CHAPTER VIII

EAST TENNESSEANS REBEL AGAINST REBELLION

The spectre of secession was a horrible nightmare to East Tennesseans. It haunted them. Knowing that it was best to crush it before it should settle down upon the state, they did not wait until the June election to raise an outcry.

In fact, Brownlow and his East Tennessee associates in Unionism, Horace Maynard, Emerson Etheridge, T. A. R. Nelson, O. P. Temple, John Baxter, John Fleming, John Netherland, Nat Taylor, F. S. Heiskell, C. F. Trigg, W. B. Carter, and many others, old Whigs and Democrats alike, had been fighting secession since it ominously appeared on the horizon with the election of Lincoln. The troublous times brought together in spirit even two such inveterate enemies as Brownlow and Andrew Johnson, the one holding the fort of Unionism in the highlands of East Tennessee and the other in the Senate in Washington boldly denouncing secession and its leaders. Though he was in Washington, Johnson’s influence in East Tennessee was great.1 Brownlow was now to show that he could use language just as abusive in defending Johnson as he had formerly used in opposing him. He denounced a forger of Johnson’s name as a “corrupt liar, low-down drunkard, irresponsible vagabond, and infamous coward.”2 When the special session of the Senate adjourned in the latter part of March, Johnson hurried back to Tennessee. He was coming to help his East Tennessee compatriots to save the state for the Union in the plebiscite to be held on June 8.

In East Tennessee there was a strong feeling, impatient and

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1 Winston, op. cit., p. 190.
2 Parson Brownlow’s Book, p. 128.
bitter, that Middle and West Tennessee had forced disunion through the legislature in May and that they were preparing to work a grim joke on the people by dragooning them into voting for it on June 8. Brownlow and others having determined to prepare for the day by organizing a campaign of opposition in East Tennessee, issued a call urging every county to send delegates to a convention to be held in Knoxville on May 30. At noon on the day set, C. F. Trigg called to order in Temperance Hall between 450 and 500 delegates from twenty-six counties. Most of them were from Knox, Roane, Anderson, Greene, Sevier, and Blount counties. So vehement was the Parson that he appeared as a triumvirate all in one—he was a regular delegate from Knox, and for each of the counties of Marion and Hancock he served by proxy. He was denied the praying of a long prayer with which the convention was opened, and he was not elected president, an honor which went to T. A. R. Nelson; but he was appointed to membership on the Business Committee, and given double power through his holding proxies for Marion and Hancock counties.

This committee, composed of members from the various counties, was the all-dominating group which shaped the purpose of the convention. It immediately set to work and on the second day presented a report and twelve resolutions, setting forth the perils of the times and breathing defiance against the government of Tennessee. The convention unanimously adopted these resolutions and ordered them to be printed in Brownlow's Knoxville Whig (and three other newspapers) and gave Brownlow the contract to print 5,000 copies of its proceedings. The next day the convention adjourned to await the outcome of the voting on June 8. In this movement there was a distinct threat of secession from a state.³

East Tennessee made a determined fight to vote disunion down not only in her own section but to raise such a large majority against it that the whole state would be saved, for she

remembered that in the February election on the question of holding a convention it was the East Tennessee majority that had defeated the move. But, as has previously appeared, Tennessee gave her majority vote for disunion in the June election, and the East Tennesseans now saw serious days ahead. Bitterness was beginning to usurp the throne of reason in all parts of the commonwealth, and threats of murder were beginning to be heard. Rumor had it that Brownlow and Johnson were marked for the slaughter, and so seriously was it regarded that the Parson made a special effort to have Johnson warned of his danger. He sent one of his sons to rescue the East Tennessee Senator from a trap, and shortly thereafter, about the middle of June, the Union leaders, concluding that Johnson was in danger as long as he remained in Tennessee, spirited him out by way of the Cumberland Gap. The Union cause in Tennessee was now in the hands of Brownlow and his associates. Johnson could be of greater aid in Washington; Brownlow could best do his work by remaining in Tennessee.

As soon as it was evident that disunion had prevailed in Tennessee, T. A. R. Nelson, the continuing president of the adjourned Knoxville Convention, called upon his East Tennesseans to reassemble on June 17 in Greeneville. East Tennessee was in no mood to submit to disunion, and the second session of the Convention would decide upon what should be done next. The delegates first assembled in the Greene County courthouse, held the morning session of the second day out under the trees, and adjourned to the Greeneville College auditorium for the remaining meetings. The Convention lasted four days. Thirty East Tennessee counties were represented, but the total number of delegates was not as great as in the Knoxville session. Brownlow was one of the Knox County delegates and at the same time increased his power and importance by representing Marion County in the guise of an “alternate.” Each meeting was opened with prayer, but the Parson as a politician seems to have eclipsed his clerical attainments, for he was not given the chance to call down the vengeance of the Lord upon the enemy at any time.

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during the Convention. The powerful Business Committee, the Directory of East Tennessee, retained the same membership which it had had at Knoxville. Brownlow thus continued to occupy a position of great importance. After three days of impassioned oratory by the convention, the Business Committee reported on the last day its “Declaration of Grievances,” which was in effect a declaration of independence. It provided for three commissioners to be appointed to go before the Tennessee legislature to ask for separate statehood, and it called for an election to choose delegates to go to another convention which should meet soon at Kingsport. This report was adopted, but not without some dissent. Twenty thousand copies of the proceedings of the convention were ordered to be printed and distributed.⁵

A remarkable situation had here developed. An historic issue had come to a head in the most distressing circumstances. East Tennessee had been conscious of her separateness from the surrounding country even before the state had been formed. From the beginning of the Watauga Association, down through the fiasco of the State of Franklin and on, East Tennessee had felt a social, economic, and geographical completeness which never entirely gave up the hope for separate statehood. During the 1840’s Brownlow was pursuing this idea with a vigor suggestive of a religious quarrel. In 1842 he was arguing that the time had come to cease paying tribute to Middle Tennessee. A meeting was held at Jonesboro to consider forming a new state which would be somewhat increased in size by the annexations of parts of North Carolina and Virginia. The next year a bill was introduced in the legislature for this purpose.⁶ The example of the western Virginia movement was now before the eyes of the East Tennesseans, and, indeed, on the very day the Greeneville session began, the Wheeling convention declared the independence of western Virginia from the Old Dominion. Being less advantageously situated for so bold a course and being weaker, the East Tennesseans were contented with an appeal to the Tennessee legislature for what the western Virginians violently

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⁶ Jonesboro Whig, December 20, 1843.
seized. Yet in the Greeneville Convention there was a strong move to declare independence, set up a provisional government, and raise an army. As it was, this convention had assumed an attitude and usurped powers that came close on the heels of treason, for its assumption of the right to order elections and otherwise to control the people of East Tennessee could not be regarded in any other light. The serious intentions of this convention were either not known to the state and Confederate authorities or they were lightly regarded, for Southern soldiers passing through Greeneville for Virginia looked upon the convention as a ridiculous performance.\(^7\)

The committee appointed to beg statehood at the hands of the legislature quickly performed its task. But the Tennessee legislature now had much more important work to do than to commit mayhem upon itself and to cut the jugular vein of the Confederacy. The petition was disposed of in short order. East Tennessee was the most strategic region in all the South, for it was through this region that the armies in Virginia would maintain quick communication with all the South and South-west from the Savannah to the Mississippi and beyond. That both the East Tennesseans and the Confederacy knew this fact was soon to be amply evident.

With Tennessee out of the Union and a member of the Confederacy, Brownlow now entered upon a campaign of withering denunciation so wild and abandoned that it is one of the minor miracles of history that he was permitted to continue so long. He was not the only Union leader in East Tennessee boldly to keep up the fight against the accomplished fact, but he was incomparably the most open and spectacular in his language. His strength was not in oratory and speechmaking but in the printed page of his Knoxville Whig. When he began his bold fight against secession soon after Lincoln's election, he began to lose many of his subscribers who were outraged by his language, but in that very picturesqueness of language he was appealing to many other people, and according to his claim he was making a net gain of two hundred subscribers a week.

Before a long-suffering government put a stop to his wild course, he had accumulated fourteen thousand subscribers and was for the first time in his life approaching the doors of wealth.8

Just before the plebiscite of June 8, Brownlow, in defending the right to fly a United States flag which he had hoisted over his home in February, declared that if the state should vote herself out of the Union “then we should have to come down, and bring our flag with us, bowing to the will of the majority with the best grace we could.” He had been put to as much trouble in protecting his flag as in defending his principles of Unionism. His neighbors had troubled him much about his flag, and when troops began coming through Knoxville on their way to Virginia they were induced to tease the Parson. He would come out of his house, shake his fist at his tormentors, bandy words with them, and make mock bows to them. Once his twenty-three-year-old daughter Susan confronted with a revolver two would-be flag-snatchers and forced them to retreat. The tale was later embellished by saying that the two men came back with ninety reinforcements but the doughty daughter held the fort against all comers.9 The Parson blamed the whole trouble upon his Knoxville enemies, who afraid to confront him, had induced these “strangers, under the influence of whiskey, to do a dirty and villainous work they have the meanness to do, without the courage.” Against them he poured out a tirade of abuse:

If these God-forsaken scoundrels and hell-deserving assassins want satisfaction out of me for what I have said about them,—and that has been no little,—they can find me on these streets every day of my life but Sunday. I am at all times prepared to give them satisfaction. I take back nothing I have ever said against the corrupt and unprincipled villains, but reiterate all, cast it in their dastardly faces, and hurl down their lying throats their own infamous calumnies.10

The Parson’s flag may have been furled after June 8, but

8 *Parson Brownlow’s Book*, p. 100; *Temple, op. cit.*, p. 276.
9 *Frank Moore, op. cit.*, I, 109; *Portrait and Biography*, p. 50. The defense of the flag was later written into a highly imaginative propaganda pamphlet featuring the Parson’s daughter. See pp. 244-45 of this book.
he forgot to submit to the will of the majority as he repeatedly promised he would do. No one was too high or none too low to escape his poisoned arrows. Former associates turned Confederate he especially loathed. "Men change in a night," he declared. Furthermore,

Men rise up and dress as Union men, and turn Secessionists before breakfast is over... The malady is short; the disease runs its course in twenty-four hours, and the patient heads a committee to order better men than himself to leave the State in a given time. He believes every lie he hears, and swears to the truth of every lie he tells. He drinks mean whiskey, and associates with men whom the day before he would have scorned. The disease is contagious, and a clever man will contract it by drinking mean whiskey out of the same tumbler with one afflicted with it.11

He did not attack merely through generalities; he called names and labelled them, high and low in Confederate and state offices. General W. H. Carroll, was a "walking groggy"; at one time John H. Crozier was "a goggle-eyed little scoundrel" and at another "the most unmitigated scoundrel in Knoxville"; J. C. Ramsey, the Confederate States District Attorney, and the son of "the vain old historian of Tennessee," was a "corrupt scoundrel and most unprincipled knave"; W. G. Swan was a member of a "villainous clique"; and W. G. McAdoo was one of the "most intense Southern patriots" of the cowardly variety.12 The editor of the Knoxville Register was "a man of bad morals, bad associations, and the tool of the worst class of men in Knoxville."13 A month after Tennessee had become a member of the Southern Confederacy, Brownlow characterized the leaders of the new nation as the real traitors, naming Yancey, Rhett, Toombs, Pryor, Davis, Keitt, Iverson, Wise, Mason, Wigfall, Breckinridge, and Lane. He boldly declared, "If there are any men in this country who deserve the doom of traitors, it is these authors of our national calamities," and he predicted that if the

13 Ibid., p. 215.
war lasted from three to five years they would all be fugitives in foreign countries.\textsuperscript{14}

With reckless abandon he fell upon the head of the Confederacy:

I have been expected to state in every issue of my paper, that the mantle of Washington sits well on Jeff Davis! This would be a funny publication. The bow of Ulysses in the hands of a pigmy! The robes of the giant adorning Tom Thumb! The curls of a Hyperion on the brow of a Satyr! The Aurora Borealis of a cotton farm melting down the icy North! This would be to metamorphose a \textit{minnow} into a \textit{whale}.\textsuperscript{15}

The Parson received in October, 1861, a package containing about half a yard of brown cloth which he felt sure was inoculated with smallpox. “Handling it with tongs” he took it out in the yard of his printing-office and burned it, and then wrote an editorial denouncing his would-be assassin, and declaring that this “attempt at our death, by the planting of a masked battery manned by the iniquitous spirit of Secession, entitles the cowardly villain who did it, to the honor of being picketed in the deepest gorge leading to hell!”\textsuperscript{16}

The first wave of enthusiasm for volunteering soon spent itself both North and South, when once the bloody business of war had set in. The Parson noted the slackening zeal of the Knoxville warriors who continued to fight with words only. He taunted them with as much satanic glee and irony about their holding back from the army as ever a small boy teased a playmate.\textsuperscript{17} In fact if Brownlow had been planning a campaign of martyrdom for himself and his paper he could not have done better than to follow the course he had taken since Tennessee left the Union. He did not call directly for rebellion against the Rebellion, but he kept up a bombardment against the Confederacy which could point to no other conclusion if it were allowed

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Knoxville Whig}, July 6, 1861, quoted in \textit{Parson Brownlow’s Book}, pp. 148-49.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Knoxville Whig}, June 29, 1861, quoted in \textit{Parson Brownlow’s Book}, p. 119.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Parson Brownlow’s Book}, p. 136.
\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Knoxville Whig}, October 12, 1861, quoted in \textit{Parson Brownlow’s Book}, pp. 245-49.
William G. Brownlow

To continue. He published in his paper time after time the accounts of Confederate tyrannies, including the arrests of people even for praying for the president of the United States. To live in the Confederacy under such conditions, he declared, "is literally to live in hell!" and "Wrongs less wanton and outrageous precipitated the French Revolution."

Brownlow's continuous agitation against the South had produced in East Tennessee a dangerous situation. All the elements were present for a rebellion against the Confederacy here. The Greeneville Convention, not dead but only adjourned, afforded a rallying point for the organization of a Lincoln government in the most strategic and vulnerable part of the Confederacy. Open military rebellion had not broken out yet, but political rebellion actually existed, for the East Tennesseans refused by their actions in the August 1 election to recognize the Confederacy. Indeed, it was an intolerable situation: This was the occasion for the election of the governor, the legislature, and the delegation to the Confederate Congress. The three congressional districts in East Tennessee elected Unionists to represent them in the Congress at Washington. Horace Maynard, one of the Unionists, made his escape by way of Cumberland Gap and Kentucky and was present to claim his seat when Congress assembled in December; T. A. R. Nelson, the president of East Tennessee by virtue of his presidency of the adjourned Greeneville Convention, attempted to slip away to Washington through Southwest Virginia, but he was arrested in the early part of August near Abingdon and was pardoned by President Davis on his promise to submit as a citizen of Tennessee to the Confederate Government; and George W. Bridges, the third of the East Tennessee incorruptibles, ultimately made his way to Washington, where he took his seat only six days before the term for which he was elected expired. An anomalous situation thus existed; a part of the Confederacy had elected representatives to the law-making body of a foreign country, and those

18 Knoxville Whig, June 29, 1861, quoted in Parson Brownlow's Book, p. 139.
representatives were seated. And at the same time, this same region was represented in the Confederate Congress.\(^{20}\)

If East Tennessee should slip from the control of the Confederacy, the power of this new government would be vitally impaired. In early July, General Leonidas Polk telegraphed to Richmond warning the government that no time should be lost in dealing with East Tennessee, although at that time there were 2,000 soldiers there. He declared that 10,000 ought to be sent at once, that a department ought to be created, including East Tennessee and portions of North Carolina and Georgia, and he recommended the appointment of Felix K. Zollicoffer to command it. Secretary of War Walker immediately ordered Governor Harris to send two Tennessee regiments to Jonesboro or Haynesville. By August 20 three more regiments, two from Mississippi and one from Alabama, had been ordered into East Tennessee. Disquieting reports were streaming out of this region, and it seemed a near panic was on among the Confederate authorities there. By December 9, East Tennessee had become a field of major interest for the Confederacy, engaging the energy and anxiety of the Richmond officials and requiring the presence of 11,000 infantry, cavalry, and artillery which were badly needed elsewhere. General Zollicoffer was placed in command in July and shortly thereafter he issued an order commanding his troops to cultivate the good will of the East Tennesseans and strictly enjoining upon them "the most scrupulous regard for the personal and property rights of all the inhabitants." He also warned his soldiers to refrain from alarming or irritating those who had been Unionists but had now submitted to the authority of the Confederacy.\(^{21}\)

The Parson thought as well of Zollicoffer as he could of any person who was so deluded as to join the Confederacy, but he had words of bitterness for the Confederate occupation of East Tennessee and for the soldiers who carried it out. He let it be

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known that the presence of soldiers in Knoxville would not cause him to change the tone of his newspaper. "I shall continue to denounce secession and all concerned in it," he declared, "though all the allied powers of hell and the Confederacy be quartered at my doors. Come what may, through weal or woe, in peace or war, no earthly power shall keep me from denouncing the enemies of my country until my tongue and pen shall be paralyzed in death. I covet no higher honor than to die in such a holy cause, and your brutal soldiery, therefore has no terrors for me."22 He charged the Confederate soldiers with being the riff-raff of the country and claimed that not a few of them had joined the army "to get rid of their wives and children."23 They were either a deluded or a vicious pack. "Ask one of them what rights he had lost and was so vehemently contending for," said Brownlow, "and the reply would be, the right to carry his negroes into the Territories. At the same time, the man never owned a negro in his life, and never was related, by consanguinity or affinity, to any one who did own a negro!"24 He had a special antipathy for the soldiers from the Cotton South. He held that many of them who came through East Tennessee were "vagabonds and wharf-rats from New Orleans, Mobile, and Texas... brimfull of prejudice against me and my paper."25

With such opinions of the Southern soldiery and with such opinions boldly expressed, the Parson should not have been surprised to have the same low opinions reciprocated. Soldiers occasionally jeered at him and made life miserable for him in as many ways as they could think of. He claimed that his enemies in East Tennessee incited them against him, and that when the meanest of these deluded grey-coats arrived in Knoxville they would visit the whiskey shops and then "swarm around my printing office and dwelling-house, howl like wolves, swear oaths that would blister the lips of a sailor, blackguard my family, and threaten to demolish my house, and even to hang me."26 Troops

25 Ibid., pp. 277-78.
passed his house daily "flourishing their knives, pointing their guns at the windows, and threatening to take my life."  

President T. A. R. Nelson, of the Greeneville Convention and Congressman-elect to Washington, might bow his knee to President Jefferson Davis and his Confederate army, but Parson Brownlow would become more determined in his opposition, irrespective of whether the soft hand or the mailed fist were extended. With the coming of Zollicoffer to Knoxville the Confederacy had taken an extremely liberal and friendly attitude toward the people, in view of the political rebellion the Unionists had raised and especially in view of the extreme importance of East Tennessee to the strategy of the Confederacy. But the Parson and his followers had evidently assumed that liberality meant weakness, so President Davis sought to do the only logical thing left to him. He issued a proclamation calling upon all East Tennesseans to swear allegiance to the Confederacy or to depart by October, 1861. This proclamation the Parson ignored, since he neither departed nor swore allegiance to the Confederacy. On November 6, the election of a president and vice president for the Confederacy was held, but so well had Brownlow trained his East Tennesseans that they ignored the whole procedure, the sheriffs not even deigning to open the polls.

The irreconcilable attitude of Brownlow and other East Tennesseans was not due entirely to an unreasoning fatuity; they had cause to believe that their precarious position was being considered in the North. One of the principal reasons why Andrew Johnson had fled in June was to provide sinews of war for East Tennessee and to set in motion an army of rescue. In Washington he would have the ear of Lincoln and of high army officers. But East Tennessee was not as accessible to Northern succor as was western Virginia, and while help was preparing, the East Tennesseans were left to their own devices.

When Tennessee passed out of the Union and into the Confederacy, there was a considerable movement of East Tennes-
seers through Cumberland Gap into Kentucky. Here they expected to build themselves into an avenging army, to rescue their homes when they should become strong enough. They felt a particular friendliness for Kentuckians, who had at this time adopted a position of neutrality, and through this very situation they expected not only the active support of Kentucky in their fight to recover East Tennessee but they had the promise of aid from the United States Government. William Nelson, encouraged and incited by President Lincoln, set up a training camp at Camp Dick Robinson on the edge of the eastern Kentucky mountains, defending himself with lame reasons against the charge that this was a breach of Kentucky neutrality, and here at least 2,000 Tennesseans came together during the summer and fall. They trickled through the mountain passes, principally Cumberland Gap, until the Confederate troops barred it. In early November it was reported that from 20 to 100 Tennesseans a day were emerging on the Kentucky side. They were training and arming and impatiently awaiting the day to march back to rescue their homes and expel the Confederates. Rumors were continually flying through East Tennessee that the army of rescue was on the march.\(^3\)

There were other East Tennesseans who determined to remain in their homes and defend them. They early began secretly organizing, arming, and training; and some of them were not opposed to taking the offensive in open violence, as was demonstrated as early as the latter part of April when Unionists cut down the telegraph wires in Knox and Roane counties.\(^3\) Almost every county in East Tennessee had its companies of Union men who were drilling in the mountain coves and out-of-the-way places, awaiting the day when they might join an army of deliverance. There was much excitement among the scattered Confederate forces, who expected to be ambushed at any time. Disturbing reports were coming in of groups of Union soldiers leaving for Kentucky to join the army shortly to enter East


\(^3\) *Knoxville Whig*, April 27, 1861. Brownlow and other Union leaders deprecated such actions on the part of their followers.
Tennessee. W. G. Swan declared that these scattered Union forces had a secret system of communication and that on the shortest notice they could join forces. He declared that 1,000 recently flew to arms on an alarm which turned out to be false. Landon C. Haynes, soon to be elected to the Confederate Senate, wrote Secretary of War Walker that military rebellion was flaring up in East Tennessee, that there were 10,000 Union men armed with rifles and shotguns, and that Brownlow had declared that civil war was inevitable. 32

There can be no doubt that East Tennessee was on the verge of an explosion, for the vast majority of the people, whipped into a fury by Brownlow and others, were inexorably opposed to submitting to Confederate rule. If they had not been cut off from Federal aid by mountains on all sides the major operations of the Civil War might have begun in the heart of the Confederacy rather than on the fringe. Bold efforts were made to run ammunition and guns into East Tennessee, and occasionally they were successful as on November 11 when the Federals in Kentucky sent in 45 pounds of rifle powder, 50 pounds of lead, and 20 boxes of rifle caps. 33 It was undoubtedly discouraging to be Unionists in East Tennessee, where the people were forced to live mostly on hopes, yet the tradition persists that the First Congressional District embracing this section of the State, sent a bigger proportion of its population into the Union army than any other district in the entire country. 34

That East Tennessee did not become a battlefield until the latter part of 1863 was no fault of the East Tennesseans. Plans were early being devised by the Washington authorities for seizing East Tennessee as one of the first great objectives of the Federal armies. Andrew Johnson had gone to Washington in June to lay such plans before Lincoln and the army leaders. East Tennessee's struggle for the Union was made to seem even more heroic than it actually was, and thus was a great deal of sentiment injected into the movement. Strategic reasons were well considered and found to be highly compelling. Two great

34 Price, op. cit., III, 322.
army movements could be made to impinge on this region. Mc­
Clellan’s operations against Richmond could be greatly helped
by creating a diversion in East Tennessee; and General Buell’s
armies which were forming in Kentucky should make this region
their definite objective. Thus would the East Tennessee fugi­
tives camping on the edges of the mountains become part of a
mighty army of deliverance. The whole conception was grand
and it appealed with vast force to the minds of Lincoln and Mc­
Clellan. Thus was sentiment, politics, and strategy mixed up in
a grand scheme.

The East Tennessee leaders were cognizant of these plans,
and this information was largely responsible for the military
units which were training and hiding throughout the regions,
awaiting the day when they would join the grand deliverance.
On November 7, 1861, General McClellan wrote General Buell:
"It therefore seems proper that you should remain on the de­
fensive on the line from Louisville to Nashville while you throw
the mass of your forces by rapid marches by Cumberland Gap
or Walker’s Gap on Knoxville in order to occupy the railroad
at that point and thus enable the loyal citizens of Eastern Ten­
nessee to rise while you at the same time cut off the railway com­
munication between Eastern Virginia and the Mississippi."35

In preparation for this grand entry the East Tennessee leaders
now decided to execute a stroke at the Confederacy which they
had long had in mind and which the Confederacy had long feared.
If the idea did not originate with Parson Brownlow, it was at
least first prominently set forth by him. All the railway bridges
in East Tennessee from the Georgia line to Virginia should be
destroyed. On May 25, 1861, the Parson published in the Knox­
ville Whig, in answer to a rumor that he and other Union lead­
ers were to be arrested and taken out of the state, this plan of
action:

Let the railroad on which Union citizens of East Tennessee are
conveyed to Montgomery in irons be eternally and hopelessly
destroyed! Let the property of the men concerned be consumed,
and let their lives pay the forfeit, and the names will be given!

Let the fires of patriotic vengeance be built upon the Union altars of the whole land, and let them go out where these conspirators live, like the fires from the Lord, that consumed Nadab and Abihu, the two sons of Aaron, for presumption less sacrilegious! If we are incarcerated at Montgomery, or executed there or even elsewhere, all the consolation we want is to know that our partisan friends have visited upon our persecutors—certain Secession leaders—a most horrible vengeance! Let it be done, East Tennesseans, though the gates of hell be forced and the heavens be made to fall!

The Greeneville Convention, on June 20, called attention to this weapon that East Tennessee held in her hands. Although East Tennesseans had not interposed obstacles to soldiers passing through “our territory,” and although they objected to violence to the railroads, “yet if the grievous wrongs inflicted by some of the troops are not stopped, we warn all persons concerned, including the officers of said roads, that there is a point at which a population of 300,000 people, outraged, insulted, and trampled upon, cannot be and ought not to be restrained.”

The Confederate authorities were thus amply warned of the possibility of this disaster happening to their communications through East Tennessee, and to ward it off they set guards at all the important railway bridges. But the guards were entirely too small to beat off a determined attack by bridge-burners; and sensing the imminent danger Landon C. Haynes on July 6 wrote Secretary of War Walker his expectation of hearing at any time that the bridges had been destroyed.

Brownlow was one of the most cunning men in all the land; he was no bridge-burner. But he could arouse a state of mind in East Tennessee which would breed bridge-burners aplenty. So he was not found among those who planned and executed the bridge-burning. In September, William Blount Carter went to Washington to present the plan to the United States Government. He saw Lincoln, McClellan, and Seward and they all agreed that the bridges should be fired preparatory to the in-

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36 Quoted in Parson Brownlow’s Book, p. 300.
vasion of Buell’s army.\textsuperscript{39} In the latter part of September General George H. Thomas, in Kentucky, wrote General McClellan that he had seen Carter and that he was convinced that the bridges could be destroyed. It would take some money and he thought the Government should provide it. Quick preparations were now put under way. Captain David Fry was given $1,000 and ordered to enter East Tennessee to enlist the bridge-burning forces.\textsuperscript{40}

On November 6 the Confederate presidential elections were held. Maddened by this make-believe performance, East Tennesseans spurned the whole procedure; but two days later, on the night of the 8th, they gave their answer to the Confederate Government. Five important railway bridges blazed forth and left a trail of ashes and charred remains. This was their reply to the “bogus Confederacy,” and a signal to the Union armies to march in. Two bridges had been burned on the Western and Atlantic Railroad, one on the East Tennessee and Georgia, which ran from Chattanooga to Knoxville, and two on the East Tennessee and Virginia, which ran from Knoxville to Bristol. It seemed now that the long-feared explosion had come. On November 11, Colonel W. B. Wood said “The whole country is now in a state of rebellion,” and a Jonesboro resident wrote President Davis, “Civil war has broken out at length in East Tennessee.” A precarious situation was reported: A thousand armed Unionists were within six miles of the Strawberry Plains bridge; 500 Unionists had left Hamilton County presumably to attack Loudon Bridge; 300 men were encamped in Sevier County; great Union concentrations were in progress in Carter and Johnson counties; an encampment was forming at Elizabethton; and so came rumors and reports from all parts of East Tennessee. It was feared that these forces were preparing to burn the remaining bridges; it was known that they expected to welcome a Federal army from Kentucky, and that they were cutting the telegraph wires as fast as they could be repaired. On November 12, Governor Harris wrote President Davis that

\textsuperscript{39} Temple, op. cit., p. 90.

\textsuperscript{40} Official Records, ser. II, vol. I, pp. 889-90; Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., I, 139; 41st Cong., 3rd sess., I, 598.
he was sending into East Tennessee immediately 10,000 troops, and at the same time he requested reënforcements from the Confederacy.\textsuperscript{41}

Quick steps were taken. Troops were sent out in all directions to break up the Union forces and to arrest their leaders. On November 18, a force of 300 rebellious Unionists was dispersed and thirty prisoners were captured. General Zollicoffer, who had heretofore pursued a policy of kindness in East Tennessee, now realized that his confidence had been misplaced, and that the Unionist leaders were guilty of treachery. He ordered the immediate disarming of all Unionists and the seizure of the chief trouble-makers. "The leniency shown them has been unavailing," he declared. "They have acted with base duplicity and should no longer be trusted."\textsuperscript{42}

In order to stamp out future trouble the Confederacy now felt it necessary to treat the East Tennesseans with the suspicion and harshness that war always imposes upon those who have it within their power to hinder victory. Squads of soldiers were sent out into every district to break up Unionist gatherings, to disarm the populace, and to arrest the leaders. Squads were also sent out to enforce contracts for hogs and cattle, which Unionists had made with the Confederacy but were now slow to fulfill. On December 11, General Carroll declared martial law in Knoxville. This action greatly displeased Brownlow, who later wrote, "Every little upstart of an officer in command at a village or cross-roads would proclaim \textit{martial law}, and require all going beyond, or coming within, his lines to show a pass, like some negro slave."\textsuperscript{43} This campaign of pacification seems to have been carried out with too much vigor, for in the latter part of December Captain G. H. Monsarrat, commanding the post at Knoxville, wrote Judah P. Benjamin, who had now succeeded L. P. Walker as Secretary of War, that maruding bands of armed men, who claimed to be agents of the Confederate Government, were impressing men into the service, threatening them with imprisonment as Unionists unless they volunteered,

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 842-13.  
seizing their horses, and forcing the care of themselves and their horses upon the people without pay. He also charged that they “Plunder the helpless, and especially quondam supporters of Johnson, Maynard, and Brownlow.”

John Baxter, an erstwhile Unionist now acquiescing in the Confederate rule, called upon Secretary Benjamin to treat the people with more leniency, believing that as a result of such a course he would find the East Tennesseans more amenable to Confederate supremacy. But Benjamin had determined that those who were guilty of crimes should be punished and especially should the bridge-burners be made to suffer. Great numbers of people were arrested and brought into Knoxville and Nashville which served as clearing stations. By November 26, seventy people were in jail in Knoxville, many of whom were believed to be mixed up with the bridge-burning business. Feeling that the mass of the people had been deluded by their wily leaders, Benjamin ordered all the lesser prisoners to be released upon their taking the oath to support the Confederacy, but the important agitators should be held for high treason. The bridge-burners were a class unto themselves and should be dealt with summarily. He ordered them to be tried by drum-head court martial and if found guilty to be “executed on the spot by hanging,” and their bodies left dangling in the air as a warning. The trial was set for November 28, and on the 30th two were hanged. C. A. Haun, another bridge-burner, was sentenced to be executed on December 11, but before carrying out the sentence, General W. H. Carroll telegraphed to Secretary Benjamin for the President’s approval, which he believed was required. Benjamin replied: “Execute the sentence of your court-martial on the bridge-burners. The law does not require any approval by the President, but he entirely approves my order to hang every bridge-burner you can catch and convict.”

Brownlow bitterly condemned this execution, claiming that Haun had been condemned “without any defence allowed him by a drum-head and whiskey-drinking court-martial.”

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One of the Parson's "Rebel atrocities." This represents the hanging of two of the bridge-burners, Jacob Harmon and his son, Henry. From Brownlow's *Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession.*
drove up a cart with a coffin in it," he said, "surrounded by a hardened set of Rebel troops, displaying their bayonets and looking and talking savagely."

On December 27, Harrison Self, another convicted bridge-burner, was notified that he would be hanged at four o'clock that day. His daughter came to visit him, and Brownlow, who was present, exclaimed "My God, what a sight! What an affecting scene! May these eyes of mine, bathed in tears, never look upon the like again!" He seized a piece of paper and wrote for the girl to President Davis: "My father, Harrison Self, is sentenced to hang at four o'clock this evening, on a charge of bridge-burning. As he remains my earthly all, and all my hopes of happiness centre in him, I implore you to pardon him. ELIZABETH SELF." The girl hastened to the telegraph office and had it dispatched to Davis. Two hours before the date set for the execution General Carroll was ordered to spare his life.

Thus could the Confederacy show leniency as well as vigor in dealing with its rebellious East Tennesseans. The bridge-burners had been guilty of a most hazardous undertaking which, according to the usages of war, subjected them to the extreme penalty. The Confederacy could not in a matter of such transcendent importance to its very existence do less than was done.

While the bridge-burners were being dealt stern punishment, many other East Tennesseans were being either set at liberty or sent on their way to Tuscaloosa, Alabama, where the Confederacy had decided to incarcerate many of its political prisoners. A carload of prisoners left Knoxville for Tuscaloosa on December 7, but four days later there were still 150 in the jail. By the 19th more than 400 prisoners from East Tennessee had been sent to Tuscaloosa.

Some Confederates believed that too harsh a policy had been adopted toward the East Tennesseans following their abortive uprising in November, while others held that the East Tennesseans by their duplicity had left no other course open. It was

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a fact which no one could dispute that a heritage of hatred for the Confederate element was burned into the hearts of the East Tennesseans, a heritage which Parson Brownlow a few years afterwards was to capitalize to the fullest extent.

The East Tennesseans were not wholly to blame for the evil days that befell them after the bridge-burning rebellion. High hopes had been held out to them by their leaders at home who in turn gathered their enthusiastic vision of the near future from the highest leaders of the nation. The army of deliverance never came, because it never set out; and it never made the attempt, because of divided counsel. Thus were the East Tennesseans, ill organized and poorly armed, left to certain conquest by the Confederates. It appeared that the Federal Government had merely led them into a trap. Any other people less obstinate and less blindly patriotic would have heard the siren notes the Confederacy wafted forth, after a few months of repression, and would have submitted.

But the East Tennesseans were never told that the army of rescue would not come, and perhaps in that fact lay their continued hope, and support of the Union. While dissensions prevailed in the high councils of the nation, the East Tennessee fugitives up in Kentucky were made almost desperate in their desires to go to the rescue of their homes and families. Andrew Johnson was in Kentucky trying to prevail on General Thomas to send the East Tennesseans back even if no other troops should go. In answer Thomas said, “If the Tennesseans are not content and must go then the risk of disaster will remain with them.” Thomas continued adamant even in the face of such reports as this: “The condition of affairs there is sad beyond description and if the loyal people who love and cling to the Government are not soon relieved they will be lost.” General Thomas refused to make the attempt or to give his permission to the East Tennesseans to try to return, for the Confederates had laid hold of Cumberland Gap, and under Zolli-coffer were soon to invade the state of Kentucky from that

\[50\] Ibid., p. 894. S. P. Carter to G. H. Thomas, November 24, 1861.
vantage point. Yet Horace Maynard pessimistically wrote Thomas on December 8:

You are still farther from East Tennessee than when I left you nearly six weeks ago. There is shameful wrong somewhere; I have not yet satisfied myself where. That movement so far has been disgraceful to the country and to all concerned. I feel a sense of personal degradation from my own connection with it greater than any other part of my public actions. My heart bleeds for these Tennessee troops.51

Where was the blame for the projected, but unaccomplished, rescue of East Tennessee to be placed? Perhaps on the Cumberland Mountains first, and on General Buell secondly. The inaccessibility of East Tennessee was never more impressive than to an army seeking to enter across the Cumberland escarpment. Lincoln, who had set his heart on seizing East Tennessee, was soon arguing for a military railroad to be built from central Kentucky to Knoxville—thus would he gain entrance.52 General McClellan urged Buell time and again to march on East Tennessee, where he would be received by warm friendship, rather than to try to seize Nashville where he would find a withering hostility. He should move to the aid of “the noble Union men of Eastern Tennessee.”53 On November 25, McClellan was still convinced that “political and strategical considerations render a prompt movement in force on Eastern Tennessee imperative.” Four days later he thought “we owe it to our Union friends in Eastern Tennessee to protect them at all hazards.” On into December and beyond he continued to beg Buell to direct his march to East Tennessee. Andrew Johnson and Horace Maynard added their plea on December 7: “Our people are oppressed and pursued as beasts of the forest. The Government must come to our relief.”54 On January 6, 1862 Abraham Lincoln added his voice to the chorus that went up

51 Ibid., p. 898.
52 He advocated this project in his message to Congress in December, 1861. Congress discussed the subject but never acted. See J. D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, VI, 46.
54 Ibid., p. 898.
to Buell on behalf of the East Tennesseans: "My distress is that our friends in East Tennessee are being hanged and driven to despair and even now I fear are thinking of taking rebel arms for the sake of protection. In this we lose the most valuable stake we have in the South." Lincoln would not show to Johnson and Maynard, Buell's recent dispatch giving reasons for not making the march, because "They would despair; possibly resign to go and save their families somehow or die with them."55

General Buell felt that an attempt on East Tennessee would be wholly impracticable and that moreover he could best help the East Tennesseans by seizing Nashville. The country was stripped of its provisions; it would take 3,000 wagons constantly going to supply the army necessary to occupy and hold East Tennessee. He declared in a letter to General McClellan, January 13, 1862, in answer to a roseate plan someone had advocated: "The plan of any colonel whoever he is for ending the war by entering East Tennessee with his 5,000 men light—that is with pack-mules and three batteries of artillery, &c.—while the rest of the armies look on though it has some sensible patent ideas is in the aggregate simply ridiculous."56 Buell went his way on to Nashville and left East Tennessee in the hands of the Confederates, to continue so for almost two years.

To this low estate, then, had Brownlow's teachings brought East Tennessee. But how had the Parson himself fared in these evil days from late October when the bridge-burners were in the making, down through their trials, tribulations, and execution, and on into the new year of death and destruction? The answer comes next.

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55 Ibid., p. 900.
56 Ibid., p. 901.