CHAPTER XVII

Recollections of General Forrest — His Personal Appearance and Traits — His Characteristics as a Commander — Never surprised or attacked — Ignorant of Tactics, but Great in Strategy — Instances of his Aggressive Self-Reliance, his Rapidity of Movement, and his Personal Power over his Men — The Fort Pillow Episode

DURING my command of the Department of the Gulf, I was constantly occupied in strengthening the defences of Mobile and in driving out raids which were made into Mississippi and Alabama by Generals Grierson, Straight, Rousseau, Davidson, and Sherman. In each effort of mine to intercept the progress or thwart the intentions of these expeditions, I was ably seconded by General Nathan Bedford Forrest. Indeed, I relied so implicitly upon his skill and judgment that I never hampered him with especial instructions. His natural qualifications as a soldier were phenomenal, and our association together was such that I am able to bear personal testimony to his great ability as a military leader, which deserves full recognition and appreciation at the hands of his people.

Forrest was born in 1821, in one of the counties of Tennessee, upon its southern border. He was the eldest of twelve children, and when his father died he was sixteen years old, and at once assumed the care of his family. He had had but little opportunity for learning, because even elementary schools were rarely found in

that wild country, and he scarcely read before he was a grown man. And even during the war, when he had become the greatest soldier of his time, he dictated all of his correspondence. It lacked nothing in force and clearness, however deficient he was in his syntax, and etymology. His early life was a period of privation and a hard struggle to maintain his mother and his younger brothers. He went early into active life, and from the very outset evinced those extraordinary capacities for business and that wonderful self-assertion which were the marked characteristics of his career. He became a horse-trader and a negro-trader, and made a large fortune in these avocations, while maintaining a character for strict probity and for kind and fair dealing rarely ever found in such callings.

When the war broke out, Forrest was in the prime of his mental and physical powers. Over six feet in stature, of powerful frame, and of great activity and daring, with a personal prowess proved in many fierce encounters, he was a king among the bravest men of his time and country. He was among the first to volunteer when war broke out, and it was a matter of course that he should be the commander of the troopers who flocked to his standard. From the very outset he evinced his extraordinary capacity for war, and in his long career of great achievements no defeat or failure was ever charged to him.

When I first met him, the army of the West had been moved out of the lines about Corinth to offer battle to Halleck's forces, which was declined by that general. Forrest, already famous, had gone alone into one of the abandoned redoubts, whose only garrison was the chaplain of a regiment whom, with his horse, he brought out with him. I observed him with great

interest, and felt the influence of his wonderful self-reliance. He could never brook the dictation of any commander, and he conceived and executed his own plans, moving when and where he saw work was to be done, and reporting only the successful result, which was always surprising to his enemy and to his commander. In all his long and arduous campaigns and scores of battles, he never was surprised or attacked. His successes were achieved with forces much inferior to his enemy. With unfailing daring and circumspection, he would make his tentative attack, or, as he expressed it, "I will give 'em a dare, anyhow." He was a great poker-player and illustrated some of its principles and technicalities upon the battle-field. When he found his enemy too strong for him at the point of attack, he would pull out and find a weak place, where he never failed to make in and win his fight. When once asked how it was he always succeeded in his battles, he replied, "I don't know, but I reckon it's because I always get there first with the most men." Unknowingly, he had announced and illustrated Napoleon's great principle of success in battle. When he found an enemy he could not attack with any hope of success, as was once the case with a strong blockhouse garrisoned with negro troops and commanded by a stout-hearted Dutchman, who firmly declined to surrender and dared him to attack, he temporized and invited a parley. Forrest knew he could not carry the place without heavy loss, and that a large reinforcement was coming on the railroad to the enemy. In twenty minutes he convinced the stout-hearted colonel that he would certainly carry his works, and that if he had to do so he could not restrain his men, who would take no negro prisoners, and the whole garrison was surrendered without firing

a shot. Meantime he had sent a detachment down the road, derailed the train, and took in the reinforcements.

His insubordination was only excused by the wonderful success he constantly won while having his own way. In April, 1863, Bragg's army was up in Tennessee. Van Dorn commanded all of the cavalry, some eight thousand horse. Forrest commanded a brigade, and captured a Federal brigade commanded by General Coborn. Bragg sent orders through Van Dorn to Forrest, to turn over all his captured horses, arms, etc., to the ordnance and quartermaster officers of the army. The property not being forthcoming, the general wrote peremptorily to Van Dorn to call on Forrest to obey the order, and explain his delay in doing so. Van Dorn sent for him to come to his office, and in a tone of authority demanded of him immediate compliance, saying, "Why have you not turned in those captured horses?" Forrest replied defiantly, "Because I haven't got 'em." Van Dorn said, "That statement differs from your written report, sir." Forrest, white with rage, said, "General Van Dorn, the time will come when your rank will not protect you, and you shall account to me for this outrage!" Van Dorn, with his blue eyes blazing, retorted, "General Forrest, my rank shall never protect me from any man who feels aggrieved by me, and I await your pleasure now, sir." Forrest slowly passed his hand over his face; then he said: "General Van Dorn, I think there are Yankees enough for you and me to fight without our fighting each other. I am sorry for what I said, and respectfully ask your pardon." Van Dorn replied: "General Forrest, I am glad to hear you speak so. No man can ever doubt your readiness to fight any man or any thing, but while under my command you must obey my orders, and I

have important orders for you to execute at once." He then ordered him to pursue the raiding party of Colonel Straight, which had just passed down into Alabama.

This was the last interview between these two celebrated men, alike in their wonderful courage and energy, while very unlike in their persons. Forrest, with his powerful frame, high cheek-bones, light gray eyes, and straight black hair, was in physical powers superior to all men. He had probably slain more men in battle with his own hand than any man living. Van Dorn, with his light graceful figure, florid face, light waving hair, and bright blue eyes, seemed formed for love and war. Not over five feet six in stature, he would have encountered Forrest or any other man. I believe they were two of the bravest men living who stood face to face that morning. They never met again. When Forrest returned from his splendid pursuit and capture of Straight's command, Van Dorn had fallen a victim of private vengeance.

When Forrest, with about twelve hundred men, set out in pursuit of Straight, he was more than a day behind him. Straight had several hundred more men in the saddle than Forrest, and, being far in advance, could replace a broken-down horse by a fresh one from the farms through which his route lay, while Forrest, when he lost a horse, lost a soldier too; for no good horses were left for him. After a hot pursuit of five days and nights, during which he had lost two-thirds of his forces from broken-down horses, he overhauled his enemy and brought him to a parley. This conference took place in sight of a cut-off in the mountain road, Captain Morton and his horse artillery, which had been so long with Forrest, passing in sight along the road till they came to the cut-off, into which they would turn,

re-entering the road out of view, so that it seemed that a continuous stream of artillery was passing by. Forrest had so arranged that he stood with his back to the guns, while Straight was facing them.

Forrest, in his characteristic way, described the scene to me. He said: "I seen him all the time we was talking looking over my shoulder and counting the guns. Presently he said, 'Name of God! How many guns have you got? There's fifteen I've counted already!' Turning my head that way, I said, 'I reckon that's all that has kept up.' Then he said, 'I won't surrender till you tell me how many men you've got.' I said, 'I've got enough to whip you out of your boots.' To which he said, 'I won't surrender.' I turned to my bugler and said, 'Sound to mount!' Then he cried out, 'I'll surrender!' I told him, 'Stack your arms right along there, Colonel, and march your men away down into that hollow.'

"When this was done," continued Forrest, "I ordered my men to come forward and take possession of the arms. When Straight saw they were barely four hundred, he did rare! demanded to have his arms back and that we should fight it out. I just laughed at him and patted him on the shoulder, and said, 'Ah, Colonel, all is fair in love and war, you know.' "

Forrest learned after the surrender that Straight had sent off a detachment to destroy our stores and works in Rome, Georgia, not very distant from where they were, and immediately caused Straight to send a staff-officer to recall that detachment, Forrest sending one of his staff along with him. The recall was in good time, and Rome was saved.

Hard riding had reduced Forrest's force to four hundred mounted men. Straight had lost a number in the

collisions which had occurred during the pursuit. I believe thirteen hundred was the number of prisoners which I forwarded with their gallant colonel to Richmond. He was a very daring and able soldier, and soon made his way out of prison and escaped with a large part of his command.

When Forrest, in fierce pursuit of Straight, had come near to the bridge over the Estananla, a little girl of fourteen or fifteen summers appeared in the road before him and signed to him to halt. She said, "The Yankees have halted at the bridge, and will fire upon you if you go within sight."

"Is there not a ford above here," asked Forrest, "where we can cross?"

"Oh, yes! A little more than a mile above is a good ford."

"Well, can't you guide me to it?"

"Yes, indeed," she said. "Take me up behind you. I know the way very well, and will show it to you."

So she got upon a stump, and sprang up behind him, and pointed out the route he must take. And so they pushed on together, that fierce warrior, gentle always with women, and the bright little girl, excited and glowing with pride in her noble action and in being of such important service to the most famous of all of the brave men of that stirring time.

After going nearly a mile she said, "Now you had better stop here. For after you pass that timber, they can see you from the ford; for by this time they may have sent some soldiers up there, and they will shoot at you if you pass that point."

So Forrest dismounted, and, accompanied by several of the officers at the head of the column, advanced to the timber, and was peering around it, when the enemy

at the ford opened fire upon them. He was amazed and alarmed when the little girl darted past him, and, spreading out her little frock, cried, "Get behind *me!* Get behind *me!*" He snatched her up, drew her back to a place of safety, tenderly and laughingly too, mounted and charged the enemy, clearing the way for his column in a few minutes. The little girl was named Emma Sanson. The Legislature of Alabama gave her six hundred and forty acres of good land, and she has now been married many years to a worthy man, and is the mother, we hope, of many sons worthy of such a mother.

When retreating, Forrest would often ride back some distance in the rear of his command, in order that he might reconnoitre the enemy for himself, and form his own estimates of his progress, etc. On one of these occasions, while crossing upper Georgia, he was galloping in haste to overtake his men, when an old woman came out of a house, and, waving her sunbonnet at him, called out, "Stop, you miserable coward! Stop and fight!" adding, as he hurried past, "If Forrest was here, he'd soon stop you!"

In 1863, General Sturgis moved out from Memphis to occupy the prairie country of Mississippi, that large fertile region upon the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, where the great cotton and corn fields lay as yet untracked by the hoofs of the invader. Forrest fell upon him on the Tishomingo Creek, with less than twenty-five hundred horse. The army of Sturgis is estimated at about fourteen thousand men of all arms, and was completely equipped. His negro troops were in front. Upon these the Confederates made a deadly charge, which completely routed them. The survivors fell back in confusion upon the advancing artillery, which was thrown into disorder, and the whole command broke up

in utter panic and fled back to Memphis. Sturgis lost all of his artillery, three batteries, his wagon train, and a great number of killed and wounded. He reached Memphis without any command, and ever after held Forrest in profound respect, and when he would hear of an expedition going out to capture him would remind the commander that he once did that.

General Tecumseh Sherman, when in command of the District of Mississippi, fitted out a formidable expedition for the capture of Mobile. He moved out from Vicksburg with twenty-two thousand infantry and artillery. General Sooy Smith left Memphis with seven or eight thousand cavalry, intending to join Sherman at Enterprise, on the Mobile and Ohio Railroad, and thence the combined forces would move to capture Mobile. General Smith's cavalry was considered invincible by all the Confederate forces. Forrest had about two thousand men not far from West Point. He fell upon Smith near Okolona in the open prairie, put his command to utter rout, and, like Sturgis, General Smith reached Memphis without his command. On this memorable field Colonel Forrest, brother to the general, fell, bravely leading his men. When General Forrest saw this, he sprang from his horse, caught his dead brother in his arms, kissed him tenderly, and with streaming eyes led his redoubtable bodyguard in a charge, broke the enemy, and commenced his rout. Sherman, on hearing of the destruction of Smith's column, retreated in haste to Vicksburg, pursued by the Confederates, under Stephen D. Lee, who had recently defeated Sherman in the battle of Chickasaw Bluff.

Forrest understood well how to patch the lion's with the fox's skin, and to supplement force with stratagem. In the winter of 1864, I was commanding the department of Alabama and Mississippi. Forrest, with about forty-five hundred horse, was in north Mississippi, and I charged him with the defence of north Mississippi and west Tennessee, and, knowing his peculiar sensitiveness when under control, I wrote to him to this effect: "In placing you in the command of this district, I wish you to feel sure I shall not interfere with your exercise of it. I will be responsible if anything miscarries, and you shall have full credit for all the successes I am sure you will accomplish. I cannot spare you a single soldier, but will promptly respond to your demands for supplies of every sort." This gave Forrest great satisfaction. It was the first time he had been so unhampered by any of his commanders, and he ever after regarded me with gratitude for the confidence thus reposed in him, and with respect for my intelligence in showing that I realized he understood his business better than I did.

About this time a heavy corps was sent out from Memphis to occupy the State of Mississippi, under the command of General A. J. Smith. The rains and the roads were very heavy, and Smith's army could move but slowly. Forrest kept a large force close in his front, while he, with two thousand men, remained quietly about West Point, getting his horses in good order upon the fine forage there.

Farragut was bombarding Fort Powell, with the intention, as I anticipated, of getting an army and fleet into Mobile Bay. Forrest telegraphed me in cipher to this effect: "The enemy has twenty-seven thousand men; has more cavalry than my whole force; I cannot check him, but with your permission will pass behind him into Memphis and destroy his stores, and thus compel him to retreat." I replied: "Go, but come

back quick. You are all I depend upon for the safety of north Mississippi."

It was more than a week before he moved. He then made a rapid march across to Oxford, and with his whole force drove back the enemy's advance, and at 4 P.M. Friday, dashed off to Memphis with two thousand horse and four guns. Saturday I first knew of his movements from the telegraph operator at Senatobia in about these words: "General Forrest just passed here at a gallop, bound for Memphis." At dawn, Sunday, came this: "Heavy cannon-firing about Memphis." He had marched ninety-four miles in thirty-six hours. Three rivers were out of their banks. He tore down houses and fences near by and bridged them and crossed his guns safely over. At crack of day, Sunday, he dashed into Memphis, and occupied the city. The commanding general fled in his night clothes from his bed, leaving his uniform, sword, etc., to the Confederates. The garrison of infantry threw themselves into the Irving Block, a strong building, from which they could not be dislodged without loss of many men. Forrest's object was fully accomplished by destroying stores and by spreading panic throughout the city, which was soon communicated by telegrams and couriers to the whole department and army of General A. J. Smith, who, on hearing that Forrest had occupied Memphis, threw up his hands, crying, "We are gone up!" and at once retreated out of Mississippi. Forrest drew his men out of the place, and by 4 P.M. was ready to go back to his own country.

In telling me of this, he said that a fine-looking staff-officer came to him, requesting the restoration of his general's uniform, with the assurance that its return would be acknowledged by a present of a bolt of the finest gray cloth to be found in Memphis. The major,

whom Forrest described as a very "sassy fellow," said, "General W. desired me to say he will catch you before you get back." "You may tell the general from me," rejoined Forrest, "that I am going back by the same road I came by, and if we meet, I promise to whip him out of his boots." — "When I told him that," continued Forrest, "I allowed he would not believe me, and would send all of his forces to intercept me on the other road; but after the major had gone off with this message, I began to think he might believe me and attack me on my same homeward road, and I got scared, and ran back as fast as I came." The Federal general did as Forrest hoped he would, disbelieved him, and made all of his arrangements to catch him where he wasn't. Thus again he had saved the State of Mississippi, and this time by his finesse and energy alone.

When I wrote him my acknowledgment of this great service, I told him he should come down to Mobile and take a few days' rest, and asked him to send me one of his brigades; for I thought that the enemy on hearing, as he surely would, that Forrest and his command were in Mobile, would delay the attack then under consideration. My wife wished to entertain him, and gave him a dinner, inviting some lady friends who were desirous of meeting this great hero. His natural deference to the sex gave them all much pleasure. He was always very courteous to women, and in their presence was very bright and entertaining. He had for women that manly courtesy and respect that marks the truly brave man. Under all circumstances he was their defender and protector from every sort of wrong. His wife was a gentle lady, to whom he was careful in his deference.

The enjoyment of our dinner was enhanced by young Colonel Aleck Chalmers, one of Forrest's regimental

commanders. He was a handsome young fellow, as gallant as he looked, and full of humor. He described for our great amusement the descent of his command upon the Gayoso House at Memphis. At dawn of the morning, they rode right into the great hall of the office, dismounted there, and clattered up the broad stairway to the corridors above, where they found the first-class boarders, officers and their families. He said: "We went along the hall knocking at the doors with our sabres or pistol-butts. The doors would fly open and the occupants of the beds come forth accoutred as they were. Sometimes it would be a man, sometimes a woman, sometimes both, all in appropriate costume. One beautiful young lady sprang from her bed, threw her arms around my neck, and begged 'For God's sake, sir, don't kill me!' 'Not for worlds, madam,' said I, returning tenderly her embrace." Which he illustrated with the proper gestures. He was a fine young fellow, and survived the war, to die after of the swamp fever of the country.

General Frank Armstrong was much with Forrest, and was an able cavalry commander — one of the very ablest in the Confederate service. He says Forrest was never disconcerted by any event in battle. On one occasion Forrest, with Armstrong's and Starnes' brigades, was operating in Tennessee against Gordon Granger's command. Armstrong was in front, with his skirmishers pressing Granger's skirmish line, when two couriers came galloping from the rear, yelling at the tops of their voices, "General Forrest! General Stanley has cut in behind you, has attacked Starnes' brigade, has captured the rear-guard battery, and is right in Armstrong's rear!" Forrest immediately shouted so that all could hear him, "You say he is in

Armstrong's rear, do you? Damn him! That's just where I have been trying to get him all day, and I'll be in his rear directly. Face your line of battle about! Armstrong, push your skirmishers forward — crowd 'em both ways! I'm going to Starnes. You'll hear from me in about five minutes!"

Off he dashed with his bodyguard, and in a few minutes loud cheering was heard. He recaptured the battery, recovered all of the prisoners lost by Starnes, and captured a large number of the enemy, driving his forces back. To this day Armstrong's men believe Forrest had laid a trap for the Federals, into which they fell; whereas Forrest was as near frightened as he could be in battle, and Armstrong believed "they were all gone up."

Forrest knew nothing about tactics — could not drill a company. When first ordered to have his brigade ready for review, he was quite ignorant, but Armstrong told him what commands to give, and what to do with himself. He had an excellent memory, — remembered everything exactly, — and was so pleased with his success that he often afterwards had reviews.

I once asked him about the charge so often preferred against him of the murder of his prisoners at Fort Pillow. He said the negroes brought it all upon themselves; that after the white flag had been raised, and while it was flying, they continued to shoot his men, who, much infuriated, shot the negroes; that he stopped it as soon as he could, but not before many had been shot. It created a great terror of him ever after among the negro troops. He knew this and, as in the case of the Dutch colonel, he used it as a caution against resistance, and an incentive to prompt surrender when dealing with the commanders of negro troops.

Sometimes, on the eve of a battle, convalescents and

released prisoners would join him and he would say, "I have no arms for you yet, but fall in here behind, and you shall have plenty of good Yankee arms presently." He told me he had twenty-eight horses shot under him. He was shot only three times, which is quite remarkable when we remember how many battles he fought, and how continually he exposed himself.

In his last fight at Selma, he was in the telegraph office with General Dan Adams, when a little boy came running in and said, "The Yankees are coming!" They ran to their horses, which were tied to the fence. The enemy, led by a big yellow-haired Dutchman, were close upon them. Forrest said: "Dan Adams was on a smart horse and got off. The big Dutchman closed upon me, and had a smarter horse than mine, and he kept cutting me over the head and arms with his sword, which wasn't sharp, but it made me mighty mad, and I kept dodging it, for my pistol got hitched, and I could not get it out till he had hit me several times. When I did draw it, I dropped my reins, caught him by his long hair, and fired two loads right into him!"

One evening we were sitting together in the veranda of my headquarters at Meridian, when his bodyguard came by on their way to water. I said, "General, that is a fine troop of men and horses." "Yes, it is; and that captain is the eighth captain who has commanded it. The other seven have all been killed in battle!" Such was the influence of his success and fame, that there were always daring applicants for vacancies in Forrest's bodyguard.

CHAPTER XVIII

Forrest's Criticism of the Battle of Chickamauga — He retires to his Plantation after the War, broken in Health, Fortune, and Spirit — Pronounced the Greatest Soldier of this Generation — Anecdotes of General Dick Taylor — His Ability as a Soldier and his Wit as a Talker — His Opinion of West Point

GENERAL FORREST continually grew in capacity, and of all his great illustrations of his power in war he was never greater than when he covered the retreat of Hood's army, after Schofield had so terribly repulsed it at Franklin, and, with Thomas, had routed it at Nashville a few days later, and now hung upon its rear and pressed it to the very brink of the Tennessee River. Hood, in his sore calamity, gave charge of his rear guard to Forrest and General Walthall. Forrest had about two thousand horse, and Walthall, in command of the infantry, was allowed to select eight brigades, numbering only two hundred rifles each! Walthall told them of the severe work before them, and personally inspected each brigade, calling upon any man who desired to fall out to do so. Not a man of those sixteen hundred Confederate veterans responded. They were all volunteers for that desperate service. Forrest was in chief command, and would have chosen Walthall from all that army for his second.

Forrest will always stand as the great exponent of the power of the mounted riflemen to fight with the revolver

when mounted, and with the rifle on foot. His troops were not dragoons "who fought indifferently on foot or horseback," nor were they cavalry who fought only mounted and with sabres. Few of his command ever bore sabres, save some of his officers, who wore them as a badge of rank. None of Forrest's men could use the sabre. He himself had no knowledge of its use, but he would encounter half-a-dozen expert *sabreurs* with his revolver.

In the great battle of Chickamauga, Forrest's division fought upon the right of Bragg's line. They were all dismounted, and did not see their horses for three days. After the retreat of Rosecrans, Forrest pursued up to within cannon-shot of Chattanooga. He sent repeated messages to Bragg, urging him to press on the flying and disordered army of Rosecrans, and occupy Chattanooga. Had this been done, there would have been no foundation for the claim that Chickamauga was a great Federal victory. It was the hardest stand-up fight ever made by the Confederate and Federal armies of the West. For two days the battle raged. At the close of the second day, the Federal army was driven from the field in rout. Thomas alone held his division in hand; the rest in confusion ran towards Chattanooga. Bragg's whole force numbered forty-six thousand men. When the battle ended, eighteen thousand of them lay killed and wounded. No army of modern war in the Old World or the New ever suffered such a loss and won the field. The enemy's losses were very great, including five thousand prisoners. His own reports show that he began and fought the battle with forces superior to Bragg's. The reason given by the latter for not following up a victory so signal was, in Forrest's opinion, not justified by the facts of the condition of the two armies

when the battle ended by the retreat from the field of the Federal army. And no one was more competent to judge of the condition of the two armies at that time than Forrest. That it was a great opportunity lost by Bragg, a great victory unimproved, has been generally admitted. That it was a defeat of the Confederate forces or a great Federal victory, history can never record.

On the 13th of May, 1865, Forrest's command was paroled. His farewell address to his men was full of common-sense, and he himself set an example of entire acquiescence in the new order of things. Many of his negro slaves were employed as teamsters, etc., for his own command. The Federal authorities did not interfere with his plans, and he took these, now free, with teams sufficient, and moved at once to his plantations in Mississippi, where he went steadily to work. The negroes were fond of him, and worked for him as for nobody else. Some time after the war a turbulent negro came to his house threatening him. Forrest killed him before he could execute his purpose. I heard of no more trouble upon his plantation.

I was in Mobile when Admiral Semmes was arrested, and happened to return to my home in New Orleans upon the steamer with him. As I stepped upon the gang-plank, Semmes, in charge of an officer and guard-of-marines, had just passed on board. He said to me, in a loud voice: "You see, General, they have me in arrest. They are going now to disregard the paroles of all of us." The marine officer in charge was a considerate and gentlemanly man, and said to him: "Admiral, this is a most unpleasant duty for me to have to perform. I wish to discharge it with as little annoyance to you as possible, and hope you will feel free to converse and

move about the boat at your pleasure. You shall be subject to no unnecessary surveillance." So the admiral and I occupied a sofa in the saloon, where we sat conversing till a late hour. He wore his characteristic manner of brave composure, while he felt the gravity of his condition. His only apprehension seemed to be of mob violence in New York, when his presence there should be known. He was taken next day to the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans, where he was detained several days. His friends were allowed free interviews with him. General Dick Taylor, Senator Semmes, Duncan Kenner, and other eminent friends were in earnest conversation with him; for the occasion seemed very grave, not only for Semmes, but for all others who had been prominent on the Southern side in the war between the States. He agreed with me in believing that Forrest would be the next Confederate arrested. The Federal organs already were indicating him as the most proper object of Federal vengeance.

So next day I went to Memphis and sought Forrest at once, to tell him about all this and urge him to leave the country. He was down at his plantation at work. I could not see him, and sought Colonel Sam Tate, his partner and chief friend (he was president of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad), who showed a deep interest in my story, and said: "Do you sit down at my desk and write to Forrest what you have told me. I will prepare letters of credit for him. He must not delay his escape. By the time your letter is ready, I'll have a trusty messenger to bear it."

Accordingly a fine young fellow, a captain of Forrest's corps, presented himself and took charge of our dispatches. I left Memphis before I could learn the result, and did not know of Forrest's action for some

weeks. His reply to our letters was: "This is my country. I am hard at work upon my plantation, and carefully observing the obligations of my parole. If the Federal government does not regard it, they'll be sorry. I shan't go away." Some weeks after, having occasion to visit Memphis, he called upon the Federal commander and spoke to this effect: "General, I have called to know what you are going to do about my case. I understand you have arrested Semmes, and are probably going to arrest me." He then repeated the reply he had made to Tate and me. The general assured him there was no purpose to trouble him. Tate and other acquaintances of President Johnson's had no doubt procured from him assurances that Forrest would not be disturbed. He continued for several years to work with his accustomed energy. Finally, in undertaking to make a railroad from Memphis to Selma, he failed.

My last interview with him was in his office in Memphis. He looked much aged and broken, and said to me sadly: "General, I am completely broke up. I am broke in fortune, broke in health, and broke in spirit." But when, a day or two after, some of the men who had "broke" him called to see him and didn't talk to suit him, he spun round upon his revolving seat and gave them a piece of his mind worthy of his most unbroken days.

General John T. Morgan, the able senator from Alabama, was his close friend, and undertook his claim against the railroad company. Being in Nashville, Forrest wrote him to come and see him at the Maxwell House, where he was ill in bed. I shall give Morgan's account of that last and most touching interview with the greatest soldier of this generation. Morgan had put Forrest's case in such shape that it was only neces-

sary to have his signature to certain papers to insure the payment of the large sum involved in the suit. He found Forrest in bed, ill and much broken. He said: "I am a dying man. For more than a year I have been a converted man. I have joined the Presbyterian Church. It was the church of my dear old mother. She was the best woman I ever knew. I hope it has made a better man of me. I have led a life of strife and violence. I now want to die at peace with all men. My son is a fine young fellow; he will do well. I do not want to hamper him at the outset of his young life with litigation. I have sent for you to tell you to drop all further proceedings in that case. I will not sign the papers."

This is the last record we have of this great soldier. He was born a soldier, as men are born poets, and his whole warfare was Napoleonic. It has been sometimes said that if he had been educated as a soldier, he would have been the greatest general the war produced, as he fought more battles than any commander of his day, always attacked the enemy upon his vulnerable point, and was never attacked. He always defeated, routed, or captured his enemy, and he continually grew in power to the last, and was ever greater than his opportunities. I do not believe that four years' confinement under military surveillance at West Point would have made him a greater soldier than he was.

Another man whom I knew well was General Dick Taylor. About 1856, we travelled together with our families. Taylor had become a very successful sugar planter, had married a lovely Creole lady, Miss Bringier, of a distinguished Louisiana family. I had married Miss Mason of Virginia, and we were all travelling together on the Mississippi in the fine steamer *Empress*.

We were about a week upon the journey, and a more pleasant one I cannot recall. He was the life of the company. After this he took an active part in the politics of the South. He was never an aspirant for office, but was a power in his personal character. In the Charleston Convention, Taylor was very able and influential, and on the outbreak of the war he went at once to the field in command of a Louisiana regiment. His very interesting and trenchant book, "Destruction and Reconstruction," published only a few days before his death, is one of the most interesting and brilliant of all the works about the war, and leaves but little to be said as to the ability and wit of the author.

During my association with him during the war and after it, I had many opportunities of enjoying his charming conversation and pungent wit. Once a very bright and gay lady asked him if he thought a certain very steady general was a proper commander of an important post on the eve of an attack. Taylor replied: "He is the very best I could entrust that command to. What can you urge against him?" "Oh, he is so attentive to his wife, I don't see how he can conduct his official business properly." "Madam," said Taylor, "I can well understand how a man can be attentive to his own wife and his business at the same time, but I'll be d—d if a man can be attentive to another's man's wife and mind his own business." This struck home, for she was one of the other men's wives, as Taylor well knew.

After the little army of Mobile reached Meridian, it aggregated about forty-five hundred veteran infantry and twenty field-pieces. I organized it at once into a division of three brigades, and prepared to march eastward and join Johnston, then in North Carolina, opposing Sherman. But soon tidings came of his

capitulation and then of the capture of Mr. Davis, and General Dick Taylor proceeded to make the best terms possible with General Canby. They were very liberal and kindly on Canby's part, who gave free transportation over the railroads to the Confederates of all of our armies who were making their weary way back to their unhappy people. A prominent official of one of those railroads received permission from Taylor to pass into Mobile on the business of his company. That city was then occupied by Canby's big victorious army, and, feeling himself no longer in danger of Taylor, the rascal telegraphed to his agent at Meridian to "give no more of those passes to Confederate prisoners of war." On hearing this, Taylor telegraphed Canby, "Please send that railroad official up here under guard to me." What was the horror of the man when a corporal and file of soldiers took him from his home and bore him up to Taylor, into whose presence he came with well-grounded fear, for report said the general had shot men for less crimes than that. Taylor administered in his fluent style such a tongue-lashing as only he could utter, and concluded by saying: "You have often heard how an honest man feels when he falls among rogues. Hereafter you will be able to tell how a rogue feels when he falls among honest men; for General Canby and I will teach you a lesson that will last you the rest of your miserable life! If I were to serve you right, sir, I would turn you over to those soldiers whom you have attempted to wrong, and they would hang you as high as Haman upon one of these tall pines. Go, and at once countermand your orders!"

After the war Taylor went to Washington to see President Johnson regarding his policy towards the Southern people, and especially toward the Confederate

President, who was his brother-in-law, and to whom he was tenderly attached. He gives in his "Destruction and Reconstruction" a characteristic account of his interviews with Thaddeus Stevens and other extreme Republicans then prominent in Washington.

About 1875, Taylor went to England, where for some time he was the guest of the Prince of Wales at Sandringham, and was received with proper courtesies in the circle of the prince's friends. He never forgot that he was the son of a President of the United States, and a general of the Southern Confederacy, and he was so esteemed. He went with the prince to the Fishmongers' Annual Banquet. When some of the company aspersed Virginia for her failure to meet her obligations under the bonds held by the English, Taylor, a Virginian by descent and affection, in his terse and manful way defended her so well that he was invited to meet the holders of ten millions of Virginia's bonds in conference. They made a very liberal proposition in view of the revelation of Virginia's poverty, and authorized Taylor to bear their offer to the government of the State. This he did, but it was received with a coldness that argued no intention on the part of the Legislature of Virginia to pay what they had borrowed from the British bankers.

About 1870, Commodore M. F. Maury, feeling his threescore and ten drawing near, made a tour of visits to his kindred in the South. He came to see me in New Orleans, and as soon as it was known that he was there, many attentions were shown him. There was then living in New Orleans a very wealthy and kindly Southern gentleman, who had conceived the hopeless idea of reconciling the opponents in the war about his dinner-table, and whenever he gave a dinner he would

invite as many Confederate gentlemen as Federal. He called to see Commodore Maury, and asked him to meet some friends at his house at a dinner. At that time, party spirit ran very high in New Orleans. The vials of wrath of the dominant Federal party were poured upon the unhappy people. A man named Flanders had been elected, by bayonet rule and a rascally ring, mayor of the city, and a Judge Durell was the Jeffreys of the Federal courts. When we sat down to the table, we found Durell on one side of our host, next to him Commodore Maury, then came General John B. Gordon, and then the writer. Upon the other side of the table were Mayor Flanders, Judge Wood, Dick Taylor, and William Hunt. But for Taylor, it would have been a sad and solemn feast; but from the first he amused the company, otherwise silent and constrained, by his witty chaffing of "his friend, Mayor Flanders." Presently Flanders said to Commodore Maury, "Commodore, to what extent, in your opinion, do the developments of modern science corroborate the revelations of Divine Writ?" The commodore was an experienced diner-out and a master of the power of language and of thought, and went on in his peculiar and eloquent way to expound the extent of the corroboration, until he felt that he had occupied the attention of the dinner-table long enough upon such a subject. Taylor saw it, and I observed his dark eyes sparkling, as he broke in, "And, Commodore, if you will excuse me for interrupting, you remember how Job cried out in his agony, 'Oh, that I had mine enemy by a ring'? Well, none of us ever knew what Job meant, until the developments of modern political science have taught us the power of a ring. Everybody now understands that my friend the mayor here holds this great city by a ring." This relieved

the commodore and the company, and old Flanders, throwing back his head and opening wide his great mouth, laughed with the rest. As we gathered about the buffet for a chasse of brandy, the commodore said, "Taylor, when did you and the mayor become such friends?" "I never saw him until to-night," was the reply. It was hard upon our good old host, but it may have been a lesson to him on "reconstruction dinners," as his were wont to be called.

Knowing my opinion of West Point, Taylor, one evening in New Orleans, delivered himself of his views on the education of officers for the United States Army as follows: "Take a boy of sixteen from his mother's apron-strings, shut him up under constant surveillance for four years at West Point, send him out to a two-company post upon the frontier where he does little but play seven-up and drink whiskey at the sutler's, and by the time he is forty-five years old he will furnish the most complete illustration of suppressed mental development of which human nature is capable, and many such specimens were made generals on both sides when the war began."

He once told me of a kindly old English duchess who was enthusiastic in her expressions of admiration for Mr. James M. Mason. She said: "Mr. Mason was a dear old man. I did love Mr. Mason! You may know how I loved him when I tell you that I even tolerated his eating his tobacco; and when he was coming to B—— Castle, I sent and got a lot of spit-pots, so that he could eat his tobacco all over the house."

Taylor's last illness was in the home of General Barlow, his warm personal friend, who had married one of the charming daughters of Mr. Peter Townsend, of New York. He was taken ill there soon after the publica-

tion of his book, and was nursed by his devoted sister, Mrs. Dandridge, of Winchester, one of the most intellectual and attractive women who ever presided over the elegant hospitality of the President's house. In her were blended the best traits of the gentlewoman of Virginia and Louisiana.

CHAPTER XIX

Last Day of Service for the Confederacy — Beginning the Journey Home — Hospitalities on the Way — Condition of the South after the War — Arrival at Richmond — General Lee's Opinion of the Oath of Allegiance — His Manner of administering a Rebuke — Other Aspects of his Character illustrated — Death of Mr. Mason

TO resume my narrative, the final day of our service for the Confederacy was one of the deepest gloom to us. The little army of Mobile had held steadfastly together with the dignity of men who had risked all from a high motive, and we stood by each other to the last. My own deep sadness was cheered by the sympathy of the noble men who had been my comrades. Gibson's Louisiana brigade had been especially active and enduring in the defence of Spanish Fort; Ector's Texans, the Alabamians, and North Carolinians, and Massenbury's Georgians made up that steadfast little garrison. They were all around me now, and the Louisiana band, the only one left in the army, came to my encampment that evening and gave me their farewell serenade. The officers of the Louisiana regiments which had served with me longest came to my tent in a body and bade me an affectionate good by. The Federal major who relieved my quartermaster of his public property declined to receive my headquarters ambulance and team, and graciously urged that I should keep it for myself. This I declined to do; but when I