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NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST: BORN TO FIGHT

RICHARD TILLINGHAST

NATHAN Bedford Forrest remains one of the Civil War's most controversial figures. According to his biographer Jack Hurst, he was both "a soft-spoken gentleman of marked placidity and an overbearing bully of homicidal wrath." Of his military genius there can be little doubt. When asked to name the best officer who had fought on the southern side, Robert E. Lee unhesitatingly replied, "His name is Forrest." In the Ken Burns PBS documentary on the Civil War, Shelby Foote remarked that two authentic military geniuses had emerged from the war: Abraham Lincoln and Nathan Bedford Forrest. Not Robert E. Lee, not Stonewall Jackson, and certainly not Ulysses S. Grant.

And yet his abilities were never fully appreciated within the Confederate government. In 1869 Jefferson Davis sat by Forrest's bedside in Memphis the day before he died of diabetes, wasted down to 100 pounds—"broke up," the old warrior confessed, "broke in fortune, broke in health, broke in spirit." The next day the president of the Confederacy served as a pallbearer. Riding to Elmwood Cemetery in the funeral cortège, Davis spoke of Forrest's martial greatness and commented that "the generals commanding in the Southwest never appreciated him until it was too late. Their judgment was that he was a bold and enterprising raider and rider. I was misled by them, and never knew how to measure him until I read the reports of his campaign across the Tennessee River in 1864." Of Brice's Crossroads, Forrest's most enterprising and daring victory, "That campaign was not understood in Richmond," the former president said. "The impression made upon those in authority was that Forrest had made another successful raid . . . . I saw it all after it was too late."

What is our final evaluation of Nathan Bedford Forrest as man and soldier to be? What was it like to serve as a trooper under Forrest's command, or to be among the outsmarted Union officers and common soldiers who had the misfortune to go up

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against him? How did his slaves see him—those men, women and children force-marched along the dusty or muddy southern roads from Alabama to Mississippi, from Mississippi into West Tennessee during the years before the war when Forrest was in the business of buying and selling human beings? These are questions I have attempted to answer to my own satisfaction, though probably we shall never get a clear answer to that last question, never plumb the depths of that rage, fear, frustration, and pain.

When Forrest was free to fight without having to follow orders from above, he was most himself, and he usually won, often against heavy odds, earning his nickname, The Wizard of the Saddle. But he hated serving under other officers, even when, as with "Fighting Joe" Wheeler, his ranking officer liked and admired him. After he fought under Wheeler in 1863 at Dover on the Tennessee River and Wheeler was dictating his official report on the battle, Forrest was lying in pain on the floor in the cabin they were using as a temporary headquarters, propped up on a cane-bottom chair. He had been thrown from his horse that day, and his ribs were bruised. Forrest said to Wheeler, that though he meant "no disrespect to you; you know my feelings of personal friendship for you; you can have my sword if you demand it; but there is one thing I do want you to put in that report to General Bragg—tell him that I will be in my coffin before I will fight again under your command."

Two things stood in the way of Forrest's advancement: he was not a gentleman, and he had not gone to West Point. The South liked to see itself as an aristocratic society whose leaders were men of distinguished lineage, their conduct above reproach. Robert E. Lee was the very model of a Christian gentleman, a knight from Arthurian romance reborn in Virginia. Then there was the question of military background. Jefferson Davis's elevation of generals Braxton Bragg and Leonidas Polk, based on his friendship with them from West Point days, was questionable. Bishop Polk had been Davis's roommate, and the president coaxed him back into military service. Forrest on the other hand was a man of the people with no military experience, unlettered and uncultivated, and, worst of all, a slave-trader.

Wealthy planters like Harry St. John Dixon from Mississippi

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chafed under Forrest's ascendancy. After the death of General Earl Van Dorn in 1864, Forrest was put in charge of all cavalry in Hood's ill-fated invasion of Tennessee. Dixon, who was serving as a private soldier, wrote: "the dog's dead: finally we are under N. Bedford Forrest." Sarcastically alluding to his nickname, Dixon speaks of "The Wizzard" and notes his own "distaste [at] being commanded by a man having no pretension to gentility—a negro trader, gambler,—an ambitious man, careless of the lives of his men so long as preferment be *en prospectu.* Forrest may be able & no doubt is, the best Cav officer in the West, but I object to a tyrannical, hotheaded vulgarian's commanding me."

Early Years

Born in 1821 in Middle Tennessee, young Bedford moved to north Mississippi with his parents, to a farm ten miles from the closest neighbor. His father died three years after the move, so as the eldest son, Nathan Bedford Forrest at age seventeen became head of a large family in territory only recently cleared of its native population. The family rose early and breakfasted by candlelight so as to be in the fields at dawn. His evenings were spent in front of the fire, sewing "buckskin leggings, coonskin caps, or shoes . . . for his younger brothers," according to Jack Hurst, whose biography of Forrest is the most balanced I have found.

I am drawing on Mr. Hurst's *Nathan Bedford Forrest: A Biography,* 1993, for some of my information, along with Shelby Foote's three-volume history of the Civil War, and Andrew Lytle's short biography, *Bedford Forrest and His Critter Company,* 1931. Anyone who gets caught up in the story and legend of Forrest will also want to read John Allan Wyeth's *Life of General Nathan Bedford Forrest* (1899). While Wyeth's book is as much hagiography as Lytle's book is, it has the advantage of having been written by a veteran of an Alabama regiment that Forrest commanded—though before Wyeth's period of service. The author was able to interview men who had served under the Wizard of the Saddle, and he sent galley sheets to all the Confederate veterans he could locate, so as to check the veracity of what he had written. The book is full of detailed information not available elsewhere. For

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the larger picture, James M. McPherson's *Embattled Rebel: Jefferson Davis as Commander in Chief* (2014), has also been helpful.

In his mid-twenties this resourceful young man began making the transition from farming to more lucrative activities, moving to Hernando in DeSoto County, just south of the Tennessee line. Operating between Hernando and Memphis, he went into business with his uncle as a building contractor, owned a brickyard and a livery stable, and operated a stage line between Hernando and Memphis, soon gravitating to the booming river town of Memphis. By the outbreak of the war, as a dealer in farm supplies, buyer and seller of slaves, real-estate speculator, Mississippi River steamboat owner and planter, he had amassed a fortune estimated at $1.5 million, making him one of the richest men in the South.

Forrest neither drank nor used tobacco; his vices were swearing and gambling, the latter often for enormous stakes. Though he had the self-made man's envy of the more refined and better educated Delta planters and Memphis merchants in whose company he moved as his wealth increased and his station in life rose, he distrusted and feared the written word: "I never see a pen but what I think of a snake," he would often say. Later in life there were always educated men on his staff to render his dispatches, orders, and speeches into proper English, but his actual command of the language may be surmised from his written refusal of a soldier's request for leave: "I told you twict Goddammit Know."

Raised on what was then the southwestern frontier, Forrest was a natural-born fighter, a violent man living in a society where you had to fight to protect yourself, your family, your property, and, above all, your honor. Anyone or anything that injured Forrest stood to regret it. When a panther attacked his mother and sister as they were returning to their farm with a basket of baby chicks, killing Mrs. Forrest's horse and tearing the clothes from her back, her son declared, "Mother, I am going to kill the beast if it stays on the earth"; he set out with his dogs at midnight, treed the animal, and waited till dawn to get a clear shot. By nine o'clock in the morning he returned home with the panther's scalp and ears.

Fortunately for the student of history, plentiful journalistic documentation exists about Nathan Bedford Forrest. In 1845 the *American Eagle,* a newspaper covering Memphis and the Mid-South, recounted a "most bloody affray" in nearby Hernando,

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Mississippi, wherein a "young Mr. Forrest"—he would have been twenty-four at the time—became involved in a dispute with one T. J. Matlock, Esq., his brother, and his plantation overseer. When, according to the *Eagle,* one of the Matlocks drew on Forrest, the latter "immediately drew a revolving pistol and set it to work as fast as possible, shooting both of the Matlocks through." In the "affray" Forrest's uncle Jonathan was killed by a stray bullet.

In 1864 an attempt was made on his life by a Lieutenant Gould, unhappy at being transferred to another unit for having displeased Forrest. Gould shot Forrest in the left side, after which the General grabbed Gould's pistol hand, took his penknife from his pocket and—opening it with his teeth—stabbed Gould between the ribs. Two doctors brought the wounded lieutenant into a tailor's shop, laid him out on a table, and tried to staunch the bleeding. The man's desperate condition did not deter Forrest, however—even when the Confederate provost marshal, Colonel J. Lee Bullock, tried to stop him, saying "I think you need not pursue Gould, for I believe that he is fatally wounded."

"Get out of my way," Forrest shouted, "I am mortally wounded and will kill the man who shot me."

Forrest recovered, Gould did not.

Slave-Trader

In 1808 an act of Congress made it illegal to import enslaved persons into the United States. The humanitarian impulse, however, clashed with an almost simultaneous development in industry. Eli Whitney's cotton gin made it possible to separate fiber from seed easily, and suddenly cotton became hugely profitable. Production in the United States expanded from 750,000 bales in 1830 to 2.85 million bales in 1850. "Cotton and Negroes are the constant theme—the ever harped upon, never worn out subject of conversation among all classes," wrote a Mississippian in the 1830s. "Slaves were seldom kept . . . for the sake of raising crops, but crops were often cultivated for the sake of raising slaves," another observer wrote.

The old-fashioned romantic view of the Old South is that it was a paternalistic agrarian society in which slaves worked the fields,

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providing the wealth to sustain a cultivated and leisured society where chivalry, religion, fine manners, and good conversation could flourish. There were brutish and cruel masters, true, but there were kind masters too. And surely this picture is not completely the stuff of fantasy. At Leighton, Bishop Leonidas Polk's sugar-cane plantation in Louisiana, a former governess recalled, "The household, white and black, assembled every morning before breakfast in the parlor. The psalms for the day were read, a psalm or hymn was sung by all; the bishop read and expounded a chapter of the Bible, and then prayed."

Recent thinking puts slavery more in the context of capitalism than of agrarianism. The economist Robert Evans, Jr., wrote in 1962 that "the slave market performed for the antebellum South some of the functions now performed by the New York Stock Exchange, i.e., it served in the eyes of the public as a sensitive reflector of current and future business prospects." Evans claims that if one had purchased a number of twenty-year-old male slaves at market prices and held them for twenty or thirty years, the return on one's investment would have been greater than that on stock in railroads, North or South, greater even than "three- to six-month bankable paper money market in Boston."

Agriculture was on the decline on the Eastern Seaboard and in Kentucky, while the Mississippi Delta, its soil enriched by thousands of years of soil runoff from the Father of Waters, was being cleared for cotton plantations. The wilderness, with its stands of fine old first-growth forests, was being cut down, the timber sold from Memphis, which in addition to its commerce in slaves, hogs, and mules, was becoming the nation's largest inland market for hardwood lumber.

Since Forrest started out as a dealer in farm supplies, it made sense to expand that business to include slaves. He scoured the countryside in search of slaves who could be bought at bargain prices and resold in Memphis at a profit. Auction Square on North Main Street was near the Mississippi River landing, where planters could transport their human property to their land in the Delta. Forrest and his partner, a man named Hill, built a "Mart," which contained a jail, on a large lot on Adams Street in Memphis between Second and Third. A visitor to Memphis can see how

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large an establishment Forrest & Hill had here. Here is their ad in a Memphis paper:

> FIVE HUNDRED NEGROES WANTED.—WE will pay the highest cash price for all good Negroes offered. We invite all those having Negroes for sale, to call on us, at our Mart . . . on Adams Street. We will have a lot of Virginia Negroes on hand, for sale, in the fall. Negroes bought and sold on commission.

Forrest's views on race would change radically in the last few years of his life, but there's nothing to indicate that his conscience bothered him at this point in his career. The southern economy was based on slavery; Forrest was intent on making his fortune, and he was a very good businessman. As an indication of the kind of money to be made, in 1854 he bought three slaves for $1,450 and sold them again two weeks later for $1,600, a profit of 10 percent. Everything I have read about the man convinces me that he was above all a realist. There is every indication that he treated his human property well, just as later on he would take good care of the soldiers who fought under him. This doesn't mean that the milk of human kindness flowed through his veins—it was just good business.

The Wizard of the Saddle

Though he originally opposed secession, Forrest joined up as soon as Tennessee and Mississippi cast their lot with the Confederacy. Despite having no military training, in a conflict when officers on both sides were West Point men and veterans of the Mexican and the Indian wars, he was a quick study who became exceptionally adept at his métier. He disdained the by-the-book tactics of his colleagues from the regular army. When asked by General Stephen D. Lee if he had any ideas about the defeat the Confederates had just sustained at the battle of Harrisburg in north Mississippi, he replied irascibly, "Yes, sir, I've always got ideas, and I'll tell you one thing, General Lee. If I knew as much

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about West Point tactics as you, the Yankees would whip hell out of me every day."

Forrest was the only man North or South to enter the war as a private soldier and rise to the rank of lieutenant general. Not one to command from the rear, he thrust himself into the thick of battle and was seriously wounded at least four times. The wonder is that he was not killed in action. He personally killed thirty enemy soldiers, and twenty-nine horses were shot from under him. At Chickamauga he stuck his finger into a bullet hole in his mount's neck and kept it there until the charge was over, after which he pulled out his finger, and the animal fell over dead. Left-handed by nature, he taught himself to use both hands with equal strength, so that he could fight ambidextrously with a sword in one hand and a revolver in the other. A powerfully built, broad-shouldered man standing six foot two inches—extraordinarily tall for those times—he cut an imposing figure. Leading his men into combat, he would rise in the stirrups, waving over his head his saber, honed to a razor-sharp edge on both sides. It is not surprising that so many enemy troops panicked and fled.

William Tecumseh Sherman called him "that devil Forrest" and declared that he needed to be "hunted down and killed if it costs 10,000 lives and bankrupts the treasury." His soldiers revered him, but they also feared him, more than they feared the enemy. His orders to his staff were: "Shoot any man who won't fight." He was no sentimentalist: if one or two of his men had to die in the effort to shore up the courage and morale of the rest, Forrest was willing to pay that price. He shot at least one deserter himself, and another time he attacked a retreating soldier with a tree limb, thrashed the man to within an inch of his life, and ordered the terrified man back into the fray. At Murfreesboro in 1864, when one of his regiments stampeded toward the rear, he shot the standard-bearer, seized the flag, and rallied the troops.

In addition to his reckless daring and split-second battlefield decisions, he meticulously and single-mindedly planned out his tactics. Once, when someone attempted to engage him in conversation while he paced back and forth making plans for the next day's action, he knocked the man down with a single blow, stepped over him, and continued to cogitate, uttering not a single word

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the entire time. War is sometimes described as a chess match, but people of Forrest's background did not play chess. On the other hand, no one ever beat him at checkers, a favorite pastime in the rare moments when he found time to relax. Describing his victory over the Federal commander in the battle of Brice's Crossroads, Forrest used a metaphor from checkers: "I saw Grierson make a bad move, and then I rode right over him."

Once given a commission, the ever-resourceful Forrest became his own recruiting agent, running ads in the Memphis papers like this one:

> 200 RECRUITS WANTED!
>
> I will receive 200 able-bodied men if they will present themselves at my headquarters by the first of June with good horse and gun. I wish none but those who desire to be actively engaged. . . . Come on, boys, if you want a heap of fun and to kill some Yankees.
>
> N. B. Forrest
> Colonel, Commanding Forrest's Regiment

Nor did he neglect the practical aspects of arming and mounting his troops. A week after being commissioned to raise a regiment, Forrest traveled up to Kentucky, where he bought with his own money 500 Colt navy pistols, 100 saddles, and other gear, transporting it all clandestinely back to Memphis. Throughout the war he was adept at finding horses for his troopers, as well as hogs and cattle to feed them.

During his first engagement, northeast of Bowling Green, Kentucky, he (in Shelby Foote's words) "improvised a double envelopment, combined it with a frontal assault—classic maneuvers which he could not identify by name and of which he had most likely never heard—and scattered the survivors of a larger enemy force." His characteristic tactic was to take the offensive and catch the enemy off guard. Even when the enemy charged him, he would charge back rather than waiting to be attacked. At Parker's Crossroads, when informed that the enemy had been reinforced and was attacking him from the rear, he ordered (probably apocryphally), "Charge them both ways!" The reckless courage of these

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charges caused many an opponent, whose forces outnumbered the men in gray, to turn tail and flee. "Whenever you meet the enemy," he instructed his men, "no matter how few there are of you or how many of them, show fight. If you run away they will pursue and probably catch you. If you show fight, they will think there are more of you, and will not push you half so hard."

After positioning sharpshooters around the enemy's flank and rear, he would attack frontally, then be ready to enfilade the panicked Federals as they fled. Technically Forrest's troops were cavalrymen, but if we picture mounted saber charges, this does not give an accurate picture of how the general fought. No one can shoot accurately while mounted on horseback. Forrest used his horses to transport troops quickly; once in position, he would dismount them and use them as infantry. Rather than keeping his artillery in the rear, he moved it up right up to his front line and fired at close range, which terrified and killed more of the enemy than if his artillery had fired from the rear.

"War means fightin'," he famously said, "and fightin' means killin'." He loved to "put the skeer" on an opponent—an early example of shock and awe—and then relentlessly and tirelessly pursue the enemy forces until they were destroyed or forced to surrender. In his famous rout of the expedition against the Confederate rear guard in Georgia and Alabama under Colonel Abel Streight in 1863, he ordered his troops to "shoot at everything blue and keep up the skeer."

Decisive Battles

Unless the Confederacy succeeded in exhausting and outlasting the North, the South had no realistic chance of winning the Civil War. The Confederate states had only 12 percent as much industrial capacity as the North. According to James M. McPherson, "Union states had eleven times as many ships and boats as the Confederacy and produced fifteen times as much iron, seventeen times as many textile goods, twenty-four times as many locomotives, and thirty-two times as many firearms."

But the Confederates also made tactical blunders that hastened the inevitable. Forrest took part in many crucial battles lost in the

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western theater, and it is clear in retrospect that had his views prevailed, some of these battles might have been won. At Fort Donelson in 1862 the CSA command was divided among three generals: Floyd, Pillow, and Buckner. The first two were political appointees with little military sense. This conclave of incompetents decided to surrender the fort to Union forces, skillfully commanded by a new star in the Union Army, Ulysses S. Grant. Losing the fort meant losing control of the Cumberland and Tennessee rivers, and made the loss of Tennessee virtually inevitable.

But the Confederate triumvirate could not see the big picture. Colonel Forrest had found an escape route via a river-side road to the south of the fort, and thought that the entire army could be evacuated. In the conclave where surrender was determined, he spoke up: "I did not come here for the purpose of surrendering my command," he declared. Forrest got his whole regiment out. "Not a gun [was] fired at us," he reported. "Not an enemy [was] seen or heard."

At Shiloh, Confederate forces carried the first day's fighting, pushing the Federals, under Grant, back to bluffs overlooking the Tennessee River. Confederate General Albert Sidney Johnston was killed in action, and Pierre Gustave Toutant Beauregard, that grandiloquent, beplumed Louisianian, took over. Before retiring for the night he sent a telegram to Richmond, declaring that he had achieved "a complete victory, driving the enemy from every position." While other commanders had retired to their tents, Colonel Forrest crept along the bluff to reconnoiter. He saw Buell's army arriving during the night, and thousands of fresh men being unloaded from riverboats. Let Shelby Foote tell the story:

> For Forrest this meant just one thing: the Confederates must either stage a night attack or else get off that tableland before the Federals charged them in the morning. Unable to locate Beauregard, he went from camp to camp, telling of what he had seen and urging an attack, but few of the brigadiers even knew where their men were sleeping, and those who did were unwilling to take the responsibility of issuing such an order. . . . Forrest stomped off, swearing. "If the enemy comes on us in the morning, we'll be whipped like hell," he said.

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He was right. The next day the Confederates were driven from the field. Outnumbered as they almost always were, they sorely missed the more than 12,000 troops and 48 artillery pieces captured earlier at Fort Donelson. Disobeying orders during the retreat, Forrest flung his 350 Tennesseans, Kentuckians, Texans and Mississippians against his pursuers at a place called the Fallen Timbers, where he was outnumbered five-to-one. In the heat of battle he outran his men and was surrounded by Union troops shouting "Kill him! *Kill* the goddam rebel! Knock him off his horse!" One Union rifleman pushed the muzzle of his weapon into Forrest's side and pulled the trigger, knocking Forrest out of his saddle, lodging a bullet at the base of his spine and rendering his right leg useless. But Forrest had the strength to grab a Union soldier by the collar, swing him onto the crupper of his horse, and gallop back to safety, using the hapless Yankee as a shield.

Forrest's attack stopped the Federal pursuit, further fueling his reputation. As for the wound, the musket ball was removed from his spine without anesthesia, which was unavailable—though the teetotaler was probably given a dose of whiskey. With his seemingly supernatural strength, he recovered quickly, and though still in pain, returned to his command within three weeks.

The third of three battles whose outcomes might have been altered had Forrest been in command was Chickamauga, fought in September, 1863. The unfortunate Braxton Bragg had allowed himself to be maneuvered out of Tennessee by the wily William S. Rosecrans after fighting the Federals to a bloody standoff at the battle of Murfreesboro on Christmas Eve, 1862. Despite written pleas from the officers on his staff, including General Leonidas Polk, President Jefferson Davis had refused afterwards to relieve his old friend of his command.

Now, south of Chattanooga, Bragg chose to do battle. Forrest had been promoted to the rank of brigadier general by this point in the war, and he commanded a cavalry brigade on Bragg's right flank. The Confederates, in savage and bloody fighting, carried the day. Casualties amounted to 18,454 on the Southern side, and 16,170 among the Federals. Bragg, in a funk because his orders had not been carried out to his satisfaction, was sulking in his tent like Achilles and refused to order the hot pursuit that might have destroyed Rosecrans's army, and at the very least, kept him out of Chattanooga.

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But Forrest pursued on his own, so quickly that he overtook a party of Federal observation troops in a tree, ordered them down, and used their field glasses to observe the Union retreat. The message he dashed off to General Polk, requesting it be forwarded to Bragg—"I think we ought to press forward as rapidly as possible"—brought no response, and the Yankees were once again allowed to escape. Later Forrest went to Bragg's tent, but again received no satisfaction. "What does he fight battles for?" the Wizard wondered out loud. To Bragg he said, "You have threatened to arrest me for not obeying your orders promptly. I dare you to do it, and I say to you that if you ever again try to interfere with me or cross my path it will be at the peril of your life."

Forrest as Trickster

Stonewall Jackson once said: "Always mystify, mislead, and surprise the enemy if possible. When you strike and overcome him, never give up the pursuit as long as your men have strength to follow; for an army routed, if hotly pursued, becomes panic-stricken, and can then be destroyed by half its number." He might have been describing the tactics of Nathan Bedford Forrest, one of military history's great tricksters. One of his favorite ploys was to send a courier under a flag of truce to his opponents, who more often than not outnumbered him. Here is the note he sent in 1862 to Colonel Parkhurst, commander of a Michigan regiment:

> Murfreesborough, July 13, 1862
>
> COLONEL: I must demand an unconditional surrender of your force as prisoners of war or I will have every man put to the sword. You are aware of the overpowering force I have at my command, and this demand is made to prevent the effusion of blood.
>
> I am, colonel, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
>
> N. B. FORREST,
> Brigadier General of Cavalry, C. S. Army

Invading West Tennessee during the winter of 1863, Forrest brought kettledrums along and kept them beating at all times, giving the enemy the impression that large detachments of infantry

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were gathering. As a result, Colonel Ingersoll of the Eleventh Illinois Cavalry overestimated his strength at "at least 5,000 strong," when Forrest's troopers actually numbered only 2,000. During the same campaign, Forrest arrested a number of Union sympathizers, kept them under guard, and ordered the drums beaten night and day while his troops marched past in sight of the prisoners, informing them that this was Cheatham's infantry division, which was in fact nowhere near. Then he would mount his troops and have them file by to exaggerate, in the captives' minds, the numbers of cavalry on hand. Later he let the prisoners escape. They hurried to Union headquarters to report on the numbers they thought Forrest had on hand. As a result General Grant sent 25,000 troops from Memphis, who were thus diverted from more useful duties.

One of the more amusing campaigns of the war was the excursion Colonel Abel Streight launched across Alabama and Georgia in 1863. Though Streight's men outnumbered Forrest's three to one, the Rebel commander "put the skeer" on him and pursued the Yankees so relentlessly, day and night, that Streight's men were run ragged, falling asleep with their rifles in their hands. Requesting a parley, Forrest, who was travelling with only two artillery pieces, stood with his back to a ridge while he and Streight talked, and had his men wheel the same two pieces over and over again along the ridge within Streight's field of vision.

"Name of God!" Streight exclaimed. "How many guns have you got? There's fifteen I've counted already." Forrest glanced casually over his shoulder and drawled, "I reckon that's all that has kept up." During the parley Forrest would occasionally interrupt himself and issue orders to a subordinate concerning non-existent units. Finally Streight gave in and surrendered his 1,466 soldiers to Forrest's fewer than 600. Once he had turned over his men and their weapons to the Rebels, it became clear that he had been tricked, and he furiously demanded that Forrest return all surrendered weapons and further insisted that the two sides resume the fight. Forrest chuckled, patted his captive on the shoulder, and remarked, "Ah, Colonel, all is fair in love and war, you know."

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