁸⁵ Foreshadowing the archetype of the southern black beast rapist that would gain prominence in the post-war decades and serve as an excuse for lynching, the Atlanta Appeal juxtaposed the image of the helpless white woman against the drunken brutish black soldier. By arguing that African-American soldiers could not control the violent lust while intoxicated and angry, they justified not only the killing of black soldiers by General Nathan Bedford Forrest, but also set the tone for post-war race relations: black men who violated the social order by drinking and becoming soldiers could be killed.⁸⁶

Ironically, while some white southerners feared violence at the hands of drunken U. S. Colored Troops, when it came to arming southern African Americans to fight for the Confederacy, many whites claimed that black men were not up to the task of fighting Yankees unless they were fortified with liquor. To be sure, white southerners had been providing enslaved laborers with whiskey – generally in the form of fatigue rations – throughout the war. Early in

⁸⁵ “Document 89: The Murder of Negro Troops – Atlanta Appeal, July 1864,” The Rebellion Record, Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 11 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1868), Doc 526.

⁸⁶ The notion that black men were beastly in nature and incapable of self-control gained traction in the eighteenth century. For scholarship, see Winthrop D. Jordan, White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968). During and after the Civil War, the notion was used by white people to falsely accuse African American men of rape and to justify white violence and lynching. See, Hannah Rosen, Terror in the Heart of Freedom: Citizenship, Sexual Violence, and the Meaning of Race in the Postemancipation South (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 194-202; Grace Elizabeth Hale, Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940 (New York: Vintage, 1998), 85-119.

the war Confederate Private Robert A. Moore had noted the presence of drunken slaves in his camp. During a cold snap in November 1861, the enslaved men “nearly all got drunk” to cope with the harsh weather.⁸⁷ As Union soldiers approached a Confederate camp during the Chattanooga Campaign, the Confederates took a whiskey ration as they prepared to march. To aid the soldiers, a local plantation owner “called up his negroes and gave them some whiskey and commenced the preparation for the move.”⁸⁸ Because black laborers were sometimes given whiskey rations, when the Confederate Congress debated the arming of enslaved southerners to fight late in the war, Kentucky’s Humphrey Marshall countered the notion that black men would not fight by positing that that “they will fight” if Confederates “Fill them with whiskey.”⁸⁹

This same contradictory image of African American men appeared among white northerners. In Franklin County, Pennsylvania, local citizens worried that free black neighborhoods would be prone to drunkenness, crime, and disorder unless reformers intervened. In 1859, the Valley Spirit described an “abode of crime and wretchedness of destitute and degraded humanity,” where “fourteen women and six children” crammed into tiny, dimly lit apartments. Poverty-stricken, “drinking whisky and inhaling tobacco smoke,” free black people reveled in “licentious and blasphemous orgies” because American “society” had not educated them to be moral citizens. If white Americans wanted to prevent such moral decay from encroaching on their cities, they needed to make “a generous donation to the Foreign Missionary Society.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Robert A. Moore, A Life for the Confederacy, as Recorded in the Pocket Diaries of Pvt. Robert A. Moore, Co. G, 17th Mississippi Regiment, Confederate Guards, Holly Spring, Mississippi (Jackson, TN: McCowat-Mercer Press, 1959), 80.

⁸⁸ Ephraim Shelby Dodd, Diary of Ephraim Shelby Dodd: Member of Company D Terry’s Texas Rangers, December 4, 1862-January 1, 1864 (Austin, TX: E. L. Steck, 1914), 28.

⁸⁹ “Document 68: Arming Slaves at the South – Confederate House of Representatives, November 10, 1864,” The Rebellion Record, Edited by Frank Moore, vol. 11 (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1868), Doc 476.

⁹⁰ “How Our Negroes Live,” Valley Spirit (Franklin County, PA), March 30, 1859.

Once the war began, the white notion that African Americans behaved more brutally when drunk influenced debates about the arming of black troops. Ironically, Union troops were not above plying black men alcohol to provide entertainment. In September 1863, in one camp near Vicksburg a group of minstrels, “quite sprung, some of them, by whiskey,” “kept on with their fun till midnight,” and well past the order for lights out.⁹¹ Soldiers in Chauncey Herbert Cooke’s camp were more malicious. After a “darkey” began teaching the soldiers new war songs, the troops tipped other African American men to sing southern songs while the whites drank in saloons. Singing for pennies, however, did not satisfy the white soldiers long. And a few rounds later, black men were being given five cents for “butting.” The men were “kept about half drunk to give them grit” as they “would back off like rams and come together head to head.”⁹² Union soldiers looting plantations in nearby Natchez similarly used liquor to bait enslaved southerners. After reaching the John Rouch plantation, a company of Ellet’s marines “burst open a barrel of whisky, made all of the negroes drunk, and in that way learned where his valuables were.” The Union soldiers then gathered up silver, food, clothing, liquor, and fine linens.⁹³

When Union soldiers were not looking for amusement from intoxicated African Americans, northern troops seemed quite convinced that black people should supply alcohol. As they headed toward Hagerstown, Maryland, in 1862, Louis Richards and his comrade inquired of “an old negro whom we picked up by the way” where to buy “a couple of bottles of good whiskey.”⁹⁴ Because whiskey was prohibited for the rank and file, exasperated officers at times targeted African Americans who were supposedly selling to their men. Michigan soldier Ira

⁹¹ Jenkin Lloyd Jones, *An Artilleryman’s Diary* (Wisconsin History Commission: 1914), 91.

⁹² Chauncey Herbert Cooke, *Soldier Boy’s Letters to His Father and Mother, 1861-5* (News-Office, 1915), 33.

⁹³ *OR*, Ser. I, Vol. XXX, Pt. 3, 25.

⁹⁴ Louis Richards, *Eleven Days in the Militia during the War of the Rebellion: Being a Journal of the Emergency Campaign of 1862* (Philadelphia, PA: Collins Printer, 1883), 33.

Gillespie noted that his Sergeant Twitchell along with about half a dozen other soldiers invaded “an oald negro den whare they kept whiskey to sell to the soldiers in their posesion.” Whether the sellers refused to divulge the location of their stash to the Union authorities, Twitchell and others strung them up by their necks and then poured the whiskey over their heads and into their eyes.⁹⁵ When they were blamed for providing whiskey to white troops or perceived to act more brutishly under the influence of alcohol, black men were seen in the eyes of white northerners and southerners as being prone to drunkenness, disorder, and beastly behavior. And white men – both Union and Confederate – conveniently justified their own brutal behavior by claiming to protect white people from the influence of blackness and whiskey.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many African American soldiers and civilians responded to such perceptions by arguing that they were more sober (and thereby more self-disciplined and more manly) than their white counterparts. In late 1861, an enslaved man was whipped to death for informing some New York troops of his master’s “Secessionist sympathies.” By April 1862, the Liberator publicly defended the man’s character and patriotism. In December 1861, enslaved “Negro Jack” escaped from a “Mr. Cox” by entering Union lines. Cox followed him, and with the help of slave catchers and agreeable Union soldiers, he reclaimed his slave and beat him senseless while in a drunken stupor. When on trial, the jury found Cox innocent by concluding that Jack had died of “exposure and excitement.” Excitement, of course, being a euphemism for drunkenness. The Liberator angrily pointed out in a letter addressed to Horace Greeley of the New York Tribune that none of the Union soldiers had ever seen Jack “*drunk publicly*,” and that furthermore, he would have had no means for acquiring whiskey. Jack had provided “patriotic and valuable services” to the Union army by reporting on the disloyal behavior of his – not

⁹⁵ Ira Gillespie, The Diary of Ira Gillespie of the Eleventh Michigan Infantry, Edited by Daniel B. Weber (Mount Pleasant: Central Michigan University Press, 1965), 23-4.

coincidentally – drunken master. Jack was promised asylum in the Union lines, and instead, soldiers had returned him to his master, and civilian courts had stripped him of his patriotism and re-labeled him a drunken slave. The Liberator was clear on this point: the drunken, violent slaveholder was the disloyal citizen, and the sober black man who risked his life to serve his country was the patriot.⁹⁶

African Americans would continue to make this distinction throughout the war. Highly critical of drunkenness among Union soldiers and officers, African American soldier and abolitionist George E. Stephens pointed to the “two great sins of the nation which threaten its very existence, the upper and nether millstones which threaten to grind into atoms all its elements of goodness and greatness”: slavery and drunkenness. Stephens condemned white soldiers whose camps were “more like that of bacchanals” – full of “brawls, riots, and midnight orgies.” McClellan had done little to stop the flow of liquor, in his opinion. And Stephens further touted his moral and masculine superiority by arguing that with “ten thousand sober troops,” he could “subdue the whole [white] Army of the Potomac.”⁹⁷

The idea that an army of temperate black men could fight better than white northerners was echoed in other parts of the North. After the New York Draft Riots in 1863, Junius Albus of the 5th United States Colored Regiment complained that white civil and military authorities had not been able to protect black New Yorkers from violent attacks at the hands of white immigrants. Striking a nativist tone, Albus questioned why “a white foreigner, ignorant of our polity, our religion, our laws, and even our language, is permitted to settle here, and not only enjoy all the common advantages of a citizen..., and yet a peaceable and educated colored man

⁹⁶ “Mr. Cox and the Slave who was Whipped to Death,” Liberator (Boston, MA), April 4, 1862.

⁹⁷ George E. Stephens, A Voice of Thunder: The Civil War Letters of George E. Stephens, Edited by Donald A. Yacovone (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 156.

cannot even enjoy unmolested, the most common rights of an ordinary citizen?” Albus did not believe white authorities could prevent similar riots in his own city of Philadelphia and proposed that black men “organize for their own defence.” The “colored population” was “much inferior in numbers, but intelligence, coolness, temperance, and courage, they are much superior to their bloody antagonists.”⁹⁸ Intelligence, temperance, and courage: all traits required for citizenship and to win the war. Albus and others in the African-American community believed that black men possessed them in greater quantities than their white counterparts – especially those of foreign birth.

White northerners expressed some surprise whenever black men showed a preference for sobriety. In the aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation, temperance reformers had determined that keeping the freedpeople away from alcohol was going to be one of their new responsibilities. Under slavery, they knew, white slaveholders had kept their people sober out of necessity because it “was a loss of a thousand dollars to have slave become a drunkard.” But liberty offered “no such protection” to a black man, as he was now free to visit “the grogshop and get far worse fetters put upon him than he ever had before.” It was up to the American Temperance Union to prevent this from happening through, among other methods, the dissemination of tracts.⁹⁹ But even as white northerners were preparing to step up their reform efforts, civilian and military officials decided it was unnecessary. Civilians living near Camp Delaware noted that the U. S. Colored Troops encamped in their midst were “more orderly and more honest than white soldiers.” They did not harass the local population, and there had been “less drunkenness.” Temperance reformers patted themselves on the back for improving the

⁹⁸Junius Albus, “Colored Troops, No. 5,” *Christian Recorder*, August 1, 1863.

⁹⁹ “A new class to be cared for,” *JATU* 27 (June 1864): 91; Charles A. Carleton, Adjutant 4th N. H. Volunteers to John Marsh, *JATU* 26 (November 1863): 164.

condition of the freedmen after so little time “under instruction.”¹⁰⁰ Union military authorities in charge of the Port Royal experiment concluded that the black “race is not addicted to intemperance,” like their white counterparts, after noticing that enslaved southerners did not drink. Perhaps in slavery black men had been “cut off from [alcohol’s] temptation,” but Superintendent Captain Edward Hooper noted that he “never saw a negro drunk” and had only ever heard of one case where a black worker was given whiskey by nearby whites.¹⁰¹ Neither the military nor the American Temperance Union were ready to bestow equal citizenship on sober African Americans, but in April 1865, the New York Times remarked that there was something “irrepressible” about African Americans – and sobriety had much to do with it. Despite the ability to “smuggle whisky easily” into camp, black soldiers were seldom, if ever, observed to be “the worse for liquor.” The reason, quite plainly, was because a “colored soldier feels himself to be ‘every inch a man,’ whenever he has exchanged his old rags for military blue, and shouldered his musket for the first time.” And it went beyond the military. Even among the civilian population, the paper noted that the number of black northerners selling and drinking whiskey “is far below that of their fair-skinned neighbors.”¹⁰² There was simply no evidence to show that the end of slavery brought with it the long feared disorder and drunkenness among the free populations of color.

¹⁰⁰ “Camp for Colored Soldiers,” JATU 26 (October 1863): 158.

¹⁰¹ OR, Ser. III, Vol. III, 436.

¹⁰² “‘The Irrepressible Negro:’ The Border States after the War: Ninth Letter” New York Times, April 16, 1865.

The Role of Slavery in a War against Sin

As northerners and southerners increasingly conflated sobriety with loyalty, temperance reformers continued to maintain that they were fighting a war caused by sin rather than slavery. But even as reformers decried slavery as a distraction, discussion of the peculiar institution was unavoidable and they became obsessed, albeit in different ways, with connecting slavery to their own reform efforts. Southern reformers, for their part, believed that the northern temperance movement had become too closely allied with abolitionism and Black Republicanism. Southerners seceded from national temperance societies to form organizations focused more exclusively on alcohol, and throughout the war southern reformers critiqued the abolition movement that had corrupted northern society. Even after the war ended, they refused to reunite with the northern branches and certainly sought to preserve the racial integrity of their temperance societies. Despite the schism, northern temperance reformers argued in much the same way as their southern counterparts that slavery detracted from the crusade. Nevertheless, northerners noted that both alcohol and slavery corrupted southern society, and the American Temperance Union, specifically, argued that northern reformers were engaged in a two-pronged struggle against slavery and liquor. Emancipation became merely the first step in a war to save the union from sin.

As they seceded from the National Division of the Sons of Temperance, Confederate temperance reformers made it clear that they were fighting a war against sin – including alcohol - - while protecting southern society from the corrupting influence of abolitionism and racial equality. Even before the state of Virginia seceded from the Union, its Pendleton Division of the Sons of Temperance decided to separate from the National Division because of “the fact of negroes being elected to office and fellowship in the Yankee States.” The Sons insisted that their

actions had nothing to do with “the political issue of the day” (the secession crisis), but instead, they were separating to protect their racial and moral integrity.¹⁰³ Other southerners echoed these concerns about the need to disassociate themselves from the increasingly immoral North. The political culture of the North had developed “a degree of cruelty, vindictiveness and brutality, which...has no parallel among the despotisms of Europe.” Northern reform movements, including temperance, only gave the illusion that the society was acting on Christian principles. Instead, northerners were trampling on constitutional rights.¹⁰⁴

As Confederate reformers organized their own temperance societies and prepared “to renew the fight with their old enemy” – liquor – they published defenses of slavery that condemned the Yankees for upsetting society’s racial hierarchy in the midst of their drunken orgies.¹⁰⁵ Alcohol was the “Abolition poison,” and Confederates refused to drink it.¹⁰⁶

Confederate minister Ebenezer W. Warren used the fictional story of Nellie Norton to rail against sin, such as drunkenness, and the North while defending the institution of slavery as the marker of progress and civilization. Nellie Norton finds herself defending slavery against a scripture-quoting abolitionist. Northerners, with their impoverished industrial working-classes, had no room to criticize the South, Norton explained, repeating an oft-uttered southern defense of slavery. Northerners had become so obsessed with abolition that there were “more sermons preached against slavery than against drunkenness, theft, debauchery, or any other sin to which

¹⁰³ “Correspondence of the Richmond Dispatch: Affairs in Lynchburg,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, March 18, 1861.

¹⁰⁴ “Being righteous Overmuch,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, July 8, 1861.

¹⁰⁵ “Hutchinson Division,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, April 20, 1861; “Sons of Temperance,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 7, 1862; “The Temperance Men,” Richmond Daily Dispatch, January 2, 1864.

¹⁰⁶ “Patriotism and Temperance,” Spirit of the Age, 12 (8 May 1861): 2.

fallen humanity is heir.” The problem, Norton pointed out, was that slavery was a distraction. Of all the sins mentioned in the New Testament, drunkenness was on the list but slavery was not.¹⁰⁷

For their part, northern temperance reformers increasingly exhibited complicated and sometimes conflicting attitudes toward slavery and emancipation. Although most firmly opposed slavery, they often argued that focusing on slavery alone distracted the masses from a more harmful evil – drunkenness. Rum, not slavery, had caused the sectional crisis to erupt into war. Drunkenness plagued white southern society, and in order to save the nation, prohibition, not simply emancipation, had to be enacted.

Some northerners believed that slavery and alcohol worked together to keep white southerners trapped in a society markedly inferior to the industrializing North. They also doubted that a society shunning free labor and temperance could be Christian. Iowa Captain Jacob Ritner scoffed at the prayers of Confederate soldiers, pondering what “deity they must fix up for themselves who will hear the prayers of liars and drunkards and slaveholders and traitors.”¹⁰⁸ As Luman Tenney trekked through the southern states in 1864, he encountered a couple of impoverished Confederates near Hiawassee, Georgia. The “Rebel girl,” he noted, was a “Member of church, chews, smokes and dips and drinks poor whiskey.”¹⁰⁹ From Tenney’s perspective, her drinking and her tobacco habits were unfeminine – they certainly did not fit with his view of a church-going woman – and seemingly uncivilized. Depravity was endemic, according to journalist Sidney Andrews, who ventured south after the conclusion of hostilities. Elaborating on what Tenney had noticed a year earlier, Andrews asserted that the North achieved

¹⁰⁷ E. W. Warren, Nellie Norton: Or, Southern Slavery and the Bible. A Scriptural Refutation of the Principal Arguments upon which the Abolitionists Rely. A Vindication of Southern Slavery from the Old and New Testaments (Macon, GA: Burke, Boykin & Company, 1864), 46-47, 118-119.

¹⁰⁸ Charles F. Larimer, ed., Love and Valor: The Intimate Civil War Letters between Chaptain Jacob and Emeline Ritner (Western Springs, IL: Sigourney Press, 2000), 286.

¹⁰⁹ Luman Harris Tenney, War Diary, 1861-1865, Frances Andrews Tenney, ed. (Cleveland, OH: Evangelical Pub. House, 1914), 105.

“its superiority” through its “middle class of people.” As he traveled through Georgia, Andrews noticed that “whiskey drinking” seemed to be the “prevailing vice of the whole people.” Southerners were more likely to carry a bottle than “a lunch or a clean shirt.” An appetite for bourbon coupled with the lack of an upright middle class supposedly kept the South in a backward, less civilized state.¹¹⁰

Temperance reformers agreed, but even as they decried any interference with temperance work, they themselves seemed filled with abolitionist fervor during the war’s early years. As they had during antebellum decades, northern temperance reformers argued that slavery violated God’s laws and chastised white southerners for perpetuating it and persuading the federal government to protect the institution. That the nation as a whole had benefitted economically from the system of slavery for decades did not keep some northern reformers from lambasting southern slaveholders. As a Wisconsin newspaper explained in 1861, the “North, by abandoning the evil, has not only cleansed her own skirts from the guilt, but acquired the right to condemn in others that sin” of slavery.¹¹¹ Admittedly the North had been the “accomplice of the South” in the past so as not to jeopardize the temperance cause. After southerners seceded, however, New York’s temperance community no longer felt compelled to soft-peddle opposition to slavery. As these reformers understood it, white southerners had seceded to protect slavery. Secession threatened the nation by bringing about a war. And reformers believed that “slavery must perish” in order for the nation to be saved.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Sidney Andrews, The South since the War, as Shown by Fourteen Weeks of Travel and Observation in Georgia and the Carolinas (Boston, MA: Ticknor and Co., 1866), 376-77.

¹¹¹Henrietta Costolo, “Communication: Pleasant Hill, PA, December 17, 1860,” JATU 24 (January 1861): 7; “Slavery at the North & South,” Higher Law 1 (January 9, 1861): 10.

¹¹² From the *Gasparin*, “Costliness of Human Progress,” JATU 25 (December 1862): 177; J.W. Love, “A Subscriber Offended,” JATU 25 (July 1862): 106.

Though northern temperance reformers always maintained that slavery was a moral evil, they also argued that drunkenness and the liquor traffic posed a threat to national well-being. Referring to the “two giant sins” and “the twin scourges” of the nation, reformers likened drunkenness to the “kindred curse of slavery” and referred to the United States as a “rum and slave benighted country.”¹¹³ When they linked the sins of slavery and drunkenness, teetotalers also intended to use the power of legislation to put an end to both. Although antebellum temperance advocates tried to use moral suasion to convince other Americans to put down the bottle, in the 1860s, these activists increasingly favored state prohibitory measures, similar to the Maine Laws of the early 1850s.¹¹⁴ The liquor traffic, reformers insisted, was as immoral as the slave trade. Comparing the rum trade with the African slave trade, reformers argued that while the slave trade brought “subjection,” the rum trade brought “disorder and crime.”¹¹⁵ They made it clear that they were fighting to rid the country of both vices in order to bring about a more perfect Union.¹¹⁶

Describing the conflict as a crusade to free the nation from all forms of sin reached a wide audience. Robert Winn, encamped in Kentucky, wrote to his sister about the millennium, slavery, and temperance. A chaplain in his camp distributed tracts and literature stressing the necessity of the “speedy abolition” of slavery, intemperance, and other sins in order to bring about the second coming of Christ. This literature predicted that once everyone was free, sober,

¹¹³ P. Osterhaut, “Correspondence: Schoharie, Oct. 9, 1861,” *JATU* 24 (November 1861): 163-64; *JATU* 25 (March 1862): 40; W. Love, “A Subscriber Offended,” *JATU* 25 (August 1862): 120; C. A. Hammond, “The ‘Higher Law’ in New York, Petebboro, N.Y. Feb. 4, 1861,” *Higher Law* 1 (February 28, 1861): 67.

¹¹⁴ Jack S. Blocker, Jr., *American Temperance Movements: Cycles of Reform* (Boston, MA: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 1-60.

¹¹⁵ “Twenty-Fourth Anniversary: Report,” *JATU* 24 (June 1861): 82.

¹¹⁶ “Gubernatorial Election,” *JATU* 25 (November 1862): 169.

and at peace (globally, not just in the United States), there would be “the establishment of a universal Republic under the lead of the United States” that would usher in the Millennium.¹¹⁷

Temperance activists themselves went beyond simply labeling slavery and intemperance the “twin scourges” of the land. Because their attention was so focused on alcohol, they declared that drunkenness itself was a form of slavery and a bondage much worse than chattel slavery, an image that had particular resonance during the war. Temperance advocates had repeatedly expressed frustration with the Republican Party, which they implored to “oppose the slavery of rum” by supporting prohibitory laws. As one reformer of Jefferson County, New York, explained in 1861, “the evils of secession, and even permanent separation, are incomparably less than those inflicted by our present license laws.”¹¹⁸ In contending that the liquor trade threatened national well-being more seriously than disunion, he was not alone. Another activist from Boston explained prohibitionists’ growing frustrations with the northern response to the sectional crisis in December 1860 by comparing the plight of the drunkard’s wife to that of the enslaved man’s wife. The drunkard’s wife had no clothes for her children. The enslaved woman simply had to watch her husband work in the beautiful southern sun under the shade of a Palmetto tree. The writer could not “understand it that while there is such an indignation through all the North against Southern slavery, there should be almost none at all against the rum power, which is binding at least fifty, if not an hundred thousand, husbands, fathers, and sons in the rum-seller’s chains.”¹¹⁹ Whatever the misconceptions about the nature of slavery, his comments are important, because other reformers shared these opinions, and as the war continued, they would

¹¹⁷ Robert Winn to sister, August 20?, 1863; Robert Winn to sister, February 12, 1864, Winn-Cook Family Papers, 1861-1875 (Transcriptions), Filson Historical Society, Louisville, KY.

¹¹⁸ “Remarks of Hon. Mr. Bell, of Jefferson County, New York, In the Senate, February 21st, on the concurrent resolutions proposing to prohibit the Liquor Traffic by constitutional enactment,” *JATU* 24 (April 1861): 51.

¹¹⁹ “Boston, December 11, 1860,” *JATU* 24 (February 1861): 24.

increasingly argue that rum slavery was a much greater threat to the nation than chattel slavery.¹²⁰

Early in the war, members of the American Temperance Union were content to fight against the twin evils of liquor and slavery, but in the fall of 1862, after Lincoln had issued his preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, the reformers quickly turned their full attention back to prohibition. Responding to the Proclamation in October, the editors of the JATU exclaimed: “And now if slavery is dead and the Republic is to rise to life of freedom and justice, let us who are engaged in a warfare against that other enemy of God and man, take courage and press on in the conflict...now is the time to drive out and crush that other horrid traffic, which is a traffic in the souls and bodies of men.”¹²¹ James Brewster of New Haven, Connecticut, explained that “the very idea that in this country there are four millions of human beings held in bondage is lamentable: but more sorrowful is that consideration that a much larger number of persons, are under bondage to a great evil...intemperance.” Brewster further reasoned that those enslaved in the South did not have the weight of immorality resting on their souls in the same way that a drunkard did.¹²² Drunkenness, once again, took center stage as the nation’s greatest sin.

Most reformers, however, viewed the problem of drunkenness within the context of the war itself. While emancipation had been a moral victory and a necessary war measure, temperance reformers remained convinced that alcohol itself prolonged the war. Citing slavery as the root of the war, reformer C.S. Nichols exclaimed in 1862 that the “slave rebellion has slain its thousands, but this heaven-denounced and God defying rum rebellion its hundreds of

¹²⁰ W. J. Rorabaugh has pointed out this connection between the slave trade and the rum trade in antebellum temperance literature, see The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 214-215; Robert H. Abzug has noted this as well in Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 81-104.

¹²¹ “Wonderful Workings of Providence: President’s Proclamation: Liberty to the Enslaved,” JATU 25 (October 1862): 152.

¹²² James Brewster of New Haven, October 14, 1862, JATU 25 (November 1862): 165.

thousands!”¹²³ Other reformers agreed, echoing the concerns of pious Americans. “How can God be for us amid all the drunkenness and profanity prevalent among us?” asked the journal’s editor.¹²⁴ Victory and the preservation of the Union required God’s blessing and emancipating the slaves alone was not enough. The liquor trade had to be abolished because saving the Union required saving the souls of the Union’s citizens by sobering them up.

With the slavery question presumably settled, temperance reformers could devote their full energies to the crusade against intoxication, and in doing so they often conflated the spiritual salvation of the Union with the literal preservation of the nation. With the help of the Union army, they were “struggling to save the country in its peril” (June 1863), “fight[ing] for the American Union” (July 1863) and for the “maintenance of the Union” (September 1865).¹²⁵ Anticipating the war’s end in the summer of 1864, John Marsh explained how a reconstructed nation should look. “A nation of drunkards must be a nation of slaves,” he warned, and thus, temperance reformers (and Americans) needed to work toward a national future free of alcohol.¹²⁶ Sobriety would liberate all American citizens.

Conclusion

When the war ended, the temperance movement remained divided, with southern organizations maintaining white supremacy as an explicit component of their ideology and

¹²³ C. S. Nichols, “A Solumn Fact,” JATU 25 (November 1862): 164.

¹²⁴ JATU 25 (November 1862): 168. For scholarship on Americans’ concerns that God would punish them on the battlefield for immoral behavior, see George C. Rable, God’s Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

¹²⁵ JATU 26 (March 1863): 40; “Fifth National Temperance Convention: Second Day Proceedings,” JATU 28 (August 1865): 122. “Address of Hon. S. C. Pomeroy, U.S. Senator from Kansas,” JATU 26 (June 1863): 85; American Temperance Union, “The Sick Soldier, Thoughts of Home: A New Tract for the Army,” JATU 26 (July 1863): 101; “A SHORT AND POINTED TEMPERANCE SPEECH,” (from Zion’s Herald), JATU 28 (September 1865): 144.

¹²⁶ Rev. John Marsh, D.D., “Twenty-Eighth Anniversary,” JATU 27 (June 1864): 84.

membership requirements.¹²⁷ But the American Temperance Union emerged from the war resolute in its conviction that the nation would soon throw off the vice of drunkenness. So hopeful were they, that in May 1865 they marked the end of the war as “one of the great eras in the world’s history, from which is to be dated some of the most important movements toward millennium.” Northerners had shown that they were willing to sacrifice everything in order “to save the nation, to break the yoke of rebellion, and to redeem four millions of human beings from the yoke of servitude.” Yet the struggle was not over because intemperance continued to drag “fifty thousands” of Americans to poverty, crime, and insanity.¹²⁸ Union victory had preserved the nation, but for temperance reformers, the task of saving the country was still incomplete. As Connecticut Governor William Alfred Buckingham put it in September of 1865, “the rebellion has shown us the power of law—let it be exercised on the side of Temperance.”¹²⁹ And, as historian Gaines Foster has pointed out, by the late 1860s, temperance reformers, still riding the momentum and hope embedded in emancipation, had formed a national Prohibition Party because they believed that the federal government had emerged from the war with enough power to rid their nation of rum.¹³⁰ Yet, in 1865, reformers were only cautiously optimistic. Demon rum retained the power to “curse this nation more than slavery ever cursed it” because “intemperance, which is the slavery of the soul, is infinitely worse than chattel slavery.”¹³¹ If

¹²⁷ David M. Fahey, Temperance and Racism: John Bull, Johnny Reb, and the Good Templars (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996).

¹²⁸ “Address to the People of the United States,” JATU 28 (May 1865): 72. The Massachusetts State Temperance Alliance echoed these sentiments. In June 1885, the President W. B. Spooner argued that just as the state “did not then mean to support slavery,” they “do not now mean to support intemperance. Gradually the sophistic and deceptions by which slavery was defended were swept away, and the true nature of the contest was revealed. It will be so in the present contest.” See, “The State Temperance Alliance,” Liberator (Boston, MA), July 7, 1865.

¹²⁹ A SHORT AND POINTED TEMPERANCE SPEECH,” (from Zion’s Herald), JATU 28 (September 1865): 144.

¹³⁰ Gaines M. Foster, Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 27-46.

¹³¹ “A Word to Ministers” (from Zion’s Herald), JATU 28 (September 1865): 135.

liquor were not eradicated quickly, the Union might face future calamities even greater than the ones it had just survived. Temperance reformers had much work to do.

Epilogue
“Let Temperance Men through the Land Wake Up”

On June 5, 1865, Alexander Downing and the soldiers of the 11th Iowa gathered at their camp headquarters near Washington, D.C. as they were being mustered out of service. Their train for Louisville would leave in a few days. But, before they departed, they gathered for a temperance speech. Blank pledges from the Washington Temperance Society circulated “and a good many of the boys signed the blanks after they were filled out.” With fresh promises to remain sober, the soldiers began their journey home.¹ The pledges given to Downing’s comrades were part of a concerted effort by northern reformers to prevent veterans from becoming drunkards when they returned to their homes. Thus began the post-war temperance crusade.

A month before the Confederate surrender at Appomattox, the war's imminent end set reformers to thinking about the future. “Let temperance men through the land wake up,” commanded the Journal of the American Temperance Union. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers who had “learned a wandering life” would be returning to their families shortly. The Union had much work to do. Lamenting that they had been unable, during the war, to smote “the grog-shop nuisance from the land, as we expel[led] slavery, before our armies came home,” reformers vowed not to let veterans head down the road to ruin. Their bodies were wounded, and for so long the men had existed only on “hard-tack and salt beef.” When they came in contact with colorful shops filled with goods and carts of “refreshments” on board trains, the soldiers would be too weak to resist temptation. Reformers determined to “get public sentiment aroused” and

¹ Alexander G. Downing, Downing’s Civil War, Edited by Olynthus B. Clark (Des Moines, IA: Iowa State Department of History and Archives, 1916), 280.

redouble temperance efforts in the camps. Now was the time to begin fighting post-war drunkenness by reminding soldiers about the importance of sobriety before they ever left the ranks.²

The problem, though, as the ATU reiterated, was that many soldiers were not only returning wounded, but they had also been “away from the restraints of friends” for so long that they had undoubtedly “been exposed to the temptations of life in the camp.” These men had “passed through the terrible storm of shot and shell, and hurricanes of flame and smoke.” And while soldiers had “fought and conquered” the rebels, reformers worried that a veteran would “find it difficult to conquer himself.”³ The International Order of Grand Templars noted, too, that both Union and Confederate soldiers had abandoned temperance principles in the army, where camp temptations and surgeons’ prescriptions had left them on “the precipice of ruin.”⁴ Whether civilian reformers fully understood all these problems is unclear, but they were certainly sympathetic to the soldiers’ plight. With calls for a renewed national focus on temperance, they argued that it was the job of the nation to step in and save veterans from strong drink because the trauma of war had seriously weakened their ability to refuse that glass of whiskey. The reformers’ predictions proved correct. Historians have shown that both Union and Confederate veterans found themselves unable to readjust to civilian life. Many were financially unstable, and rocky relationships with their families were often exacerbated by dependence on alcohol. When many aging veterans moved into homes, they continued to drink as they tried to cope with the

² “What is to be the Future of our Soldiers?,” Journal of the American Temperance Union and The New-York Prohibitionist 28 (March 1865): 40.

³ “When Johnny Comes Home,” JATU 28 (May 1865): 77.

⁴⁴ International Order of Grand Templars, Journal of the Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Session of the Right Worthy Grand Lodge of North America held at London, C. W., May 23, 24, 25, 1865 (Chicago, IL: Jameson and Morse, 1865), 392-3.

physical and emotional pain left by the war.⁵ Despite identifying the problem correctly in 1865, temperance reformers never convinced veterans to give up alcohol. Because of this – at least in part – aging soldiers found themselves increasingly marginalized in American society.

But reforming veterans was not the only cause for which temperance reformers were gearing up in 1865. Their hopes for a national prohibition movement in 1860 had been delayed by war, but the American Temperance Union wasted no time mobilizing after the war ended. That slavery had ended boosted their momentum. As abolitionists celebrated, teetotalers believed their triumph would be next. “We shall celebrate our jubilee when the sun of the world’s last long millennial day is higher in the heaven than now...A great revival is to take place in the interests of this cause.” Not only in the New England, but also throughout the western parts of the United States, support for prohibition was spreading – reformers were certain.⁶ The Templars expanded as well, as new lodges sprung up in California, New Mexico, and even Missouri – “where the Order but barely survived the shock of war.”⁷ Even in Virginia, the Friends of Temperance recovered from the war quickly, and it was holding semi-annual meetings in October 1866, though it remained officially severed from northern organizations and specified that membership could be extended to only white men and women.⁸

North and South, lodges formed and reformed. The goals of the post-war temperance movement, according to the Grand Templars of Kentucky, were three-fold: that liquor dealers

⁵ Jeffrey W. McClurken, Take Care of the Living: Reconstructing Confederate Veteran Families in Virginia (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 66, 96, 126; James Marten, Sing Not War: The Lives of Union and Confederate Veterans in Gilded Age America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

⁶ “Twenty-Ninth Anniversary,” JATU 28 (June 1865): 83.

⁷ International Order of Grand Templars, Journal of the Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Session, 7.

⁸ The 1869 proceedings reference meetings as early as 1866. See, Office of the Secretary of the State Council, Proceedings of the Fourth Semi-Annual Session of the State Council of the Friends of Temperance of the State of Virginia, Held at Harrisonburg, Va., April 27, 28, and 29, 1869 (Norfolk, VA: Journal Office, 1869), 9; Constitutions of the Supreme, State, and Subordinate Councils, of the Friends of Temperance, adopted at the First Meeting of the Supreme Council of the Order, held in Petersburg, June 25, 26, 27, and 28, 1867. To which is appended the Rules of Order for the Supreme and State Councils (Petersburg, VA: Index Job rooms, 1868), 14-15.

would “be driven out of society;” that “moderate drinkers will be compelled to quite their cups,” and that “many drunkards” would be “saved from the gaping grave.”⁹ Over the next three decades, myriad regional and national organizations such as the National Temperance Society, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and the National Prohibition Party would gain support in northern, southern, and western states. Prohibition trumped moral suasion as the reforming mechanism of choice after the Civil War, and the movement ultimately garnered enough national support to pass the 18th Amendment, which prohibited the manufacture and selling of alcohol nationally.¹⁰ But the foundation for the post-war movement, in many ways, had been laid during the Civil War. The war had led Americans – northerners and southerners – to experiment more broadly with forms of legal regulation and prohibition, and it paved the way for Americans’ understanding that the state had a responsibility to regulate behavior. At the same time, the American public recognized that individual behavior reflected the state of the nation. By labeling drunken soldiers and liquor traffickers as threats to the war effort, Americans equated sobriety with loyalty. During the war, drinking became un-American, and the state expanded to promote proper behavior, including sobriety. As the newly reunited nation moved forward, this link between sobriety and citizenship would propel the national prohibition movement.¹¹

⁹ Proceedings of the Called Session, held at Skilesville, on the 11th and 12th of April, 1866 (Owensboro, KY: Thos. S. Pettit, Printer, Monitor Office, 1867), 13.

¹⁰ Ruth Bordin, Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900 (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1981); Joe L. Coker, Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement. (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007); Holly Berkley Fletcher, Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century (New York: Routledge, 2008); Bruce E. Stewart, Moonshiners and Prohibitionists: The Battle over Alcohol in Southern Appalachia (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011); Charles D. Thompson, Jr., Spirits of Just Men: Mountaineers, Liquor Bosses, and Lawmen in the Moonshine Capital of the World (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Lee L. Willis, Southern Prohibition: Race, Reform, and Public Life in Middle Florida, 1820-1920 (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011).

¹¹ For scholarship on the Civil War as a catalyst for state-sanctioned reform movements, see Morton Keller, Affairs of State: Public Life in Late Nineteenth Century America (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 122-161; Gaines M. Foster, Moral Reconstruction: Christian Lobbyists and the Federal Legislation of Morality, 1865-1920 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

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