

A Struggle for Respect

Lew Wallace's Relationships with Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman After Shiloh

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Lew Wallace, born on April 10, 1827, in Brookville, Indiana, aspired to greatness. Given a better than average start socially, politically, and economically, Wallace went on to achieve fame as a soldier, government official, and author before his death in 1905. Of the many relationships with other prominent Americans that he enjoyed over this long and active life, none proved more complex or troubling than those Wallace maintained with two of the best-known public figures of the nineteenth century: Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman. The purpose of this article is to examine why Wallace continued to turn to these men for advice and assistance in the weeks and years after April

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6, 1862: the day when Wallace's failure to move his division in a timely fashion had imperiled the Union Army at the battle of Shiloh.¹

Wallace's interactions with Grant and Sherman reveal both his capacity to deal with strong personalities and his staunch determination to fulfill his life's aims and ambitions. Unusually sensitive, yearning to earn a place on the same plane as his more accomplished contemporaries, Wallace could not resign himself to second-rank status; nor could he accept that his talents and exertions may have been inferior to those of such better-known peers. This persistence proved a mixed blessing in Wallace's life. While it drove him to attain the military, political, and literary fame to which he had aspired, it also left him anxious and unable to enjoy the satisfaction merited by his many achievements. Wallace's troubled interaction with the Union Army's greatest generals reflects a struggle for respect never fully won in the course of a long and illustrious life.

Brigadier General Lew Wallace first met Ulysses S. Grant at Paducah, Kentucky, in late October 1861. Grant, then a more senior brigadier general than the recently promoted Wallace, had come to Paducah from his headquarters at Cairo, Illinois, to discuss an attack against a Confederate position in southeastern Missouri with Wallace's superior, Brigadier General Charles F. Smith. Wallace entertained Smith, Grant, and Grant's adjutant John A. Rawlins at his quarters and enjoyed the camaraderie of his guests far into the night.² Unfortunately, a false story that the gathering had been a drunken debauch spread among the ranks. Wallace quickly squelched the rumors, and the incident passed with no evidence that Grant had taken any offense. Still, Wallace believed that the matter had made Grant's staff officers suspicious of him.³

¹See Irving McKee, "Ben-Hur" Wallace: *The Life of General Lew Wallace* (Berkeley, Calif., 1947) and Robert E. and Katharine M. Morsberger, *Lew Wallace: Militant Romantic* (New York, 1980). The Morsbergers, in particular, suggest that the battle of Shiloh broke Wallace's relationship with Grant. Harold Lew Wallace, "Lew Wallace's March to Shiloh Revisited," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 59 (March 1963), 19-30, focuses on whether Lew Wallace followed orders on the first day of Shiloh. (Harold Wallace is not a relative of his subject.)

²Wallace later recalled Grant's short beard with a "natural reddish tinge," his uniform coat "the worse for tarnished brass buttons," and the strong impression "that there was nothing about him suggestive of greatness, nothing heroic." Lew Wallace, *Lew Wallace: An Autobiography* (2 vols., New York, 1906), I: 352.

³*Ibid.*, 351-53, 355-56.

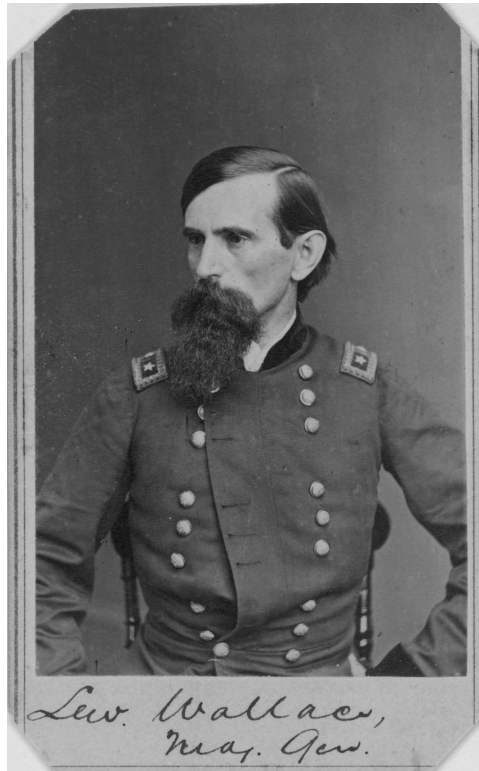
The Union victory at Fort Donelson in February 1862 should have righted all wrongs between Grant and Wallace. Left behind to guard earlier conquests, Forts Heiman and Henry, Wallace pushed his troops to Fort Donelson after the battle had begun more rapidly than anticipated. Grant then gave Wallace command of a newly formed division and assigned him to the center of the line. Wallace distinctly remembered that Grant's face "flushed slightly" and that he "crushed the papers in his hand" when he learned that control of a critical road on the Union right had been lost. Regaining full composure, Grant said in "his ordinary quiet voice" to Wallace and another general: "Gentlemen, the position on the right must be retaken." Wallace and his soldiers valiantly recaptured the road and drove the enemy back into their fortifications. But he also disobeyed Grant's order to withdraw and await reinforcements because he did not think the commander comprehended the gravity of the situation. Grant later approved Wallace's decision. The general "intends to give you a chance to be shot in every important move," reported Grant's staff officer William S. Hillyer to Wallace after the Confederates' surrender on February 16. Hillyer concluded his short note: "I *speack advisedly*—God bless you—you did save the day on the right."⁴ Grant's official report on the battle commended Wallace and the other division commanders for being "with their commands in the midst of danger" and "always ready to execute all orders no matter what the exposure to themselves."⁵

The aftermath of the Fort Donelson victory, however, dismayed Wallace. Members of Grant's staff urged Wallace to revise his report to mention their heroics during the battle. Eager to please these officers, Wallace interviewed his subordinates to corroborate the details of the staff's deeds. None could. Wallace politely told the staff officers that he must leave his report unchanged, privately fearing that principled action would provoke prejudice that could do future harm to his reputation.

The first clear evidence of strain in Wallace's relationship with Grant, however, awaited the battle of Shiloh a month-and-a-half later.

⁴Lew Wallace, "The Capture of Fort Donelson," in *From Sumter to Shiloh: Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, ed. Roy F. Nichols (New York, 1956), 422; William S. Hillyer to Lew Wallace, February 16, 1862, microfilm, reel 1, Lew Wallace Collection (Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis). See also James A. Treichel, "Lew Wallace at Fort Donelson," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 59 (March 1963), 3-18.

⁵John Y. Simon, ed., *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant* (28 vols. to date, Carbondale, Ill., 1967-), 4: 225.



Major General Lew Wallace, 1862

Wallace commanded the Third Division of the Army of the Tennessee at the battle of Shiloh on April 6, 1862. His controversial decisions on that day would forever color his relationships with Ulysses S. Grant and William Tecumseh Sherman.

Courtesy Library of Congress, Manuscript Division

Wallace, now major general, was commanding his division at Crump's Landing on the Tennessee River as the Union Army concentrated for an assault on Corinth, Mississippi, a critical railroad junction. His scouts monitored the roads and bridges linking their outlying division to the main encampment about five miles upriver at Pittsburg Landing. On April 4, the scouts reported that the Confederates had vacated Corinth to attack Pittsburg Landing. Wallace relayed this report to Grant,

headquartered farther downriver at Savannah, Tennessee, but the note evidently failed to reach his hands.⁶

Hearing distant sounds of battle very early on the morning of Sunday, April 6, Wallace prepared his division to move toward Pittsburg Landing. That same morning, Grant steamed upriver to Wallace's location and told him to be ready to march in any direction, pending further orders. Grant's commands disappointed Wallace, who wanted to commence an immediate march toward the front lines, but they were soundly reasoned. Grant held Wallace at Crump's Landing because he did not yet know whether the main attack would fall upon his large force at Pittsburg Landing or on Wallace's division. Grant soon learned that the target was Pittsburg Landing, and he sent his assistant quartermaster, Captain Algernon S. Baxter, to Wallace with orders that he bring his division to the Union right with dispatch.⁷

From here, the story becomes hopelessly muddled. Principal actors in the subsequent events disagree about times, the content of verbal orders, individual demeanors, and motives. No matter how one weighs the undocumented recollections and virulent recriminations, the central problem remains that Wallace did not reach the Union Army at Pittsburg Landing until after nightfall on April 6.⁸

Despite the confusion, Wallace posted his division to the right of the new Union line by day's end. Told by Grant early on April 7 to move west against the enemy, they did so, and fought in the day-long offensive that routed the Confederates. Despite his role in the victory, Wallace fretted over his late arrival to the battle. He was frustrated by the vague orders and bad information that he felt had led him to march to the wrong front.⁹ He was also fearful that his difficulties would lower him in

⁶The orderly most likely missed Grant and left the message for delivery in the headquarters mail. Wallace, *Lew Wallace*, 1: 448-58.

⁷*Ibid.*, 459-63.

⁸James Harrison Wilson, *The Life of John A. Rawlins: Lawyer, Assistant Adjutant-General, Chief of Staff, Major General of Volunteers, and Secretary of War* (New York, 1916), 86-87, 97-98. For an analysis of the evidence on Wallace's march to the Shiloh battlefield, see Larry J. Daniel, *Shiloh: The Battle That Changed the Civil War* (New York, 1997), 256-61.

⁹When Captain Baxter met Wallace on the morning of April 6, he told him that the enemy was being repulsed. This knowledge led Wallace to march toward the original Union front line well out from the river (via an abandoned road called the Shunpike) rather than for Pittsburg Landing as Grant evidently contemplated. Wallace, *Lew Wallace*, 1: 463-475; Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 5: 69-70.

Grant's estimation. Nothing in their direct exchanges gave support to Wallace's fear. Indeed, Grant's initial report on Shiloh, dated April 9, passed lightly over Wallace: "Genl Lew Wallace, at Crumps Landing six miles below, was ordered at an early hour in the morning to hold his division in readiness to be moved in any direction to which it might be ordered. At about 11 o'clock the order was delivered to move it up to Pittsburgh, but owing to its being led by a ~~high~~ circuitous route did not arrive in time to take part in Sunday's action." Nevertheless, Wallace worried. "The newspapers have several lies about me aside from the report of my death," he advised his wife, Susan. "Time," he asserted after explaining his extended march to the front, "will set everything right at last."¹⁰

Despite his optimism, Wallace soon began receiving signals suggesting something was amiss. In late April 1862, Wallace balked at an order from Grant. Grant testily rebuked his remonstrance: "Your instructions are plain. You were not to await the arrival of Cavalry, but the Cavalry was to follow and report. Too often my orders and instructions are misunderstood or totally disregarded by you."¹¹ That summer, Wallace was removed from his field command and assigned to Cincinnati. He pinned blame primarily on Major General Henry W. Halleck, commander of all Union armies, and desperately sought reassignment to a fighting unit. During the exceedingly cautious march on Corinth following the battle of Shiloh, Wallace had harshly criticized Halleck's leadership in the presence of that general's staff officers and subsequently had reason to believe that Halleck disliked him.¹² Initially ordered on October 30 to report to Grant at Corinth, Wallace was instead directed back to Cincinnati to serve on a military commission. By November, the rift between Grant and Wallace was known even by public officials in Indiana. It is not clear how this knowledge had come to Wallace's political friends in his home state, but they definitely tried to minimize contact between the two men. For instance, Governor Oliver P. Morton's private secretary telegraphed Morton in Washington, D.C.: "If Lew. Wallace is ordered to Grant, have it changed to

¹⁰Wallace, *Lew Wallace*, 2: 576; Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 5: 33; and Lew Wallace to Susan E. Wallace, April 17, 1862, reel 2, Lew Wallace Collection. Many newspaper reports after the battle of Shiloh confused Lew Wallace with William H. L. Wallace, a Union general and division commander who was mortally wounded during the fighting.

¹¹Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 5: 93.

¹²Morsberger and Morsberger, *Lew Wallace*, 106-8.

McClermand. He and Grant do not get along, and he desires to go with McClermand.”¹³ (It must be noted that Grant despised Major General John A. McClermand, and any sign of fondness for that officer by Wallace could only further irritate Grant.) Certainly, Grant did not hide from his superiors his lack of enthusiasm for Wallace. Assessing “Wing and Division commanders” on December 14, he concluded that it would be “particularly unfortunate” to have Wallace sent to him because he held too high a rank to manage.¹⁴ During the summer, Wallace had testified before the joint congressional committee investigating the conduct of the war. Although circumscribed and measured, Wallace’s testimony easily could be construed as critical of Grant’s generalship at both Fort Donelson and Shiloh. Such remarks could not have warmed Grant’s feelings for his subordinate.¹⁵

One year after Wallace’s unfortunate late arrival to Shiloh, it was no longer necessary for him to pick up on subtleties or to sift rumors and innuendoes to determine Grant’s views. Upset over “unjust aspersions” still abroad stemming from his division’s march from Crump’s Landing to the battlefield at Shiloh, Wallace supplied an official explanation of his actions in a letter to Halleck dated March 14, 1863.¹⁶ Then in Washington, D.C., Wallace read Grant’s official endorsement, dated April 25, 1862, on the report Wallace had submitted immediately after the battle:

I directed this Division about 8 O’Clock a. m. to be held in readiness to move at a moments warning in any direction it might be ordered. Certainly not later than 11 a. m. the order reached Gen. Wallace to march by a flank movement to Pittsburg Landing. Waiting until I thought he should be here I sent one of my staff to hurry him, and afterwards sent Col. McPherson and my A. A. G. This report in some other particulars I do not fully endorse.¹⁷

¹³Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 6: 286-87.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 7: 29.

¹⁵House Committee on the Conduct of the War, 37th Cong., 3rd sess., 1862. H. Doc. 108, pp. 337-53.

¹⁶*The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (128 vols., Washington, D.C., 1880-1901), ser. 1, vol. 10, part 1, 176.

¹⁷Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 5: 68. Wallace’s report, dated April 12, 1862, appears in *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 10, part 1, 169-74.

Mortified and astonished, Wallace wrote a long letter to Grant on June 27, 1863, seeking to correct errors and obtain exoneration.¹⁸ Wallace wanted to appeal to Grant in person and wrote only after being refused permission to visit him at Vicksburg, which the general then held under siege. Hearing nothing from Grant, Wallace formally requested Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton to order a court of inquiry.¹⁹ Wallace's desire for an investigation would have been keener still had he known of Grant's response to the initial letter Wallace had written to Halleck. After soliciting and receiving from pertinent staff officers written recollections critical of Wallace's performance, Grant vouched "for their almost entire accuracy" and surmised at Wallace's expense: "Had Gen. Wallace been relieved from duty in the morning, and the same orders been communicated to Brig Gen Morgan L. Smith (who would have been his successor) I do not doubt that the Division would have been on the field of battle and in the engagement, before one o'clock of that eventful 6th of April. There is no estimating the difference this might have made in our casualties." A week later, Grant repeated this language in a second letter to Halleck.²⁰

Wallace understood that this tension was quickly building toward a public clash with Grant, and he sought the advice of Major General William Tecumseh Sherman, who had overcome allegations of insanity early in the war to fill important commands under Grant and establish a friendship with him. Sherman had also commanded a division at Shiloh, fighting alongside Wallace on the second day of the battle. Less than two weeks later, Sherman had written a friendly letter to Wallace in response to a request that they coordinate scouts and pickets. "You may always take it for granted," Sherman informed Wallace, "that I will accede to any plan of picketing you may suggest."²¹ Given this background,

¹⁸Wallace's emotions were founded. Two days before Grant wrote his stinging endorsement, Wallace had received a note from Grant's adjutant implying agreement with the report: "I am directed by the General Commanding to say that you have permission to forward your Official Report of the Battle of Shiloh for publication." John A. Rawlins to Lew Wallace, April 23, 1862, reel 2, Lew Wallace Collection.

¹⁹Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 8: 60-62; and *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 10, part 1, 188-89.

²⁰Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 8: 60, 95. The reports from Grant's staff officers appear in *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 10, part 1, 178-88.

²¹William Tecumseh Sherman to Lew Wallace, April 19, 1862, reel 2, Lew Wallace Collection. Sherman also noted that he and Grant had passed Wallace's "new Camps" on April 18: "We

Wallace could expect a knowledgeable and sympathetic hearing. Sherman's reply to Wallace's August 16 letter was diplomatic. He promised to see Grant about Wallace's concerns and assured the troubled general that Grant esteemed him "as possessing as large a share of high soldierly qualities as would satisfy the ambition of most men." "We have all made mistakes," Sherman continued, "and Should be generous to each other." Praising Grant for his qualities as a commander, Sherman counseled Wallace not to press for an inquiry into the events at Shiloh, noting that future actions "may sweep that into the forgotten of the Past." Sherman recommended that Wallace find another division, lead it quietly, "and trust to opportunity for a becoming sequel to the brilliant beginning you had." More than anything, Sherman urged patience. "Avoid all controversies," he concluded, "bear patiently temporary reverses, get into the Current events as quick as possible, and hold your horses for the last home stretch."²² Sherman's words persuaded Wallace to withdraw his request for a court of inquiry. He wrote to Secretary Stanton: "It is possible that I may satisfy General Grant upon the points involved, and thus save further trouble."²³

True to his word, Sherman brought Wallace's case to Grant's attention at the end of August. First, he forwarded Wallace's explanatory letter; second, he sent a confidential telegram to John A. Rawlins (the aide who had been sent to hurry Wallace's advance on April 6, 1862). Characterizing Wallace's letter as "long & very proper," Sherman asked that Wallace be answered "in a kind tone" and given hope of restoration to a field command. While Sherman agreed with Rawlins that Wallace "was laggard" at Shiloh, he believed that the supplicant general had "good qualities which with proper cultivation might Save his honor & be of use to the Service."²⁴ Grant responded that restoring Wallace to a high command in the army would unjustly deprive some able and richly

supposed you very busy; else would have stopped." This is the only letter between Sherman and Wallace found in this collection that is not readily available in print. Collections at the University of Notre Dame and the Ohio Historical Society contain no letters between or involving Sherman and Wallace. The Library of Congress holds only a few, which are incorporated into this essay.

²²Brooks D. Simpson and Jean V. Berlin, eds., *Sherman's Civil War: Selected Correspondence, 1860-1865* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1999), 526-27.

²³*The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 10, part 1, 190.

²⁴Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 8: 95-96.

deserving officer of a place or a promotion. Sherman summarized his meeting with Grant in a letter to Wallace dated October 9, and conceded the merit of Grant's view. Sherman still encouraged Wallace to persist in his efforts to secure field duty. While disappointed, Wallace later admitted that "the delicacy with which he imparted the result was not without a soothing effect."²⁵

Wallace's tortuous quest for active duty ended in March 1864 with his assignment to command the Eighth Army Corps and the Middle Department, which included Delaware and a considerable portion of Maryland. Less than four months later, his leadership at the battle of Monocacy delayed a strong Confederate column bent on ransacking Washington, D.C., and revived Wallace's relationship with Grant. Then the commander of all Union armies, Grant had stripped the fortifications at the capital to augment the forces fighting toward Richmond. Many influential politicians felt that Grant's actions had left the capital vulnerable to Confederate raid. Although Wallace and his troops lost the battle of Monocacy on July 9, they had slowed the Confederate advance just enough to allow reinforcements sent by Grant to reach Washington and turn away the raiders on the outskirts of the city.

In the days that followed the battle, Grant showed his usual disregard for Wallace, recommending that Major General Edward O. C. Ord, an officer whom he held in high regard, supersede Wallace as commander of troops operating in the field. Grant's attitude changed as he came to realize the full extent of Wallace's effort—his final battle report praised Wallace for moving "with commendable promptitude."²⁶ Grant also showed renewed confidence at an early August dinner with Wallace in Baltimore. Writing about it a few days later, Wallace barely could suppress his exuberance: "He was unusually kind—even demonstrative to me. He spoke of the Battle of Monocacy, and was sure we killed and wounded three times as many rebels as our own losses. . . . Before leaving, he gave me a warm invitation to visit him at City Point, which I am sure to do as soon as the Shenandoah Valley grows more quiet."²⁷

Wallace visited City Point in early September, and again received cordial treatment. Grant, Wallace wrote to his wife, "seemed to be taking

²⁵Wallace, *Lew Wallace*, 2: 666.

²⁶Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 15: 192.

²⁷Lew Wallace to unknown (possibly Susan E. Wallace), August 8, 1864, reel 3, Lew Wallace Collection.

pains to make me forget that there had ever been anything between us of an unpleasant nature.” One staff officer apparently felt comfortable enough with Wallace to reveal a Grant secret: Whenever visitors questioned Grant and the general was unsure of his answer, he spoiled matches trying to light a cigar. When Grant finally struck a match, his reply was ready.²⁸ Wallace did not broach his differences with Grant over the march to Shiloh despite discussion of that battle and Fort Donelson. “He acted as if there had been no differences,” Wallace wrote to his wife, “and so did I.” Grant ended their visit by indicating that he might want Wallace to serve as his chief of staff. Obviously pleased, Wallace informed his wife that he would accept the position if Grant offered it.²⁹

Rather than fighting in Virginia, Wallace was assigned to conduct delicate and irregular negotiations along the Mexican border. Wallace’s former schoolmate S. S. Brown had learned that Confederates in western Texas, if given proper assurances, would change their allegiance, unite with Union soldiers, and march into Mexico to support republicans attempting to overthrow the French imperialist government that had recently persuaded a youthful member of the Austrian royal family, Maximilian, to rule as emperor. Wallace conveyed this information to Grant in a letter dated January 14, 1865, and asked to be sent to the region to explore possibilities. Bringing enemy soldiers into Union ranks through a Mexican venture, Wallace promised, “would stagger the rebellion, next to the giving in of the State of Georgia.”³⁰ Grant viewed the imperialists in Mexico as a real threat to the Monroe Doctrine and sympathized heartily with the republicans. Eight days later, he ordered Wallace to inspect western Texas. Wallace spent February and March in the southwest attempting to find allies and build coalitions. He planned army operations to isolate Maximilian and wrote Grant to request command of all Union forces in Texas. Blithely ignoring military and diplomatic realities, Wallace’s schemes mushroomed into the realm of the

²⁸Ibid. Wallace observed Grant perform this bit of theater when a delegation from Philadelphia came to press for more active offensive operations. On cue, Grant spoke when he struck his match, telling his visitors that keeping General Robert E. Lee’s army in place at Richmond and struggling with supplies was then better strategy than chasing a large force over the countryside and causing a Union supply problem.

²⁹Lew Wallace to Susan E. Wallace, September 12, 1864, and Lew Wallace to William Wallace, September 23, 1864, reel 3, Lew Wallace Collection.

³⁰Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 13: 283.

improbable—if not impossible—and Grant quite properly chose not to answer the long letters from his enthusiastic inspector.

While Wallace entertained his various Rio Grande intrigues, the Civil War effectively ended with the march of Sherman's army through the Carolinas and Lee's surrender to Grant at Appomattox. Wallace arrived in Baltimore on April 15 and hoped to report to Grant in person, but President Lincoln's assassination the previous day disrupted his plans. Dismayed that "the business stands unconcluded," Wallace wrote to Grant in an effort to reignite his interest in the Mexican negotiations. The letter apparently went unnoticed.³¹

Grant was, however, still paying attention to Mexican affairs. He selected major generals Philip H. Sheridan and John M. Schofield, two of his favorite officers, to pursue matters along the border. Sheridan subsequently sent reports to Grant that derided Wallace's activities. In particular, Sheridan revealed that Wallace had attempted to secure American money and volunteers to deploy in Mexico through contact with an unreliable Mexican republican leader named José María Jesús Carvajal, whom Wallace had brought east under an assumed name.³² These revelations undoubtedly dampened any enthusiasm Grant may have felt for Wallace's schemes.

Although deeply enamored over prospects for a republican success in Mexico, Wallace persisted for practical reasons as well. Carvajal had promised him a big payday and a commission as major general in the Mexican Army if he would cajole funds out of financiers and raise volunteers from the swelling ranks of mustered-out soldiers. Wallace carried out much of this business on the sly while sitting on the military commission that tried the Lincoln conspirators and acting as secretary of the military commission that eventually condemned to death Henry Wirz, commander of the notorious Confederate prison at Andersonville, Georgia. Completing these official duties, Wallace determined that he must see Grant, and he enlisted Schofield to bring about a face-to-face exchange while Grant visited New York City. "Gen. Wallace will call upon you," Schofield wrote on November 15, "in reference to a matter of importance, which he will explain to you. Please comply with his wishes, in the matter, if practicable."³³ Busy schedules evidently precluded a

³¹Ibid., 289.

³²Ibid., 16: 323-24.

³³John M. Schofield to Ulysses S. Grant, November 15, 1865, reel 4, Lew Wallace Collection.

meeting of the two. On November 16, Wallace sat in the Metropolitan Hotel where Grant was lodging and wrote the general to ask his assistance in coordinating troops along the Mexican border and in procuring arms in New Orleans for shipment to Brownsville, Texas. "I will be back at between 12 and 1 o'clock to make an effort to get a word with you," Wallace stated hopefully, before concluding, "if that is impossible, I trust you will extend your confidence far enough to give me your views and conclusions on the points submitted." No written reply from Grant has been identified, and it is doubtful that the two men conversed in any substantial way on this subject.³⁴

Matters did not improve appreciably even after the fall, when Wallace submitted his army resignation to devote himself to Mexican ventures. Wallace desperately implored Grant on December 14, 1865: "I find myself at my 'wit's end,' compelled to turn to you or the President. Is it not possible to effect something through a secret fund? Or, cannot a secret loan treaty be made with Mexico?"³⁵ Grant evidently ignored this pathetic appeal, and Wallace, now a Mexican major general with no troops to lead, could do little more than wander about Mexico in search of fame and fortune. He found neither, but he did continue to ask Grant's assistance in securing reappointment for a friend as collector of customs at Brownsville. Again, Grant evidently ignored Wallace's appeal. The republicans finally prevailed when the French withdrew from Mexico and left Maximilian unsupported. Wallace resigned his Mexican Army commission and returned to the United States shortly after Maximilian was executed on June 19, 1867.

With his hopes for success in Mexico dashed, Wallace had to find another way to pay his expenses. He hit upon the idea of persuading the United States government to adopt his book on infantry tactics, drafted in the lull following Shiloh. As he completed the manuscript in January 1866, Wallace wrote to Grant seeking advice on how to solicit the government for publication. Two months later, Wallace asked Grant to present his manuscript to Secretary of War Stanton for formal review. Grant forwarded Wallace's letter and manuscript to Stanton with the

³⁴Lew Wallace to Ulysses S. Grant, November 16, 1865, *ibid.*

³⁵Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 15: 628-29. For additional details on Wallace's actions in Mexico, see Robert Ryal Miller, "Lew Wallace and the French Intervention in Mexico," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 59 (March 1963), 31-50.

recommendation that three infantry officers conduct the review. Wallace believed his tactics “simpler than the old one[s]” and better suited to modern army maneuvers, but the board’s finding that Wallace’s proposals “had little to recommend, either, in the deviations from the authorized System, or in the additions thereto” left him disappointed.³⁶ Grant approved the principal features of the board’s report, and on February 4, 1867, heartily endorsed a board recommendation to adopt Lieutenant Colonel Emory Upton’s published book on infantry tactics.

Wallace perceived himself as a victim of both army politics and hidebound military beliefs. Another incident a year later reopened his Shiloh wounds. Adam Badeau’s newly published *Military History of Ulysses S. Grant* (1859), written in close cooperation with Grant, offered a harsh assessment of Wallace’s actions at Shiloh.³⁷ In a letter to Grant dated February 28, 1868, Wallace sought “a note of acquittal from blame, plain enough to allay the suspicions and charges to which I have been so painfully subjected.”³⁸ With his request, Wallace sent Grant statements from several officers who had served under him on that fateful day. Although the statements generally supported Wallace’s version of events, he had silently edited them for greater consistency and grander effect.³⁹ Grant’s reply was friendly, but too tepid to suit Wallace, who requested Grant’s authorization to delete the words “seem to” in a critical sentence of the latter’s response: “The statements which I now return seem to exonerate you from the great point of blame, your taking the wrong road, or different road from the one directed, from Crumps Landing to Pittsburg Landing.” Grant made no known reply to Wallace’s editing request.⁴⁰

³⁶Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 17: 45-46.

³⁷After reading extracts of Badeau’s military history published in the *Chicago Tribune* on December 25, 1867, former soldier James R. Ross addressed a long letter to Wallace that explicitly denounced that book’s handling of the general at Shiloh. James R. Ross to Lew Wallace, January 25, 1868, reel 6, Lew Wallace Collection.

³⁸Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 18: 191.

³⁹Wallace’s editing marks are visible on the originals. Once he had redacted the texts, Wallace crossed out a passage included in the first draft of his letter to Grant: “Upon reading, you will discover conflicts in the letters, but as all such are on minor points, they will, if rightly considered, serve to convince you that each writer drew his paper independently and without collusion with me or each other.” Lew Wallace to Ulysses S. Grant, February 28, 1868, reel 6, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁴⁰Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 18: 192.

Grant's inauguration as President of the United States on March 4, 1869, opened new possibilities for Wallace. His support for the Republican Party as a campaign speaker and, to a lesser extent, his unsuccessful congressional bid in 1870, put Wallace in line for patronage positions as rewards for his political service, and he was not shy about asserting his personal relationship with Grant.⁴¹ Only two days after Grant took office, Wallace, while sitting in the White House, wrote a letter to the new president appealing for appointment as Indiana's district attorney.

You have it in power to do me a favor. I have returned to the law, and by hard work and patience hope to win my way back to a good practice. The office of United States District Attorney for the District of Indiana has no political significance, and is at present filled by a gentleman notoriously incompetent; it would nevertheless be a great help to me, by at once giving me the start in the profession which I so much covet. I make request for the appointment directly, as your knowledge of me makes recommendations and interference of others unnecessary. If you think me a proper person to discharge the duties of the position, and are free to give it to me, and are so disposed, I feel sure this direct asking will do me no harm. As to my qualifications I have no hesitation in referring you to Mr. Colfax. Having congratulated you before and after your inauguration, I leave you this note, and place the matter in your hands, and go home tonight.⁴²

Nothing developed from this bold sally, probably because Wallace harbored no real enthusiasm for a resumption of his legal career, and Grant never saw, or gave little attention to, this one request among the thousands that inundated him during the initial weeks of his presidency.

Wallace again approached Grant for a political favor in August 1872, and the inveterate adventurer from Indiana pursued this one with vigor. Wallace had joined a group of entrepreneurs interested in starting

⁴¹Morsberger and Morsberger, *Lew Wallace*, 216.

⁴²Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 19: 364. Wallace refers to Vice President Schuyler Colfax, who served from 1869 to 1873.

a steamship service between New Orleans and Brazil, and they had identified friendly ministers and consuls at key points in South America essential to a profitable venture. Wallace contacted Grant about the project, asking for the appointment of Charles M. Travis of Crawfordsville, Indiana, as consul to Pará, Brazil, “a point of the highest importance” to the success of the steamship line. Several prominent Hoosiers joined Wallace in recommending Travis. Grant favored commercial expansion, especially in Central and South American nations, and gave a favorable endorsement to Wallace’s letter: Travis received the consulship.⁴³

Wallace also sought from Grant a diplomatic appointment for himself in a place where he could facilitate the contemplated steamship business. Wallace first targeted a consulship at Santarém, Brazil, but then set his sights on the more prestigious position of minister to Bolivia. “A residence in that country, about to be opened to direct trade by a railroad around the falls of the Madeira river,” Wallace explained, “will give me ample opportunity to post myself and the American public upon what is to day really a sealed book—I mean commercial affairs in the Amazon valley.”⁴⁴ To boost his chances of appointment, Wallace gathered recommendation letters from an impressive list of national political notables; wrote a letter to the editor of an Omaha newspaper, defending Grant against charges of drunkenness at Fort Donelson and Shiloh; and presented political dirt on incumbent minister Leopold Markbreit, whose supporters, he alleged, had tried to blackmail the Republican National Committee.⁴⁵ In the end, Wallace’s efforts went unrewarded; Grant nominated John T. Croxton, a former Union cavalry officer from Kentucky, to the Bolivian post.⁴⁶

Wallace’s failure to secure an overseas station proved fortunate. The steamship enterprise wrecked in the wake of the Panic of 1873 and cast the luckless Consul Travis adrift, impoverished and suffering the ravages of yellow fever. Travis floated back to Crawfordsville by

⁴³Travis had served in the 12th Illinois Infantry and compiled a worthy army record. *Ibid.*, 23: 225-26.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 226-27.

⁴⁵His letter to the editor defending Grant against charges of drunkenness received wide circulation through reprinting in at least one major daily. *New York Times*, September 11, 1872. The blackmail that Wallace uncovered was that an Ohio newspaper publisher (and Markbreit’s principal supporter) had demanded \$30,000 from the Republican National Committee for his loyalty and defected to the liberal republicans when the money was not forthcoming.

⁴⁶Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 19: 263-66.

November 1875 and wrote a letter to the secretary of state seeking a better appointment. He received nothing and sank into historical oblivion.⁴⁷ Wallace and the other promoters apparently abandoned, and tried to forget, both Travis and the steamship bust.

While the steamship company struggled, Wallace completed his first novel, *The Fair God, Or, The Last of The 'Tzins: A Tale of the Conquest of Mexico* (1873), a work that grew out of his long fascination with that country. Proud of his literary accomplishment, Wallace sent a copy to Grant from Crawfordsville. The author included a letter dated August 13, 1873, in which he observed that “the battle portions of the book might prove interesting.” “I would be delighted,” Wallace concluded, “to have your opinion of my success in the effort.”⁴⁸ Grant penned no known reply. Wallace also sent *The Fair God* to Sherman, along with a similar letter asking for “a note containing your opinion of the work.” Wallace closed by mentioning his “very vivid recollection of kindnesses received from you in certain days which were indescribably gloomy to me,” a revealing reference to their discussion of Wallace’s desire for a court of inquiry to investigate his conduct at Shiloh.⁴⁹ Sherman promptly and graciously answered Wallace’s letter, praising the book and encouraging Wallace to write “a series of Romances, which will paint to us, the living custom” of the Mexican people.⁵⁰ This pleasant exchange of letters with Sherman probably encouraged Wallace to call on the general three months later when the blossoming author was in Washington, D.C., conducting research for a future manuscript at the Library of Congress.⁵¹

Wallace’s contacts with Grant over the remainder of his presidency were sporadic. As he prepared for a speaking tour in late 1874 following popular success with *The Fair God*, Wallace asked Grant for his comments on a lecture, “Mexico and the Mexicans.” Grant replied through a secretary, who wrote that the president “perceives no statement of fact in

⁴⁷Ibid., 23: 227-28. The 1880 U.S. Census shows Travis employed as a lawyer and residing in Crawfordsville with his wife, Mary; six-year-old son, Claud (born in Brazil); and a female Irish servant named Nora Meehan. U.S., Tenth Census, 1880, Population Schedules for Montgomery County, Indiana, p. 308.

⁴⁸Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 24: 441.

⁴⁹Lew Wallace to William Tecumseh Sherman, August 13, 1873, William T. Sherman Papers (Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

⁵⁰Morsberger and Morsberger, *Lew Wallace*, 224.

⁵¹Lew Wallace to Joanna M. Lane, December 21, 1873, reel 6, Lew Wallace Collection.

your copy which he would change at all, and that as for the portion relating to your visit in Mexico and your return you of course are the best judge." On "the subject of the French occupation of Mexico," the secretary added, Grant "sympathized most warmly with the cause of the Republicans" and "could not but look upon the war upon them as being also directed against ourselves."⁵²

Writing and lecturing did not pull Wallace away from politics. The electoral crisis that followed the presidential campaign in 1876 steered him to Louisiana and Florida, where he joined other "visiting statesmen" attempting to ascertain the official vote. Grant also monitored developments closely, knowing that violence might erupt and that the Republicans needed every disputed electoral vote for their candidate, Rutherford B. Hayes. He undoubtedly welcomed Wallace's telegram sent from Tallahassee on December 6, 1876: "Count just finished Hayes majority nine hundred & thirty republicans elect governor Lieut governor & both members of Congress all quiet."⁵³ Wallace did not enjoy this political service, but his dutifulness, and Hayes's victory, helped earn his appointment as governor of New Mexico Territory in 1878.

In New Mexico, Wallace faced the challenges of controlling desperadoes in the middle of the territory and Apaches along the borders. Wallace sought military approval to mobilize civilians against the Apaches. Sherman—then commanding general and always zealous of professional army prerogatives—denied the request, thinking incorrectly that Wallace sought militia to protect Santa Fe rather than to patrol the southwestern part of the territory, where regular troops were stretched thin. On the whole, Wallace won praise, especially for suppressing the notorious Lincoln County War and for checking the wild career of the outlaw William Bonney, better known as Billy the Kid. Wallace also found time to complete his second novel, *Ben-Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (1880). Its popularity made him a literary celebrity and a first choice when President James A. Garfield was seeking a minister to Turkey, a better-paying and more prestigious post than governor of New Mexico Territory.⁵⁴

⁵²Simon, *The Papers of Ulysses S. Grant*, 25: 457.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 28: 48.

⁵⁴Morsberger and Morsberger, *Lew Wallace*, 257-96. Wallace sent a presentation copy of *Ben-Hur* to John Sherman, William Tecumseh Sherman's younger brother, who then served as

Despite the upward trajectory of his career, Wallace's disagreement with Grant over Shiloh still haunted him, and the issue was still being publicly debated in 1881. Papers presented on the battle of Shiloh at the annual meeting of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee in early April of that year, with Sherman presiding, provoked yet another newspaper controversy over the facts of the engagement. Defending Wallace against charges of tardiness in moving to the front, Charles Whittlesey, former colonel of the 20th Ohio Infantry, asserted a new claim that the Union troops around Pittsburg Landing had lost the battle on the first day, even before Wallace had been ordered to move. Sherman denounced this claim—not publicly, but in a letter to his nephew: “We claim that the Battle was *never* lost, and we object to parties who came up after the hardest fighting was over, after Sidney Johnston was killed, and after the Enemy was shaken by the terrible losses we had inflicted reporting and adhering to the assertion that the Battle was lost, justifying their conclusion that we were saved by the timely arrival of Lew Wallace's Division, and of the Army of the Ohio.” He then distanced himself from the dispute: “Genl. Wallace never took exception as far as I know to my statement of facts. His controversy is and has been with Genl. Grant.”⁵⁵ Sherman showed less restraint in a letter to William R. Rowley, a participant in the newspaper dispute, and one of Grant's staff officers who had reported Wallace's division marching on the wrong road on April 6, 1862. Sherman accepted Rowley's version of events and chided the performance of Wallace and his division at Shiloh. “Wallace may think he can give Grant and Sherman hell,” the famously testy general surmised, “but I think he will be more scorched by his own fire than we.”⁵⁶

secretary of the treasury. He politely acknowledged the gift and sent in return a copy of his *Selected Speeches and Reports on Finance and Taxation, From 1859 to 1878* (New York, 1879), which he characterized as “rather dry and uninteresting” but “may some time or other be useful for reference.” John Sherman to Susan E. Wallace, December 30, 1880, reel 9, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁵⁵William Tecumseh Sherman to Henry Sherman, June 18, 1881, William T. Sherman Papers; *Report of the Proceedings of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, at the Fourteenth Annual Meeting, Held at Cincinnati, Ohio, April 6th and 7th, 1881* (Cincinnati, 1885). Wallace was part of the Society of the Army of the Tennessee, a veterans association for officers founded at the close of the Civil War, during the early 1870s, but he dropped his membership after coming to believe that some members blamed him for the severe Union losses at Shiloh.

⁵⁶William Tecumseh Sherman to William R. Rowley, July 15, 1881, William T. Sherman Papers.

Others, however, came to Wallace's aid. Prompted by renewed public discussion of Shiloh, Wallace's former subordinate officer George F. McGinnis set about preparing a defense of his division commander for presentation at a reunion of the 11th Indiana Infantry in September 1883. He asked Wallace to supply material favorable to his case. Evidently both Wallace and McGinnis were hindered by fears that Grant still wielded political influence. McGinnis assured his former superior that rather than read a paper on Shiloh "which might produce ill feeling on the part of Grant and his friends" and result in Wallace's removal as minister to Turkey, he "would put the paper in the fire."⁵⁷ Changing his stance in a letter of April 7, 1883, McGinnis rebuked Wallace for adopting the position that it was not yet time to settle "the whole question" of his connection to Shiloh. Further delay, McGinnis suggested, would mean that those remaining veterans of Shiloh would die off and prevent the collection of necessary evidence in Wallace's favor. Wallace was sufficiently convinced to write a letter, also read aloud at the 11th Indiana reunion, claiming that Badeau's *Military History of Ulysses S. Grant* had misrepresented and scapegoated him "to protect the reputation of others."⁵⁸

Wallace's edginess about the legacy of Shiloh surfaced again only one month later, when he learned that the federal government planned to publish the Shiloh battle reports in its eagerly awaited *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (1884) along with Grant's damning endorsement of Wallace's account. Presumably frantic, Wallace cabled Secretary of War Robert Todd Lincoln on October 27, 1883: "Please have publication of report of battle of Shiloh deferred till receipt of letter from me."⁵⁹ The next day Wallace wrote that letter. "It may already be in your knowledge that I was subjected to most severe accusations in connection with the movements of my command during the first day of that battle," he began, and then discussed at length the "dishonoring effect" of his critics' persistence. To remedy the situation, he asked Lincoln to have the editor include Grant's postwar modification of his initial endorsement of Wallace, as well as the statements from officers in

⁵⁷George F. McGinnis to Lew Wallace, June 23, 1882, reel 9, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁵⁸*New York Times*, September 20, 1883; George F. McGinnis to Lew Wallace, April 7, 1883, reel 9, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁵⁹Lew Wallace to Robert Todd Lincoln, October 27, 1883, reel 9, Lew Wallace Collection.

Wallace's command that had prompted Grant to alter his view.⁶⁰ The many scratch outs and revisions in the draft letter suggest Wallace's great anxiety as he labored to strike the right note. He did win a small victory when Lincoln delayed the printing of the questioned volume on the strength of the cable; in the end, however, Wallace was unable to change the content of the volume. Siding with series editor Robert N. Scott, Lincoln wrote Wallace that opening the *Official Records* to later recollections and explanations would mar the contemporary documents and that including such materials was not "within the laws and the rules" established by Congress in its authorization of the work. Trying to soothe Wallace, Lincoln observed that in no other case had the series printed "unofficial papers prepared after the war was over. For these the historians must go elsewhere. I regret very much the disappointment which will be caused you by the course which my duty in this matter compels me to take."⁶¹

New opportunities for satisfaction arose after direct contact between Wallace and Grant resumed during the spring and summer of 1884. The former general and president had been left virtually penniless in the wake of frauds committed by the managing partner of his Wall Street firm of Grant & Ward. At roughly the same time, Grant was diagnosed with throat cancer. Previously unwilling to chronicle his Civil War experiences, Grant now agreed to author articles for *Century Magazine*. When Wallace learned that one article covered Shiloh, he wrote to Grant to see if this account might contain his long-sought exoneration for "one who has been so bitterly and continuously criticised in the connection." After restating all of his former contentions, Wallace concluded on an emotional note: "For the sake of the hundreds of survivors of my old division, as well as that justice may be finally and completely done to me individually, I presume to present the matter to you in this letter."⁶² Grant replied cordially, but left Wallace unsure about whether his former superior would present a revised view. A meeting with Grant and his wife at their New York City home in November assured Wallace that the couple admired his achievements as an author,

⁶⁰Lew Wallace to Robert Todd Lincoln, October 28, 1883, *ibid.*

⁶¹Robert N. Scott to Robert Todd Lincoln, November 16, 1883 and Robert Todd Lincoln to Lew Wallace, November 21, 1883, *ibid.*

⁶²Lew Wallace to Ulysses S. Grant, September 16, 1884, reel 10, *ibid.*

but still did not clarify whether the ailing general's forthcoming article would resolve the Shiloh contention. "I talked the Shiloh matter all over with Grant," Wallace wrote to his wife, "and he is now making the final modifications of his article on Pittsburg Landing. Still I cannot say his remarks were satisfactory. He talked all around the matter without actually touching it, and made no promises. If his article has as much of himself in it, as his conversation it will be Grant and very little battle. So wags the world away!"⁶³

The article that finally appeared in *Century Magazine* in February 1885, disappointed and disturbed Wallace. It contained all the old charges worsened by a misguided effort to alleviate their sting: "I presume his idea was that by taking the route he did, he would be able to come around on the flank or rear of the enemy, and thus perform an act of heroism that would redound to the credit of his command, as well as to the benefit of his country."⁶⁴ From his post in Turkey, Wallace lamented to his son Henry that Grant's article was "just about as I expected and as I would have had it, since he was determined to attack me again." *Century* editor Roswell Smith, Wallace noted, had offered him an opportunity for a brief reply. Wallace instead requested "space for a full article on the subject."⁶⁵ Expressing less bravado in a letter sent to his wife several weeks later, Wallace wrote: "Shiloh and its slanders. Will the world ever acquit me of them? If I were guilty I would not feel them so keenly."⁶⁶

A friendly newspaper editor in Indianapolis promised in an editorial that Wallace would refute Grant with "a full and perfect history of the movements of his division throughout the two days of the battle." According to this editor, Wallace would share specifics from his conversation with Grant when the two had dined together at City Point, particularly Grant's statement to him that "If I had known then what I know now, I would have ordered you to move as you started for the field."⁶⁷ Outlining plans for his reply to Grant in a letter to another friend,

⁶³Ulysses S. Grant to Lew Wallace, October 7, 1884, in Nichols, ed., *From Sumter to Shiloh*, 610; Lew Wallace to Susan E. Wallace, November 21, 1884, reel 10, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁶⁴U.S. Grant, "The Battle of Shiloh," *Century Magazine*, 29 (February 1885), 596.

⁶⁵Lew Wallace to Henry L. Wallace, February 14, 1885, reel 10, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁶⁶Lew Wallace to Susan E. Wallace, March 3, 1885, *ibid.*

⁶⁷*New York World*, March 10, 1885. The editorial appeared in the March 11, 1885 edition of the *Indianapolis Times*.

Wallace indicated that “I’m not at all dispirited over Grant’s article. In fact I feel sorry for him. His mental failure is vastly more observable than his physical.”⁶⁸ Once over his initial anger, however, Wallace thought better of a written attack on the dying hero. He never composed a full account of his actions at Shiloh until his autobiography, published posthumously in 1906.⁶⁹

Grant tried one last time to moderate his censures of Wallace at Shiloh. Just before his *Century* article appeared, Grant received from the widow of Brigadier General William H. L. Wallace a letter that Lew Wallace had written to her husband, dated April 5, 1862, that showed him actively preparing to move to the main Union position at Pittsburg Landing by the route his division at first followed when the Confederate attack came the next day. “This modifies very materially what I have said, and what has been said by others, of the conduct of General Lew Wallace at the battle of Shiloh,” Grant wrote in response to this revelation. Wallace’s letter, Grant continued, “shows that he naturally, with no more experience than he had at the time in the profession of arms, would take the particular road that he did start upon in the absence of orders to move by a different road.” He then admitted that his staff officer could have garbled the verbal order to Wallace, and “that I am not competent to say just what order the general actually received.” Finally, Grant acknowledged that if the Union front at Pittsburg Landing “had not changed, the road which Wallace took would have been somewhat shorter to our right than the River road.” These conclusions appeared in *Century Magazine* shortly after Grant’s death in July 1885. They were also included as a note to the chapter on the first day at Shiloh in *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant* (1886). Since 300,000 subscribed to Grant’s reminiscences, many likely read his much more sympathetic assessment.⁷⁰

⁶⁸Lew Wallace to E. F. Test, March 11, 1885, reel 10, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁶⁹For a stout defense of Wallace in response to Grant’s *Century* article, see Charles Whittlesey, “Wallace at Shiloh,” *Magazine of Western History*, 2 (July 1885), 213-22.

⁷⁰*Century Magazine*, 30 (September, 1885), 776; Ulysses S. Grant, *Personal Memoirs of U. S. Grant*, (2 vols., New York, 1886), 1: 351-52. Wallace acknowledged Grant’s exoneration in his oration at the dedication of the Indiana monuments at Shiloh, April 6, 1903. John W. Coons, comp., *Indiana at Shiloh* (Shiloh, Tenn., 1904), 269-80. A little more than one year earlier, Wallace had concluded occasionally strained correspondence with the principal coordinator of historical markers for the Shiloh National Military Park Commission over the proper text to describe the march of his division on the first day of that battle with an assertion that Grant in

H. G. 3^d Division
 Adamsville, Apr. 5, 1862

Gen. W. H. L. Wallace,
 Comd. 2^d Div.

Sir:

Your rec^d. Glad to hear
 from you. My cavalry from this
 point has been to and from your
 post frequently. As my 3^d Brigade
 is here, five miles from Camps
 Landing, only 2 or two & a half
 miles from it, I thought it would
 be better to open communication
 with you from Adamsville. I
 will tomorrow order Maj. Hays
 of the 5th Ohio Cav^y to report to
 you at your Quarters; and, if you
 are so disposed, probably, you
 had better send a company to
 return with him, that they may
 familiarize themselves with the
 road, to act, in case of emergency,
 as guides to and from our
 Camps.

I am, Sir, resp^{tly}
 Your obt^d Serv^t,
 W. H. L. Wallace

Letter from Lew Wallace to Brigadier General William H. L. Wallace, dated April 5, 1862
 William Wallace's 1885 decision to share this letter with Ulysses S. Grant
 inspired the former president to revise his remarks on Lew Wallace's
 conduct during the first day of the battle of Shiloh.

Isabel Wallace, *Life and Letters of General W. H. L. Wallace* (Chicago, 1909).

That Wallace nursed no grudge toward Grant, even before this modification reached print, can be seen in at least two episodes unrelated to the Shiloh affair. After reading an inaccurate report of Grant's death in early April 1885, Wallace lamented to his wife that busy Americans "will indulge in a paroxysm of grief lasting the whole of a day"—woefully inadequate mourning given the deeds of the deceased.⁷¹ (The sorrow and observances following Grant's death, it must be said, proved Wallace's cynical prediction wrong.) Wallace was truly saddened by Grant's suffering and death. Second, Wallace responded generously to the plight of Grant's sons, who scrambled for income following the demise of Grant & Ward. Frederick Dent Grant and Jesse Root Grant Jr., the oldest and youngest sons, respectively, had involved themselves in a project to construct a railroad from Constantinople to the Persian Gulf. Money to finance a trip to Europe to explore prospects came from Samuel Clemens's publishing firm, Charles L. Webster & Company, which had published their father's memoirs. Railroad magnate Leland Stanford provided advice. Wallace, who as the recently displaced minister to Turkey knew officials and conditions in that country, encouraged the hopeful Jesse Grant, saying "the Sultan is anxious for the road to be built." Wallace went so far as to return to Turkey "as the representative of Eastern men on a business mission."⁷² No one knew that Wallace was acting for the Grants, which certainly was the most likely reason for the trip. Even with such financial and ambassadorial backing, the Turkish railroad plan fizzled in late 1885. But Wallace had extended himself to the Grant family members when he easily could have let them fend for themselves.

Lew Wallace wanted to perform great feats in his life, and he valued the high regard of his contemporaries—particularly those with influence or power. Wallace's persistence in pursuing these desires had taken him into the army, and it had elevated him to a level of authority that brought him into contact with men like Grant and Sherman. Yet the constancy of his contacts with these luminaries—through the

his *Personal Memoirs* "wrote the exoneration for which I and my descendants can never be sufficiently gratified." Lew Wallace to David W. Reed, February 20, 1902, reel 13, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁷¹Lewis Wallace to Susan E. Wallace, April 7, 1885, reel 10, Lew Wallace Collection.

⁷²Frederick Anderson, ed., *Mark Twain's Notebooks & Journals* (3 vols., Berkeley, Calif., 1975), 3: 165, 170, 202; *New York Times*, October 20, December 9, 1885.

inevitable ups and downs of any dynamic relationship and amid the more particular complications brought on by his actions at Shiloh—is striking. Wallace surely gained more than he lost from maintaining his relationships with the two generals, and their advice (or, at times, simple inaction) probably saved him from embarrassments or missteps on more than one occasion. But the doggedness of his entreaties demands explanation. Why did he continue to endure the potential embarrassment and humiliation of seeking absolution from two men who seemed so clearly hesitant to grant it?

The answer appears to be that not securing Grant's exoneration would have been tantamount, for Wallace, to acknowledging that he possessed less capacity, composure, or courage than his commander or other successful generals—including Sherman. Such an admission would have run contrary both to Wallace's self-perception and to his ideal of manhood. With Wallace's inner drive had come a sensitivity, a tendency to let slights leave him disheartened and troubled. His persistence in seeking to clear the record on Shiloh attests to that fact. Yet rather than let this character flaw lead to self-pity, Wallace continually rallied from his low points. His military, political, and literary accomplishments will forever mark him as a notable figure of his age and will outweigh, in the balance of history, any doubt over the actions he took beside the Tennessee River on an April day in 1862.

Wallace outlived both Grant and Sherman, and could have the last word on his famous contemporaries. In a manner that perhaps he himself did not fully perceive, Wallace's accounts of the two men, published in his autobiography, bear the same mix of magnanimity and criticism, of respect and hurt, that had characterized his relationships with them during their lives. Writing of Shiloh, Wallace uses the autobiography as an opportunity to take Sherman to task for failing to keep watch for the Confederate attack that came on April 6 and for putting the Union Army in grave peril. His treatment of his great hero, Grant, is equally critical, emphasizing the commanding general's failure to give full and clear information on several occasions during the battle. Even his exculpatory summary of the two men's actions seems to bear a critical edge, albeit one wrapped safely in complimentary tones:

That General Grant and his lieutenant, Sherman, were caught so flagrantly may astonish their admirers; it should not, however, for in the Shiloh period they were both at school, learning to



Lew Wallace, c. 1900

Wallace, who outlived both Grant and Sherman, used his memoir as an opportunity to enjoy the last word on his famous contemporaries.

Courtesy General Lew Wallace Study and Museum, Crawfordsville, Indiana

apply military principles acquired by them at the academy long before; one of them, it may be further said, graduated after Vicksburg, the other on the road to Atlanta.⁷³

In the end, Wallace hoped that others would consider his own life in the same way: that they would recognize him as a man who, for all his

⁷³Wallace, *Lew Wallace*, 1: 491.

faults, possessed a large heart and a fundamentally noble character. In his parting thoughts on Grant and Sherman, he modeled the kind of tribute which he himself had sought so persistently from others throughout his life.

