

Stanley vs. Schofield

A plot against Thomas or an astounding series of coincidences
by Bob Redman, 25 July 03

All Official Records citations refer to the running serial number and the page number.

At the end of August south of Atlanta, immediately prior to the battle of Jonesborough, Sherman set up a confrontation between David S. Stanley and John Schofield. Both began the war in Missouri under Halleck and both were at Wilson's Creek. Schofield was, however, a staff officer, and Stanley was in the cavalry. He came to the Army of the Cumberland with Rosecrans, and his performance in battle was unblemished during the war.

Wilbur Thomas (*General George H. Thomas - The Indomitable Warrior*) writes on page 588 of an "unholy alliance" between Grant and Schofield which was formed during the weeks before the battle of Nashville with the purpose of bringing down Thomas. A study of the record demonstrates that the alliance was formed earlier, and that the two generals weren't alone.

According to McKinney (p. 356) "Schofield was a junior major general who had been pushed up to the command of a department and held there by political pressure." This was known and resented in the Army of the Cumberland. Sherman had already used this resentment to get rid of "stiff-necked" and outspoken Palmer, one of the few non-graduates of West Point to achieve the rank of major general in the Union army, by ordering Palmer to report to Schofield, knowing that Palmer would refuse, thus forcing him to resign. Now, as the struggle for Atlanta was approaching its end, it was Stanley's turn to be cycled through Schofield's mill. Sherman could have chosen another of Thomas' commanders to link up with Schofield at Rough and Ready, but he picked Stanley, a major general whose date of commission was prior to that of Schofield. Sherman even admitted that he knew in advance that Stanley would pull rank. Then he decided "in favor" of Stanley while inviting Schofield to contest the decision. Good boy that he was, Schofield behaved and then wrote his protest full of legalisms and obfuscations, and Halleck, a month later when the specific occasion and pretext had passed, duly set aside Sherman's decision. Halleck's communication to this effect is dated 4 Oct. 1864, the day after Thomas had arrived in Nashville to begin creating a new army. He would need help, and the choice of units to reinforce him would be, or perhaps already had been, carefully thought out.

It is useful to know that Schofield had originally been proposed for Grant's command by Halleck:

<ar56_529>

WASHINGTON, D.C., December 29, 1863--12 m.

Major-General GRANT, Nashville, Tenn.:

Major-General Foster [in Knoxville] has asked to be relieved from his command, on account of disability from old wounds. If his request should be granted, who would you like as his successor. It is possible that General Schofield will be sent to your command.(*)

H. W. HALLECK, General-in-Chief.

*See Grant to Halleck, January 18, 1864, pg. 571 [This document is not or no longer present in the O.R.]

Grant was willing, but had some questions:

<ar58_879>

NASHVILLE, TENN., January 13, 1864-11 a.m. (Received 1.40 p.m.)

Maj. Gen. H. W. HALLECK, General-in-Chief:

If General Foster is relieved General McPherson or General Schofield would suit me to fill his place, but both are ranked by generals already in the Department of the Ohio. I would recommend, therefore, the appointment of General W. F. Smith to major-general, and rank dated back to his first appointment, and he be given the command. If it is in contemplation to give General Smith a higher command, either of the officers named or General Parke will suit me.
U. S. GRANT, Major-General, Commanding.

Halleck responded, however without directly addressing Grant's reservations, such as they were:

<ar58_80>

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY, Washington, D.C., January 13, 1864.

Maj. Gen. U. S. GRANT, Chattanooga, Tenn.:

I have just received your telegram, recommending the appointment of Brig. Gen. W. F. Smith to a major-generalcy. Your former recommendation was submitted to the Secretary of War, and I think the appointment will be made as soon as there is a vacancy. Not only is there no vacancy now, but by some error more than the number authorized by law were made last summer, and some major-generals now in service must be dropped. Their names cannot be sent to the Senate.

I hope it may not be necessary to relieve General Foster, as he is a good officer and a live man. There are some doubts about General Schofield's confirmation. If ordered to your command I think you will find him an able officer for any position. No change of commands will probably be made till the Senate acts upon his case.

Yours, truly, H. W. HALLECK, General-in-Chief.

Halleck needn't have worried, if indeed there was anything to worry about, because at this same time, Sherman through his brother, the senator John Sherman, was lobbying Congress in order have Schofield confirmed in this command (McKinney, pg. 497, note 7). It seems that a whole bunch of people really wanted Schofield to join the drive to Atlanta. On 22 Jan. 1864 Schofield's appointment was in fact confirmed by the War Department, and Grant announced his approval in the following communication:

<ar58_229>

SAINT LOUIS, MO., January 27, 1864. (Received 6.30 p.m.)

Major-General HALLECK, General-in-Chief:

Understanding that General Schofield is ordered to report to me, I would request that he be assigned to the command of the Department of the Ohio and General Stoneman to command of Twenty-third Army Corps. No objection to General Foster, but I fear that if he does not attend soon to his wounded leg it will be too late, and he is now entirely unfit for field duty.

U. S. GRANT, Major-General.

And Schofield assumed command in Knoxville:

<ar58_356>

KNOXVILLE, February 9, 1864.

Major-General GRANT:

I arrived here and assumed command this morning. I will report the condition of affairs as soon as possible.

J. M. SCHOFIELD, Major-General.

Every major author who deals with the subject of Schofield's behavior before the battle of Nashville bases his analysis on Sherman's assertion that he offered Schofield the choice of going to Nashville or participating in the march to the sea, whereupon Schofield chose Nashville. Thus Schofield is supposedly the bad guy who initiated the conspiracy against Thomas which just happened to play into Grant's hand. However, Sherman is one of the least credible witnesses about events concerning him in the Civil War, so his version can be discounted. This leaves us a more compelling explanation, namely that Schofield and Sherman were simply doing what they were told to do, and that Grant and/or Halleck were doing the telling. That not only Grant stuck in his oar with his dispatch of 7 Nov., but also Halleck on 8 Nov., indicates that Schofield's precise command position under Thomas was of overriding interest to them both. It is therefore an inviting assumption that the "unholy alliance" of Grant and Schofield included Halleck, as well as junior partners Sherman and

Sheridan. If this was the case, that would explain a lot of other mysteries of the Civil War, but that is [another story](#).

Just before the battle of Jonesborough, Sherman set the scene for a test case to establish Schofield's position in the hierarchy:

<ar76_721>

In the Field, August 31, 1864.

General THOMAS: I send you for perusal Howard's letter of 3 a.m. He did not get the road, though I doubt not he is too close for the comfort of the enemy. We must not fail in this. Order one of Davis' divisions down at once to Renfro's and move all of your trains well to your right, so that you can rapidly fling your whole command over to Jonesborough. Then let Davis send out from his front, obliquely to the right front, a strong skirmish line with supports, as though to reach the railroad three or four miles above Jonesborough. **Have Stanley do the same toward, but below, Rough and Ready.** Impress on these commanders that it is not so necessary to have united lines, but rather columns of attack. We are not on the defensive, but offensive, and must risk everything rather than dilly-dally about. We must confuse the enemy. **As soon as Schofield comes up I will put him against Rough and Ready till he meets formidable resistance.**

W. T. SHERMAN, Major-General.

P. S.--The messengers to Schofield are back, and Stanley may look for him about Morrow's in two hours at furthest

The order to Stanley went out from Thomas' headquarters:

<ar76_720>

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE CUMBERLAND. Renfro's, August 31, 1864.

Maj. Gen. D. S. STANLEY, Commanding Fourth Army Corps:

GENERAL: **The major-general commanding directs that to-morrow morning early you commence the destruction of the Macon and Western Railroad in conjunction with General Schofield, who will receive orders from General Sherman.** You will destroy as far as you can in the direction of Jonesborough, or until you meet with General Baird's division, of the Fourteenth Corps, which you will probably find engaged in the same work. Should you meet with or overtake General Baird, you will report for further orders. General Garrard has been ordered to cover the flank of your column during its march down the road.

Yours, very respectfully, WM. D. WHIPPLE, Assistant Adjutant-General.

Then Sherman elaborated:

<ar76_732>

In the Field, August 31, 1864--2 p.m.

General SCHOFIELD: Your information corresponds with that of our information here. Baird is on the road leading straight down from Rough and Ready to Jonesborough, about five miles north of Jonesborough. Howard found a strong and threatening force in his front, but is strongly posted 600 to 800 yards from the depot. **If you and Stanley will make a lodgment on the railroad below Rough and Ready, Howard can hold the enemy at Jonesborough till you do infinite mischief, and Davis can hold the flank.** Break the telegraph at once if possible, to cut off communication. It is Hardee's and Lee's corps at Jonesborough, and Stewart's and militia remain in Atlanta and East Point. You can use Garrard if sure of getting the railroad to-day. If you reach the road don't waste a minute till you have destroyed a good section and make a good lodgment. Keep me well advised.

W. T. SHERMAN, Major-general

Knowing how Stanley would react, or probably banking on Stanley's reaction, Sherman wrote to Schofield:

<ar76_734>

In the Field, Couch's House, August 31, 1864--9.15 p.m.

General SCHOFIELD: As the question of rank will come up, I will decide it now, and beg you to acquiesce whatever your present opinion may be. Whenever two or more officers happen together on a common duty calling for a common head, even for a minute, the officer highest in rank present must give the necessary orders. Your own, Stanley's, and Davis' commands will to-morrow form a common movement requiring a common head in case of battle or extreme danger, and whoever happens to rank must command and be held responsible. The real point is your being a separate army commander, but the overruling necessity of the well established principle before recited takes precedence, or in a combined army like this, embracing three, the latter lose their separate character and become parts or components of the single army. I have and shall continue to keep each army separate, employed as far as may be on tasks proportioned to the strength of each, but when these unexpected combinations arise from the nature of things a fixed rule had better be established now. **My decision, I repeat, is that when current events carry your corps and another together in a**

common object your rank is then determined by the well established rule, and as a separate army commander you have no legal right to exercise that authority over an officer of superior rank in another separate army, but the one having the highest commission must command the whole. Please act on this decision. I will be near Jonesborough to-morrow, prepared to act promptly, according to the signs, but again beg to impress on you and all the great importance of destroying that railroad absolutely beyond hope of repair.
I am, &c., W. T. SHERMAN, Major-General, Commanding.

Schofield then wrote to Stanley while displaying the utmost in cooperativeness, and all of this on the same day:

<ar76_734>

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE OHIO, August 31, 1864--8 p.m.

Major-General STANLEY, Commanding Fourth Army Corps:

GENERAL: I inclose you a copy of a dispatch from General Sherman giving his plan of operations for to-morrow. (*) I have seen Garrard, and he will strike in toward Rough and Ready early in the morning. At the same time I will send Cox up toward Rough and Ready to break the road as far as practicable and help Garrard to get between us and Atlanta. Meanwhile Hascall will move down and join Cox. I propose that you move forward at daylight toward Jonesborough, covering the railroad and the main wagon road, breaking the track as much as you can, and I will follow as soon as Cox is done above and Hascall joins. I will complete the destruction of the road in your rear, and be ready to re-enforce you if you meet the enemy in force. During the day we can alternate according to circumstances. Please inform me if this meets your views, or suggest any change which may occur to you by which we can work together to the best advantage.

Very respectfully, J. M. SCHOFIELD, Major-general.

As instructed by Sherman, Schofield then wrote his protest of Sherman's decision. If you don't want to bother with all of the fluff and gobbledegook, skip to the bottom of the communication:

<ar76_797>

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE OHIO, Near Lovejoy's Station, Ga., September 4, 1864.

Maj. Gen. W. T. SHERMAN, Commanding Military Division of the Mississippi:

GENERAL: In compliance with your request, I have the honor to submit my views upon the questions of rank arising under the act of Congress approved April 4, 1862. These questions may be thus stated:

First. When a corps is temporarily detached from the army to which it belongs to operate with another army, whose commander is assigned by the President, under the act of April 4, 1862, but who is junior by commission to the corps commander, is this corps commander entitled by law to command the combined force?

Second. Is there any provision of law for such command?

The first question can probably best be answered, and the difficulty of the second illustrated by considering a case which has occurred and which is likely to be a very common one. General A commands an army consisting of two corps, whose commanders, Generals B and C, are senior by commission to General A. General D commands a corps of another army and is senior to General A but junior to Generals B and C. General D's corps is detached and ordered to operate with <ar76_798> General A's army. The sixty-second Article of War directs that in such case the officer highest in rank by commission there on duty shall command the combined force, "unless otherwise specially directed by the President of the United States." But the officer highest in rank is General B or C, who must therefore command (according to the sixty-second Article of War), unless otherwise specially directed by the President. But neither General B nor C can take the command, for the President has otherwise directed by making them subordinate-to General A, under the act of April 4. And there is no provision of law whatever that would give the command to General D, notwithstanding the fact that he is senior to General A, for he is junior to both General B and General C, hence the combined force can have no commander unless it be General A. I think, therefore, it is clear that the law of April 4, 1862, in giving through the President's order an officer command over his seniors by commission, abrogates the sixty-second Article of War so far as it relates to himself and other officers of the same grade who are not commanding under the law of April 4.

The second question is not so clear. There is an apparent conflict between the sixty-second Article of War and the act of April 4, 1862, which seems to leave a combined force such as I have supposed without a commander provided for it by law. But in my opinion this conflict is not real. The Article of War itself gives the President the power to direct otherwise than according to the general rule, which I understand to mean simply that he may direct the senior not to assume command of all the forces but, leave each under its own commander, and the act of April 4 gives him the additional power to assign a junior officer to the command whenever military operations may require the presence of two or more officers of the same grade in the same field. The President, in pursuance of this law, has assigned a commander to each of three armies or departments (the armies consisting simply of the troops serving in those departments and determined not by the President but by the General-in-Chief of all the armies, or other superior officer having direction of military operations in the three departments), and has assigned a general to command the three departments, combined under the name of a military division, and to direct the operations of the combined armies as

general-in-chief. Under the authority conferred by the act of Congress, and the discretion given him in the Article of War, he has provided in advance for the very case in point by naming three army commanders to be next in authority and responsibility to the general-in-chief in the order of their rank, and superior in both authority and responsibility to all other officers; and has given to the general-in-chief authority to combine or separate, detach or unite, his three armies, or any part of them, on any field, as in his judgment "military operations may require." The President has assigned in advance the commanders of the forces which military operations may require to be united on any field, and has left it to his general-in-chief to judge when, whose, and what forces shall be united. The evident object of the law of April 4, 1862, was to give the President the power to select from all the major-generals of the army those in his judgment most competent to direct the operations of the separate armies, and the power thus given has been habitually exercised. If, when the exigencies of the service require a temporary increase of one of these armies, which is likely to occur only at the most critical periods of a campaign, the army commander selected by the President can be superseded by an officer who has never been intrusted with more than a subordinate command, the object of the law is defeated and the President's selection is of no avail at the most critical moment. It must be observed that, if the sixty-second Article of War was alone taken as the law, a major-general commanding a division in one army might assume command of another army whenever the accidents of a battle should separate him from his own army and throw him in contact with another.

Finally, it is my opinion that the act of April 4, 1862, must be construed as creating, in effect, an additional grade in the army, viz, that of department or army commander superior to that determined by commission alone.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant, J. M. SCHOFIELD, Major-General, Commanding.

Of course Sherman sent along with Schofield's treatise his own explanation and veiled recommendation:

<ar78_413>

HDQRS. MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSISSIPPI, In the Field, Atlanta, September 20, 1864.

Maj. Gen. H. W. HALLECK, Chief of Staff, Washington, D.C.:

GENERAL: I have the honor to submit herewith a paper(*) from Major-General Schofield, which raises a question of law which should be authoritatively determined. General Schofield states the question fairly, but he arrives at a conclusion the reverse of my decision in a case which arose at the time I moved against the Macon railroad between Rough and Ready and Jonesborough. I have endeavored throughout the campaign to avoid putting an "army" commander on a detachment with a corps commander of superior lineal rank, but at the time specified I had ordered General Schofield, my left, to attack Rough and Ready, whilst General Howard, my right, was engaged at Jonesborough, seven miles distant, and as General Schofield's army was not strong enough I had ordered General Thomas, the center, to re-enforce General Schofield with his nearest corps, which was General Stanley's. The question of rank was inevitable, and I was in the midst of battle forced to decide that as General Stanley did not belong to General Schofield's Army of the Ohio, the 62d Article of War must control the question--when, upon a march, different corps happen to join, the officer highest in rank in the line of the army must command and be held responsible; in other words, that during the temporary absence of that wing from my immediate personal supervision General Stanley, the senior, was entitled to command. General Schofield cheerfully acquiesced, but at my instance he has made the point, that I might submit it for adjudication. You can readily see that a doubt on so important a question might be mischievous, and had better be decided on the abstract merits of the principles involved than to await its solution by a conflict, which might produce fatal results.

I am, with great respect, your obedient servant,

W. T. SHERMAN, Major-general.

A month later Halleck announced that Sherman's decision was overturned. Schofield outranked Stanley:

<ar79_64>

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY, Washington, D.C., October 4, 1864.

Major-General SHERMAN, Atlanta:

GENERAL: Your letter of the 20th ultimo, (*) inclosing a communication from General Schofield in regard to the question of command between himself and General Stanley, has been submitted to the Secretary of War, and I am directed to reply as follows:

When the President of the United States has, under the act of April 4, 1862, assigned an officer to the command of an army, army corps, or department, no other officer of the same grade, although senior in rank, can assume or exercise the command of such army, army corps, or department.

Suppose a general commanding in the field should attach to an army corps a division commanded by an officer ranking by seniority the commander of that corps, the former could not assume command of the corps by virtue of that seniority, because, in the language of the Sixty-second Article of War, it has been "otherwise specially directed by the President of the United States." Suppose there be assigned to a department or army all army corps commanded by an officer ranking the department or army commander, the former could not claim to command the latter, because the President has "otherwise specially directed." The commander of an "army is of higher rank than the commander of an" army corps," and the latter must yield when the two act together. So where two or more army corps act in the same department the commander so assigned by the President must command the whole, without regard to seniority. The case, however, is different where two corps in the same army or department "shall happen to join or do duty together," and not under the immediate orders of the department or army commander. Under such circumstances the corps commander of the highest rank would command the whole until "otherwise specially directed by the President of the United States." The same reasoning applies to two divisions which "shall happen to join or do duty together" beyond the direct authority of their corps commanders.

Although General Stanley's claim to the command of the joint forces on the occasion alluded to is not sustained, it was nevertheless General Schofield's duty to acquiesce in your decision, and obey General Stanley's orders; and the Secretary of War is gratified to find in his conduct on the occasion, and in the tone of his protest, the spirit and subordination so commendable in the good soldier.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant, H. W. HALLECK, Major-General and Chief of Staff.

When Schofield arrived in Tennessee to beef up Thomas' forces, Thomas wrote the following communication, or most of it anyway.

<ar79_666>

NASHVILLE, TENN., November 6, 1864--10 p. m. (Received 9 a.m. 7th.)

Major-General HALLECK, Chief of Staff:

I received from General Croxton this morning at 10 o'clock dispatches to the effect that the enemy had attacked him in force, and had driven him across Shoal Creek on the afternoon of the 4th instant, compelling him to fall back to Four-Mile Creek. The following dispatch (*) has just been received from him, which I forward for your information. I forward also the following (+) just received from General Schofield. I shall concentrate all of General Schofield's troops at Pulaski, with exception of Colonel Gallup's brigade, which, for the present, I will leave at Johnsonville. Have placed General Schofield in command of the two corps at Pulaski, believing him entitled to it by virtue of his position as a department commander, that being a higher command than an army corps. Hope I may be sustained in this decision, as in the present case, aside from the reasons on which I made the assignment, General Schofield is much the more reliable commander of the two. General Wilson has just arrived here, and arranged with me this evening for a complete remount and thorough reorganization of the cavalry. Think we shall have no further trouble with the cavalry, excepting that attending the getting of horses sufficiently fast to the front. Have just heard from General Granger, at Decatur, who reports that a reconnaissance from his post had just returned from within eight miles of Courtland. Met 800 of the enemy's cavalry (all Texas troops) at Fox Creek, drove them a mile beyond, but could obtain no information in addition to that heretofore reported. The outpost at Brown's Ferry reports only a few rebel cavalry on the opposite shore, who made no attempt to cross. All of General Stanley's troops are now at Pulaski, and in position ready for the enemy, should he attempt an advance. The cavalry is well up to the enemy's position, and will be able to give the earliest information of his first movement northward.

GEO. H. THOMAS, Major-General.

(Same to General Sherman, 12.30 a.m. November 7.)

Note that there is anomaly in this dispatch. According to the text Thomas expressed a personal judgement about an officer relative to another, finding that, between Schofield and Stanley, "General Schofield is much the more reliable commander of the two." This isolated statement is completely uncharacteristic for Thomas. First of all, nobody was more reliable than Stanley who, by the way, rode right beside Thomas at the final review of the Army of the Cumberland on 9 May 1865 in Nashville, staffs trailing behind. Second, nowhere else in the entire Official Records does Thomas criticize in this manner any of the commanders

under or above him. Finally, Hough reports that Thomas told him after the war, that he had recognized immediately, upon learning that Schofield was to be sent to him, that Schofield's purpose was inimical and that Thomas' position as commander was threatened. Thomas could not have considered Schofield to be more reliable than Stanley, and therefore would not have written such a statement. Form your own opinion, but I suggest that Schofield, as Secretary of War in 1868 or as Lt. General and Commander-in-chief of the Army (1888-95), had ample opportunity to tamper with the record and add the passage. Anyone who thinks that a general of Schofield's level and attainment was above such behavior is naïve and probably also believes that Grant wasn't capable of falsifying the record.

From the following dispatch we learn that Schofield couldn't help rubbing it in:

<ar79_691>

JOHNSONVILLE, November 7, 1864--11 a.m.

Major-General THOMAS:

I have received your dispatch of 9 a.m., As I telegraphed you this morning, I think there should be two brigades here for the present, and <ar79_692> I have ordered forward Moore's and the remainder of Gallup's brigades as they arrived. I will give the necessary instruction to the commanding officer and return at once to Nashville. **Your decision as to command agrees with one already made by the War Department in the case submitted by General Sherman.** He received it while at Gaylesville. Reports received this morning indicate that Forrest has gone up the river to Perryville, where he talks of crossing. I have sent scouts up and down the river.

J. M. SCHOFIELD, Major-General.

Grant weighed in:

<ar79_684>

CITY POINT, VA., November 7, 1864---7 p.m.(Received 7.40 p.m.)

Maj. Gen. H. W. HALLECK, Chief of Staff:

I suppose there is no doubt that General Thomas will be sustained in giving General Schofield the command over General Stanley. The latter is senior in rank, but a corps is a very high command for him. To insure its being advantageously used he should always have a superior with him to direct. If Schofield is likely to be embarrassed by Stanley's feeling soured at serving under a junior, and therefore not giving a hearty support, authority had better be given Schofield to remove the latter, when, in his judgment, the good of the service requires it.

U.S. GRANT, Lieutenant-General.

Halleck weighed in:

<ar79_703>

WASHINGTON, November 8, 1864--11 a.m.

Major-General THOMAS:

General Schofield, as the commander of an army, ranks General Stanley, as the commander of a corps. It was therefore proper for you to assign Stanley to Schofield's command. A former order of General Sherman's placing Schofield under Stanley was disapproved by the War Department.

H. W. HALLECK, Major-General, Chief of Staff.

Thomas bowed to the inevitable and put a good face on it:

<ar79_704>

NASHVILLE, TENN., November 8, 1864--8 p.m.(Received 12.45 a.m. 9th.)

Maj. Gen. H. W. HALLECK, Washington, D. C.:

Your dispatch of 11 a.m. to-day received. **General Schofield has shown me the decision of the Department on the point of rank to-day, and I am happy to find my decision was in conformity with it.**

GEO. H. THOMAS, Major-General, U. S. Volunteers, Commanding.

You might wonder why all the fuss about Schofield. He and Halleck knew each other since early in the war, and apparently Halleck had noticed certain qualities in Schofield which might render him useful at some future date. From 21 Nov. 1861 to 10 April 1862 Schofield commanded the District of St. Louis in Halleck's Dept. of the Missouri and rapidly

advanced in rank until Halleck went to Washington in May 1862, whereupon Schofield's career prospects seemed to dim a bit. However, Halleck kept looking out for Schofield as the following dispatch shows. When Schofield got into a vaguely defined political scrape, Halleck spirited him away for 4 weeks to command a division under, of all people, Thomas in Tennessee (17 April-10 May 63) until the heat was off. The last paragraph is so obscure as to seem written in code. It is a common technique for 2 conspirators communicating through the mail or other public means to refer to another document not available for scrutiny, and to use agreed upon formulas to indicate a response.

<ar33_208>

SAINT LOUIS, MO., April 10, 1863.

Major-General HALLECK,

General-in-Chief, Washington, D.C.:

MY DEAR GENERAL: I thank you for the order sending me to the Army of the Cumberland, and for your efforts to secure my promotion. There is a powerful combination of military and political aspirants in this department, whose success requires my removal from any important command here, and sufficiently unscrupulous to resort to any means that might be necessary to accomplish it. I was aware of my inability to withstand such attacks as might be expected from these men, and hence desired to be separated from them before it was too late. I am as willing as anybody to be sacrificed when any good is to be accomplished by it, but do not like to be slaughtered for nothing. Had General Sumner lived to take command here, I should have been glad to remain here; as it is, it would be deep humiliation to me, without any probable chance of good to the service.

I make these remarks because of a letter just received from Professor Bartlett, in which he mentions having received one from you containing a reference to a letter you had written me a few weeks before. I did not receive the letter you refer to.

Please accept my hearty thanks for the kindness you have always shown me.

Your sincere friend,

J. M. SCHOFIELD.

The valuable qualities which Halleck and Grant ascertained in Schofield were ruthless ambition combined with high intelligence and a willingness to lend himself to any project which they put before him. When they needed a mole and messenger in Sherman's army in Georgia, he was ready. When Grant sought "evidence" to convince Lincoln and Stanton to get rid of Thomas, Schofield sat himself at the telegraph. When the attempt didn't succeed, Schofield was still rewarded and sent back to Sherman. Although the rewards for his behavior would keep coming to him for the rest of his life, they must not have completely satisfied him, or he wouldn't have felt the need to pack all of those lies into his Memoirs.

The question forces itself on us, why would Grant, Schofield, and Sherman go to all of this trouble? I have answered in detail the question about Grant's relationship to Thomas in my article "[Politics in the Union Army at the Battles for Chattanooga.](#)" Schofield disliked Thomas from the time he was one of Thomas' students, and Thomas had decided against him in a trivial disciplinary matter. But Sherman's attitude toward Thomas is more difficult to explain. They were roommates their first year at the academy, and perhaps he resented even then Thomas' self-assurance and yes, his southern patrician background, which Sherman lacked. Sherman's written statements about Thomas vary from adulation to vicious slurs. However, in the following passage from a letter written on 27 April 1864 to his father-in-law and adoptive father, former U.S. senator Thomas Ewing, Sherman bared his soul. Note that the first sentence contains two falsifications:

- 1) Grant did not hold back Thomas' troops at Chattanooga. On the contrary, Thomas delayed carrying out Grant's repeated order to send his troops to the foot of Missionary Ridge and stop until he knew from the sound of battle (and probably from his signalmen on Lookout Mountain) that Hooker was well behind Bragg's left flank.

- 2) **Hooker started his infantry across the creek immediately on the remains of the burned bridge while the bridge was being rebuilt to carry his artillery. There was little delay. It is a safe assumption that Hooker was in a hurry.**

The second sentence, however, contains the meat of the letter:

At Chattanooga Grant was with Thomas in person - he held back Thomas' troops till Hooker got into position - we were delayed by Chattanooga Creek impassable that day without a Bridge to construct which took time, 4 hours. **If we were to dispose of such men as Thomas summarily who would take his place?** We are not masters as Napoleon was. He could make & unmake on the Spot. We must take the tools provided us, and in the order prescribed by Rank of which the Law judges. (Thomas Ewing and Family Papers)

Now we know what Sherman would have done with Thomas had he the power he assumed that the dictator Napoleon had. He would have hounded Thomas out of the army. And in fact, both he and Grant tried to do just that. When they failed after thousands of people outside the government, and many inside the Government (including Lincoln and Stanton) rallied to Thomas' support, Grant and Sherman went to work on a campaign of character assassination and falsification of the historical record. To get an idea of the tenor of this campaign read "['Slow Trot' and other Thomas nicknames!](#)" by Don Plezia.

The simple human, all too human reason for all of this is that Thomas' overwhelming competence was a constant reminder to Grant and Sherman of their own incompetence. As Twain wrote, "There's nothing more insufferable than a person who is a good example."