

JOHN A. QUITMAN AND THE SOUTHERN MARTIAL SPIRIT

By Robert E. May*

"There are few areas of the modern world," observed George B. Tindall, "that have bred a regional mythology so potent, so profuse and diverse, even so paradoxical, as the American South."¹ Many serious students of the South would unhesitatingly answer "amen" to Tindall's assertion, and quickly proffer the image of the militant and violent Old South as an example of the mythological proclivities of Dixie. Historians, journalists, novelists, and others have accepted as gospel the stereotype that antebellum southerners were an unusually aggressive and martial people. There is ample evidence, moreover, that many antebellum southerners *believed* in their own militancy, and that this conviction influenced the political decision to leave the Union. Southern myths, as Tindall pointed out, whether based upon empirical fact or not, have traditionally played a role in unifying southern society and developing a "sense of community" in the region.²

Since the Confederacy was the losing side in the Civil War,

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¹George Tindall, "Mythology: A New Frontier in Southern History," in Frank E. Vandiver, ed., *The Idea of the South: Pursuit of a Central Theme* (Chicago, 1964), 1. The author would like to thank Donald J. Berthrong, head of the Purdue University Department of History, for his perceptive suggestions regarding this essay.

²John Hope Franklin, *The Militant South, 1800-1861* (Cambridge, 1956); Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and Nationalism in the Old South* (New Haven, 1949); James C. Bonner, "The Historical Basis of Southern Military Tradition," *Georgia Review*, IX (Spring, 1955), 74-85; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (New York, 1957), 211-21; Frank E. Vandiver, "The Southerner as Extremist," in Vandiver, ed., *Idea of the South*, 43-55; Charles S. Sydnor, "The Southerner and the Laws," in George Brown Tindall, ed., *The Pursuit of Southern History: Presidential Addresses of the Southern Historical Association* (Baton Rouge, 1964), 62-76; Tindall, "Mythology," 2, 15.

there may have been more fiction than substance in the militant South myth. Scholars, at best, disagree as to the comparative merits of southern officers and enlisted men in relation to their northern counterparts. In addition, there has been, in recent years, a critique of the antebellum South's martial reputation. Historians have suggested that, by placing southern attributes in a comparative framework with the rest of the United States, evidence can be offered demonstrating that, while the Old South might well have been militaristic, it was not necessarily *more* militaristic than the Old North. Northerners before the Civil War were as likely as southerners to support warfare, attend West Point or other military institutions, stay in the regular army, contribute to military thought, found volunteer militia companies, and perform a myriad of other militaristic functions long assumed to be the special province of the martial South.³

Further perspective can be given to this question through biography. Region-wide studies have been most valuable in providing an aggregate portrait of Old South society. Biography, however, can supplement such studies by providing a certain intensity of analysis difficult to achieve in broad surveys. One of the blatant examples of the martial South was John A. Quitman (1798-1858) of Mississippi. Quitman's martial behavior and military activity were a constant thread through a prominent and varied public career which included service in the Mississippi legislature (1828, 1835-1836), chancellor of the Supreme Court of Chancery of Mississippi (1828-1835), significant participation in the state constitutional convention of 1832, governor of Mississippi (temporarily filling a vacancy in 1835-1836, and a

³Marcus Cunliffe, *Soldiers & Civilians: The Martial Spirit in America, 1775-1865* (Boston, 1968), 335-84; James L. Morrison, "The Struggle Between Sectionalism and Nationalism at Ante-Bellum West Point, 1830-1861," *Civil War History*, XIX (June, 1973), 138-48; Robert E. May, "Dixie's Martial Image: A Continuing Historiographical Enigma," *The Historian*, XL (February, 1978), 213-34.

regular term in 1850-1851), and member of the United States House of Representatives (1855-1858).

Although Quitman was born and raised in New York, spent some time in Pennsylvania, and lived in Ohio from November, 1819 to November, 1821, he spent his adult life in Mississippi. His military career there commenced in the militia, where he achieved high rank. He served in the Texas Revolution and won fame as a general commanding volunteer forces in the Mexican War. In the early 1850s he planned a military expedition to Cuba to add a new slave state to the Union. He served as chairman of the House Committee on Military Affairs from early 1856 until a couple of months before his death. Quitman's politics were consistently militant. The "father of secession in Mississippi,"⁴ he was for nullification in the 1830s and for southern withdrawal in the crisis of 1850. Quitman's personal traits—including a love of hunting and vigilance on matters of "honor"—matched his martial public stance. Few southerners better conformed to the composite portrait of the martial southerner which John Hope Franklin presented in his influential *The Militant South*, and it is not surprising that Franklin related some of Quitman's martial activities in his book.⁵ However, in many ways, Franklin missed the significance of Quitman's career. A more detailed study of Quitman's life shows the depth of Quitman's militaristic fervor while at the same time pointing to a need for caution when isolating the southern states as the peculiarly martial area of antebellum America. Regional idiosyncrasies, to have validity, must be assessed within the context of the mores of the whole nation.

John A. Quitman arrived in Natchez, Mississippi, from Ohio, in 1821, at the age of twenty-three. He came as an indigent refugee from the effects of the panic of 1819, which had suf-

⁴John K. Bettersworth, *Mississippi: A History* (Austin, 1959), 214.

⁵Franklin, *Militant South*, 38, 103, 105-106, 110-14, 209.

focused his aspirations to become a prominent lawyer and achieve wealth in Ohio. His legal career immediately took on a new life in Natchez, and he soon gained wide recognition as a leading practitioner of the Mississippi bar. Over the following years he threw himself into a variety of concerns which included—in addition to his practice and politics—land speculations, civic involvement, and Masonic activity. Marriage in 1824 to the niece of an influential judge brought some social prestige. More prestige came as he accumulated plantations and slaves. By the mid-1830s Quitman was a wealthy southern planter, with holdings in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Militaristic behavior characterized John A. Quitman's activities from the inception of his Mississippi career. By the time he arrived in Natchez, the militia system was in a state of serious deterioration in Mississippi and the nation as a whole. A failure to achieve federal regulation of the militia and a Jacksonian-era intolerance of institutions which seemed prejudicial against the "common man" combined with the freedom from a foreign invasion threat and the recession of the Indian frontier to cause a laxity in militia standards. In some areas the militia had disappeared completely. This waning of militia effectiveness had touched Natchez. Quitman later recalled that he arrived in the city when musters had fallen into "disuse" and the community's military spirit had dwindled.⁶

While the exact details of Quitman's entrée into the militia are not known, it must have occurred virtually coincident with his arrival, because by January, 1823, he had been commissioned

⁶Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Federalists and the Creation of the Military Establishment in America, 1783-1802* (New York, 1975), 128-38; Everett Dick, *The Dixie Frontier: A Social History of the Southern Frontier from the First Transmontane Beginnings to the Civil War* (New York, 1948), 262-73; Russell F. Weigley, *History of the United States Army* (New York, 1967), 156-57; Cunliffe, *Soldiers & Civilians*, 179-212; *Natchez Free Trader*, April 26, 1845.

brigade inspector for the second brigade of the first division in the Mississippi system.⁷ This position provided Quitman with a public visibility which he hoped would prove of future service. He wrote his brother that the duties of brigade inspector were "performed during vacation [from court sessions], and. . . will give me an extended acquaintance." Then in the spring of 1824 he worked with a group of other young Natchez men to found a volunteer company to revive the community's fading martial spirit. The result was the "Natchez Fencibles." Its captain for the first five years, and at later periods, was John A. Quitman. Quitman was active in its affairs even after he achieved statewide judicial and political prominence.⁸ The Fencibles were incorporated into the fourth regiment of the state militia system.

The Fencibles' functions extended beyond drill, parades, and combat readiness. Rather, it evolved into an integral facet of Natchez community life—an expression of the city's social structure and value system. It was constantly involved in Fourth of July celebrations and such public activities as ceremonies welcoming Andrew Jackson to Natchez and the honoring of other militia companies.⁹ Furthermore, its visits outside Natchez stimulated militarism in other locales.¹⁰ The Fencibles' mission included the maintenance of law and order, and it acted as a force

⁷Commission signed by the secretary of state of Mississippi, January 10, 1823, in John Quitman Papers (University of Virginia).

⁸*Natchez Mississippi Republican*, October 20, 1824; *Natchez Free Trader*, April 26, 1845, April 24, 1855; *Natchez Southern Galaxy*, February 19, 1829; *Natchez Courier*, October 6, 1837; John A. Quitman address, July 4, 1831, in J. F. H. Claiborne Papers, Letterbooks, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi [hereafter cited MDAH]; John A. Quitman to his brother, February 1, 1823 and October 17, 1835, in J. F. H. Claiborne, *Life and Correspondence of John A. Quitman* (2 vols., New York, 1860), 138-39.

⁹*Natchez Mississippi Republican*, October 20, 1824; F[ountain] Winston to John A. Quitman, June 30, 1827, J. F. H. Claiborne Papers (MDAH); *Natchez Free Trader*, April 20, December 31, 1839, January 6, 7, 11, 16, 1840, July 6, 1844.

¹⁰The Fencibles, for instance, made a public visit to Vicksburg in 1835. William Johnson's Diary, November 8, 1835, in William Ransom Hogan and Edwin Adams Davis, eds., *William Johnson's Natchez: The Ante-Bellum Diary of a Free Negro* (Baton Rouge, 1951), 74-76.

to inhibit the potential of slave insurrection during times of racial tension. The company may have had para-nativist tendencies. William Johnson, Natchez's free black barber, mentioned in his diary a number of Fencibles' interventions against local Irishmen.¹¹ However, these activities were couched in terms of maintaining order in the town, and Johnson did not designate them as nativist in intent. Quitman's ideology was anti-nativist, and he was not involved in the incidents Johnson cited.

What Quitman did do as the Fencibles' leader was serve as marshal of Fourth of July celebrations, preside at public dinners involving the company, and present the men to such luminaries as Jackson. By 1829 "Captain" Quitman had gained statewide recognition as the expert on the subject of revitalizing the militia, an increasingly salient public issue. Governor Gerard Brandon in his 1829 message to the legislature requested militia reform, and the legislators responded by resolving that Quitman should be requested to advise a new militia system to the following legislature, so that it might be enacted into law. Quitman complied later that year, sending Governor Brandon his system in October. To Quitman, the problem derived from a lack of supervision, which had led to the degeneration of musters. He argued that courts martial lacked the means of enforcing sentences against delinquent militia members, that the state did not do enough to encourage volunteer companies, and that an "unnecessary multiplication of Military offices and titles" had provoked general disrespect for the militia system. He recommended that fines for absence from parade be collected by constables and sheriffs, that inferior positions in the militia become a prerequisite for high rank, that the number of brigades be

¹¹William Johnson's Diary, March 17, 1837 and October 31, 1838, in Hogan and Davis, eds., *William Johnson's Natchez*, 169, 240; James H. McLendon, "John A. Quitman," (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Texas, 1949), 80.

reduced from six to four, and that the state treasury fund certain officers of the militia, such as the adjutant general and regimental adjutant. He also specified the duties of officers and made a number of other suggestions. In his report Quitman summoned the legislature to meet the challenge of militia reform because Mississippians had a "slave population around our firesides" and "powerful Indian tribes" on their borders. The legislature responded with a thirty-four page act, putting into law many of Quitman's suggested changes, including the enforcement of fines by county constables, provisions for volunteer companies, and funding for key militia positions such as adjutant general and regimental adjutant. The six brigade system was retained, but the substance of Quitman's program had been adopted.¹²

In 1836, when Quitman had an opportunity to put his combat-readiness to the test, he seized the moment. News of the fall of the Alamo [March 6, 1836] had an electrifying impact upon Quitman, and thrust him into the Texas Revolution. He believed in the cause of Texas independence, knew that some former citizens of Natchez had fallen in the Alamo's defense, and feared that the Mexican army might proceed into Louisiana and try to liberate southern slaves. Foreseeing that an independent Texas would be ripe for profitable land speculation, he would not overlook such opportunities in the press of events in the weeks which followed.¹³

¹²*Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Mississippi, 1829*, 15-16, 33; *Laws of the State of Mississippi, 1829* [resolution of February 5, 1829]; John Quitman to Gerard C. Brandon, December 31, 1829, in *Natchez Southern Galaxy*, April 1, 1830; Act of February 12, 1830, in *Laws of the State of Mississippi, 1830*. Quitman's support of military readiness carried over into his participation in the state constitutional convention of 1832, where he voted with a 20-17 majority to delete a provision which would have allowed conscientious objectors to pay their way out of militia service. During Quitman's short term as governor in 1835-1836, he recommended further refinement of the militia system. *Journal of the Convention of the State of Mississippi Held in the Town of Jackson* (Jackson, 1832), 259; *Journal of the Mississippi Senate, 1836*, 45-46. At least one volunteer militia unit in Mississippi was named after Quitman, the (Port Gibson) "Quitman Riflemen," *Natchez Free Trader*, May 24, 1845.

¹³John Quitman to Eliza Quitman, May 7, 1836, John Quitman Papers (MDAH); Undated manuscript in Quitman's hand, filed 1837, in Quitman Family Papers (Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina) [cited hereafter SHC]; *A Brief Sketch of the Life, Civil and Military, of John A. Quitman, Major General in the Army of the U.S.* (Washington, 1948), 10.

In early April, 1836, against his wife's wishes, Quitman led approximately forty men (including a number of Fencibles) into Texas, technically violating United States neutrality legislation. After crossing the Sabine River, Quitman's force intervened at Nacogdoches to secure that town against a threatened Mexican-Indian attack, and then rushed to join Sam Houston's force which was reported falling back from the pressure of the Mexican Army. Quitman and his men arrived two days too late for the battle of San Jacinto. Seeing that Houston and Thomas J. Rusk had things well in hand, Quitman decided to return to his anxious wife, arriving back in Natchez in late May. His men stayed in Texas, formally enrolling in the Army of Texas as volunteers under Rusk's command.¹⁴

Only circumstances had kept Quitman from participating in his first major battle. He would wait a whole decade for that opportunity to come again. It may have been an agonizing wait. During this interval Quitman travelled to Europe (in 1839) to negotiate bonds for a railway company of which he was president. Quitman's funding efforts proved fruitless, but his letters home manifest a simmering desire for battle. Seeing a re-creation in Dublin of the battle of Waterloo by some eight thousand British and Irish troops was almost more than he could take. "You may imagine my enthusiasm," he wrote. "When the infantry *charged bayonet*, I wept with deep interest. Oh! how I should like to have seen & been in the reality!!!" Stimulated by the re-creation, he visited the original Waterloo battlefield in Belgium during his tour of the continent a couple of months later: "There I . . . stood on the spot where Napoleon stood when he ordered his

¹⁴James H. McLendon, "John A. Quitman in the Texas Revolution," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LII (October, 1948), 163-83; Claiborne, *Quitman*, I, 149-59; Documents dated May 5 and May 6, 1836, John Quitman Papers (University of Virginia). For Quitman's challenging of his wife's wishes, see Eliza Quitman to John A. Quitman, April 11, 1836, John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, April 13, 1836, Quitman Family Papers (SHC).

last charge & almost fancied that the British & Prussian legions were before me."¹⁵

The continuing tense situation on the Texas-Mexican frontier offered a good possibility that Quitman's hopes would be fulfilled. Border incidents were rife following Texas independence, and the potential for a reflare of full-scale war was ever-present. Quitman kept tabs on the developing events, and particularly thought that war was pending following a Mexican raid on San Antonio in February, 1842. He designed a strategic outline for a campaign for a Texas acquaintance and predicted that the Lone Star republic could conquer Mexico. Given "the character of your people and that of your enemy," victory was certain, even if Mexico proved to have a two-to-one numerical superiority.¹⁶

American annexation of Texas in 1845 led to the war Quitman had been anticipating. Mexico had never recognized Texan independence, and extension of American sovereignty over Texas led to a disruption of Mexican relations with the United States. Congress declared war on Mexico on May 11-12, 1846, following a series of diplomatic crises and frontier incidents between the two countries.

Quitman again was ready to fight, but this time he aspired for a major command role. In 1837 he had won election as major general of the second division of the Mississippi militia (later winning reelection) and he felt his status as the state's "oldest major general" entitled him to priority in mustering and commanding troops if Mississippi was called on for volunteers by the

¹⁵John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, July 5, August 19, 1839, Quitman Family Papers (SHC). The line, only partially constructed, was intended to connect Natchez and Jackson.

¹⁶John A. Quitman to ?, in Claiborne, *Quitman*, I, 192-93. A detailed study of the complex border situation is Joseph Milton Nance, *After San Jacinto: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1836-1841* (Austin, 1963), and Nance, *Attack and Counter-Attack: The Texas-Mexican Frontier, 1842* (Austin, 1964). For a very comprehensive treatment of the diplomatic front regarding Texas during this period, see David M. Pletcher, *The Diplomacy of Annexation: Texas, Oregon, and the Mexican War* (Columbia, Missouri, 1973).

federal government. He lobbied vigorously for the command using his contacts both at the state capital in Jackson and in Washington, D.C., stressing his interest in insuring that Mississippi would preserve "the military reputation. . . [she had] acquired in former wars." Quitman's energy bore fruit. When Congress created six civilian brigadier generalships to command volunteer troops, Quitman became one of President James K. Polk's designees.¹⁷ Once again he rushed to a theater of war over strong objections from his wife, though she later forgave him because "you never would have been satisfied with yourself had you not gone." He pledged an acquaintance that he would win a "major general's baton" on the "field of battle," or find a Mexican grave.¹⁸

He earned that "baton." Although fervent militarists do not necessarily make great commanders, Quitman proved to be an inspirational leader. The volunteers who served under him loved him for his compassionate interest in their welfare, his "fighting" nature, and his willingness to expose himself in the heat of battle, and they responded to his demands.¹⁹ As brigade

¹⁷Adjutants General's Records, Register, Military Appointments, Series K, Volume A (MDAH); Commission signed by the secretary of state of Mississippi, October 19, 1837, Commission signed by Governor Alexander McNutt, November 15, 1841, John Quitman Papers (University of Virginia); John A. Quitman to Albert Gallatin Brown, September 6, 1845, John A. Quitman to the Mississippi congressional delegation, May 22, 1846, in Claiborne, *Quitman*, I, 223, 225-26; John A. Quitman to James K. Polk, May 21, 1846, H. Stuart Foote to James K. Polk, May 30, 1846, Powhatan Ellis to James K. Polk, May 30, 1846, John B. Nevitt and J. M. Thacher to James K. Polk, May 26, 1846, R. W. Gaines to James K. Polk, May 22, 1846, all in Record Group 107, Records of the Secretary of War (National Archives) [cited hereafter NA]; J. A. Wilcox to John A. Quitman, May 25, 1846, Claiborne Papers (MDAH).

¹⁸Eliza Quitman to John A. Quitman, February 19, 1847, Quitman Family Papers (SHC); John A. Quitman to J. F. H. Claiborne, September 5, 1846, in Claiborne, *Quitman*, I, 240.

¹⁹William S. Johnson Diary, September 2, 1847, in John Hammond Moore, ed., "Private Johnson Fights The Mexicans, 1847-1848," *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LXVIII (October, 1966), 222; J. Jacob Oswaldel Journal, July 16, 1847, in J. Jacob Oswaldel, *Notes of the Mexican War, 1846-47-48*. . . . (Philadelphia, 1885), 225; Sydenham Moore to John A. Quitman, November 15, 1846, D. D. Baker to John A. Quitman, May 5, 1851, Claiborne Papers (MDAH); William S. Walker to his uncle, October 27, 1847, from clipping in Robert J. Walker scrapbook, Robert J. Walker Papers (Library of Congress).

commander at Monterrey on September 21, 1846, he helped direct a successful charge on La Tenería, a strongly defended earthwork northeast of the city, after other troops including a large percentage of regulars had been stymied in their efforts to take the position. Two days later Quitman and his volunteer brigade were in the midst of the street-to-street fighting in the eastern part of Monterrey which eventually helped persuade the Mexican command to accept armistice terms. That December Quitman successfully executed a march to and occupation of Victoria, to the southeast of Monterrey, with an independent command. During the siege of Vera Cruz in March, 1847, Quitman and his troops drew heavy enemy fire in taking some sand hills west of the city to facilitate the investing of the city by American forces.

Quitman had already achieved the "honor" that he had sought when he entered the war, although he was vexed by reports circulating in Mississippi downgrading his role at Monterrey. Congress included him in the recipients of special swords awarded to officers for valor at Monterrey; and Secretary of War William L. Marcy in April, 1847, sent him a commission as major general in the United States Army. For a short interval Quitman even believed that he was second-in-command behind General Winfield Scott, and harbored dreams of taking over the whole army should the "casualties of war" provide an opportunity. Then it was decided that General William Worth ranked Quitman, and in the ensuing march to Mexico City, Quitman, to his chagrin, did not even get to command a full division. He almost resigned his commission.²⁰

²⁰William Marcy to John A. Quitman and Gideon J. Pillow, April 14, 1847 [copy], R. G. 107, Records of the Secretary of War, Letters Sent, John A. Quitman to Captain H. L. Scott, May 30, June 3, 1847, Winfield Scott to John A. Quitman, May 31, 1847 [copy], R. G. 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received (NA); John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, May 6, 1847, Quitman Family Papers (SHC).

Still, honor came, and glory was waiting at the gates of Mexico City. During the battle for the Mexican capital on September 13, 1847, Quitman's volunteers gallantly scaled the hill and castle of Chapultepec which guarded the western approach to the city, and then Quitman took personal charge of the storming and seizure of the southwestern ("Belén") gate to the city. "I was upon the works with the foremost," Quitman bragged to his wife, "and my handkerchief was the first American hostile flag which floated over the gate."²¹ General Scott acknowledged Quitman's role by awarding him the position of civil and military governor of Mexico City following its surrender.

Quitman's Mexican War career was not without blemishes. There were those contemporaries who argued that he did not keep his volunteers under tight enough discipline. A quartermaster officer complained that Quitman overdrove his teams causing broken wagons and deaths to mules.²² Many of the complaints against Quitman, however, came from regular army officers who resented his high rank, which he achieved despite a lack of professional training. Some critics were Whigs who automatically wrote off his appointment as a purely patronage gambit by the Polk administration. The most serious charge against Quitman has come from historians who have suggested that his quest for glory clouded his judgment on the battlefield, and sometimes led to unnecessary sacrifices of troops. In the attack on the Belén gate, for instance, every member of Quitman's staff and all his artillery officers were casualties in the unrestrained charge. Yet General Scott had only intended Quitman's thrust to be diversionary so as to draw Mexican strength

²¹John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, September 19, 1847, Quitman Family Papers (SHC).

²²Daniel Harvey Hill Diary, April 2, August 18, 1847, February 1, 1848 (SHC); William B. Campbell to his wife, October 30, 1846, Campbell Family Papers (William R. Perkins Library, Duke University); R. H. Allen to [James R. Irwin?], May 9, 1847, R. G. 92, Quartermaster General's Office, Consolidated Correspondence File (NA).

away from troops under General William Worth attacking a different gate.²³ Had Quitman, because of his compulsive desire to prove his command merit and the general value of volunteer troops in battle, exercised defective tactical judgment?

Actually, Quitman's command ability only peripherally relates to his martial ardor, which is the point at issue here. Quitman's constant enthusiasm for battle, even after the horror of wounds and death had been rammed home to him, accords with the mystique of the militant southerner. In fact, he suffered severe frustration during campaigns when his role was only secondary and his life was not in jeopardy. For example, he argued with Winfield Scott during the Mexico City campaign because his division at one point was ordered to remain at San Agustín to guard the depot, baggage wagons, and teams, while divisions under David Twiggs and Gideon Pillow were permitted to pass on toward the enemy. The assignment, he complained, left his command "no means of distinction."²⁴ Regardless of these temporary disappointments, his military fervor remained constant. Despite professions of intense homesickness in letters to his family, he consistently criticized armistice agreements and defensive strategies which might have freed him to go home! His solution to the war was total victory and the complete subjugation of Mexico. Quitman was very upset when Zachary Taylor concluded armistice terms at Monterrey which allowed the Mexican army to withdraw intact from the city. Despite his presence at the conference which determined these terms, Quitman wrote to Governor Albert G. Brown of Mississippi that the battle should have been fought to its ultimate conclusion. Defensive

²³Winfield Scott to William Marcy, September 18, 1847 [copy], R. G. 94, Records of the Adjutant General's Office, Letters Received (NA); K. Jack Bauer, *The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York, 1974), 319; Charles J. Peterson, *The Military Heroes of the War with Mexico: With a Narrative of the War* (Philadelphia, 1848), 125.

²⁴Claiborne, *Quitman*, I, 347, 347n.

strategies, he warned, would protract the war, undermine American prestige in Europe, and convey the initiative to the Mexican army. Mexico must be forced to sue for peace: "With such an enemy as we have to contend against, we can never succeed in impressing them with respect for our power and national character except by dealing upon them hard blows: we can only obtain their respect through their fears." Later, when there was talk that Mexico City might prove too difficult to hold, Quitman argued for its retention until peace was attained.²⁵

In many ways, the war with Mexico became the emotional climax of Quitman's life. Quitman clung to his memories of the war and the connections that he made in it. He pressured the Polk administration to brevet him a major general for his service at Monterrey before he was mustered out of the army,²⁶ and succeeded in getting the brevet in September, 1848. After his return to the United States and discharge from the service, he kept the war alive on a personal level. There was a stream of war companions who visited him at "Monmouth," his mansion near Natchez, and much of his correspondence in later life would be to Mexican War acquaintances. He bought lithograph lists of the Mississippi regiments which served in the war, posed for a portrait with one of his Mexican War swords, purchased a painting of the Grand Plaza in Mexico City, sent copies of a play about Cortez to P. G. T. Beauregard, and was very active in the affairs of the Montezuma Society.²⁷ He kept track of the anniversaries of those golden moments in the war: "This day five years ago was

²⁵John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, August 14, 1846, February 27, April 29, October 13, 1847, John A. Quitman to Henry Foote, October 15, 1847 [copy], Quitman Family Papers (SHC); John A. Quitman to Robert J. Walker, November 12, 1846, in Claiborne, *Quitman*, I, 272-274.

²⁶John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, June 9, 1848, Lovell Family Papers (University of the South); Claiborne, *Quitman*, II, 12-13.

²⁷Receipt from William Y. Yerby, dated March 4, 1848, John Quitman Papers (MDAH); Natchez *Free Trader*, May 25, 1848; John Quitman Daybook, March 14, 1849, John Quitman Papers (Louisiana State University).

also Sunday & spent by myself in bombarding Chapultepec. Tomorrow will be the anniversary of my entrance into the City of Mexico by the Belén gate."²⁸

When he sent his son east to college following the war, he naturally turned to Generals George Cadwallader and Robert Patterson, who lived in Philadelphia, to keep an eye out for his son's welfare. As governor of Mississippi in 1850, Quitman gave patronage preference to at least one fellow Mexican War comrade from the Monterrey campaign, and threw a big dinner for the Mississippi Rifles at the executive mansion in Jackson. Later, when President Franklin Pierce interfered with his filibustering expedition to Cuba, Quitman was outraged, at least in part because he saw it as a sellout by an old comrade in arms. How dare Pierce, who had been a friend when "both of us were 'seeking the bubble reputation at the cannon's mouth,' " try to thwart him.²⁹

The war had done much to enhance Quitman's political prestige at both the state and national levels, and he played his Mexican War record for all it was worth. General Quitman constantly rehashed his wartime feats before local political audiences to the frustration of the Whig paper in Natchez. He became a perennial candidate for the Democratic vice presidential nomination, attracting much support from war veterans. Although during the war he had been a vocal champion of the competency of volunteer troops, he now carefully cultivated support among regulars. To avoid any implication that he dispar-

²⁸John A. Quitman to F. Henry Quitman, September 13, 1852, John Quitman Papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania)

²⁹F. Henry Quitman to George Cadwallader, February 18, 1849, John A. Quitman to F. Henry Quitman, April 21, 1851, John Quitman Papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania); John A. Quitman to James Riddle, Executive Journal, 1850, Record Group 27, Volume 42 (MDAH); John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, September 21, 1850, Quitman Family Papers (SHC); John A. Quitman to Franklin Pierce, draft, undated, John Quitman Papers (MDAH).

aged the regular service, he wrote his authorized biographer that he should "insert with a comparatively small regular establishment—maybe—or some words to indicate that I wish not to dispense entirely with a regular army nor underrate their services."³⁰

Quitman's preoccupation with military affairs persisted through the last decade of his life. As governor of Mississippi in 1850 he urged the creation of an arsenal in Jackson for the storage of public arms.³¹ Simultaneous with his service as governor and for a number of years afterwards, he was deeply involved in an extensive conspiracy to liberate Cuba and then annex it as a slave state by means of a privately-organized military expedition. On April 30, 1854, Quitman, despite advancing age and wealthy circumstances, signed an agreement with Cuban exile elements conferring the actual command upon himself. For about a year there were feverish preparations for the expedition. In the end, opposition from the United States government, Spanish precautions against invasion, and financial difficulties induced Quitman to reluctantly cancel the enterprise.³² The general also yearned to be secretary of war, and apparently was considered for that position following James Buchanan's presidential election in 1856. Although the assignment was never actually offered him, he was given as a sop the symbolic role of commander-in-

³⁰*Natchez Courier*, October 18, 1850; John A. Quitman to Louisa Quitman, September 18, 1846, John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, November 22, 1846, Quitman Family Papers (SHC); John A. Quitman to Peter G. Washington, April 29, 1848, John Quitman Papers (Louisiana State University).

³¹*Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi, 1850*, 325, 717-18. Arms from the federal government had previously been stored in various rooms of the state house, which had damaged the building's floors. Quitman's concern here was probably related to a belief that Mississippi should be militarily prepared should he ever succeed in his objective of persuading his state to secede.

³²Ray Broussard, "Governor John A. Quitman and the López Expeditions of 1851-1852," *Journal of Mississippi History*, XXVIII (May 1966), 103-20; C. Stanley Urban, "The Abortive Quitman Filibustering Expedition, 1853-1855," *Journal of Mississippi History*, XVIII (February, 1956), 175-96; Robert E. May, *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire, 1854-1861* (Baton Rouge, 1973), 22-76.

chief of the military cortege at the Pennsylvanian's inaugural procession.³³

During his last years, when Quitman was a member of Congress, he used his leverage as chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs to try to strengthen the national military establishment. In his first congressional session, immediately making his sympathies clear, he fought for additional appropriations for rifle production, presented and supported a petition from West Point officers which stated that the commutation price allowed for army rations was insufficient, and defended the recruitment of volunteers for use against Indians in the Washington and Oregon territories. He also made a major speech asking repeal of federal neutrality legislation, so that William Walker's filibuster movement to Nicaragua would not be crippled by federal opposition as his own Cuba expedition had been impaired.³⁴ He voted consistently on the side of military spending. In balloting on Senate amendments to the deficiency bill on April 21, 1856, Quitman supported all three amendments for military appropriations, although he opposed every non-military amendment. Quitman also made it clear in the Congress that he would not shy away from a war vote should international conditions warrant a strong stand by the United States: ". . . in my opinion, we shall have no war, unless England and France, in the expectation of the pacification of Europe, are bent upon interference with American affairs. When they do so, my voice. . .

³³Albert Gallatin Brown to J. F. H. Claiborne, J. F. H. Claiborne Papers (MDAH); New Orleans *Daily Delta*, January 6, 1857; Memphis *Daily Appeal*, January 7, 1857; Philadelphia *Argus* quoted in Natchez *Free Trader*, March 31, 1837.

³⁴*Congressional Globe*, 34 Congress, 1st Session, 409-12, 522-26, 641-43, 775; *Ibid.*, Appendix, 668-72. For a general survey of Quitman's congressional career, see John Edmond Gonzales, "John Anthony Quitman in the United States House of Representatives, 1855-1858," *Southern Quarterly*, II (April, 1966), 276-88.

will be for war."³⁵ In his subsequent congressional career, Quitman continued advocating army interests, and also appealed for the judicious use of volunteer troops as supplementary forces in times of crisis. Quitman became an acknowledged spokesman for the military establishment. Representative was his defense of the use of Army engineers as superintendents and architects during the construction of public buildings such as post offices. When Ohio congressman Edward Ball complained that the military should be confined to its own sphere and had no legitimate role in civilian projects, Quitman rejoined that no "class of men whatever in the country" were more deserving of public confidence than the officers who had worked on the construction projects. The army's appreciation of Quitman's reliable support was reflected in the comment of General in Chief Winfield Scott in February, 1857, that the officers believed Quitman was the instrumental force behind their recent "handsome" pay raise.³⁶

Fittingly, Quitman's last public acts were militarily-oriented. Though in ill health from the lingering effects of the "National Hotel" disease and other complications, Quitman journeyed in May, 1858, to the anniversary celebration of the Palmetto Association of South Carolina. South Carolina's "Palmetto Regiment," of which the Association was the survivor, had been under his command at Mexico City. The occasion offered him yet another opportunity to re-experience these

³⁵*Cong. Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 523, 983-85. The amendments he supported were \$460,000 for quartermaster's department supplies (which passed the House), \$180,000 for incidental expenses of the quartermaster's department such as postage and expenses for escorts for paymasters (which the House voted down) and \$100,000 for barracks construction, encampments and other matters (which the House also voted down).

³⁶*Cong. Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 1795; Winfield Scott to John A. Quitman, February 24, 1857, in *Natchez Free Trader*, April 17, 1857. Quitman's sectional commitments, however, could override his affiliation with army interests. He voted against an army appropriations bill in July, 1856, which included an amendment which inhibited the use of federal troops to enforce the legislation of the proslavery legislature at Shawnee Mission, Kansas. *Cong. Globe*, 34 Cong., 1 Sess., 1813-1814.

moments of wartime glory. He viewed a procession, heard a song in his honor written by fellow secessionist William Gilmore Simms, and gave his own remembrances of the prominent part the Palmettos had in the "brilliant victories which conquered an empire." Then, after the adjournment of Congress, though he was rapidly failing and in no condition to travel, he rushed home to Natchez so as to be on time for a militia encampment of which he had been requested to take command. Upon arrival his weakness necessitated a resignation of the assignment, and he died in July.³⁷

The stereotypical martial southerner, however, was more than a militia enthusiast, soldier, and filibuster. He also liked to hunt, ride horses, fight, and duel. His whole personality was suffused in a militant aura. Here, too, Quitman conformed properly to the model. He loved to hunt and frequently went on extended hunting and fishing expeditions as an escape from political and plantation cares. During the Mexican War, he was frustrated when the necessity of keeping his volunteers under discipline deprived him of the opportunity to hunt grouse, pheasant, duck, and turkey.³⁸ Quitman had a similar relish for horseback riding. Contemporaries often noted Quitman's rigid commitment to the chivalric concept of the "honor" of a gentleman. The word "honor" keeps surfacing in his correspondence, and he vigorously countered attacks upon his character. In 1837 he responded to a local newspaper's politically-inspired allegations that he was a demagogue, egotist, and poor swordsman, by caning and beating the editor on election day in front of the Natchez courthouse door.³⁹ Though Quitman did have an uncharacteristic role as secretary of an anti-duelling society in 1828, he voted at the

³⁷Claiborne, *Quitman*, II, 277-86; 366-79.

³⁸John A. Quitman to F. Henry Quitman, January 11, 1847, John Quitman Papers (MDAH).

³⁹*Natchez Free Trader*, September 7, 1837; William Johnson's Diary, September 9, 12, 1837, in Hogan and Davis, eds., *William Johnson's Natchez*, 191-92.

Mississippi constitutional convention against a provision (which passed) requiring all state officers starting their terms of office to swear that they had neither fought a duel nor been party to one.⁴⁰ Quitman was also for years a member of the Board of Trustees of Jefferson College in nearby Washington, Mississippi. Jefferson College had a strong emphasis on military science.

Militarism even infused Quitman's speech; he constantly used military analogies and metaphors. "A law suit is like a campaign," he observed, regarding litigation against his brother-in-law. "The least blunder may be fatal to a good cause." Quitman's son was chastised for tardiness to a session at Princeton because absence from duty "in military life would have cost an officer his commission." Quitman reserved much of his military terminology for the sectional controversy, which may have been a subconscious expression of his own willingness to wage war on the North if necessary. He told the Mississippi legislature in 1850 that the Congress had become a "theater of war" against slavery, and he alerted Robert J. Walker that it would be "unmilitary" for the South to permit a "cordon of hostile states" upon her border. In comparing Jefferson Davis's stand on sectional relations with his own, Quitman said, "I carry my State rights views to the citadel; you stop at the outworks." And he asserted that he feared blatant abolitionist attacks on the South less than political compromises because it "is easier to defend a

⁴⁰*Natchez Ariel*, March 29, 1828. Quitman's aberrant behavior in joining the duelling society was probably his response to the death of an acquaintance in a duel in February, 1827. R. Somerby to John A. Quitman, February 8, 1827, J. F. H. Claiborne Papers (MDAH). Quitman, however, may have had some aversion to duelling. In 1830 he wrote to his wife about a duel on the streets of Clinton, which he termed a "dreadful rencountre." And in 1842 he tried to talk S. S. Prentiss out of issuing a challenge. John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, May 12, 1842, Quitman Family Papers (SHC); S. S. Prentiss to Felix Huston, May 15, 1842, S. S. Prentiss Papers (MDAH). See also Virginia Quitman McNealus, ed., *Code Duello: Letters Concerning the Prentiss-Tucker Duel of 1842* (Dallas, 1931). And William Johnson recounted an incident in which a drunk at his barber-shop brazenly cursed Quitman's nullification views, but no violence resulted. William Johnson's Diary, November 18, 1836, in Hogan and Davis, eds., *William Johnson's Natchez*, 147.

fortress against an open daylight attack than to guard against the secret approach of the sap and the mine. . . ."⁴¹

Quitman seems the very essence of the militant southerner. It is hard to imagine any public figure in the Old South who better conformed to the standard criteria used to delineate the martial personality.⁴² The important question is why Quitman was so militant. Since his militia involvement antedated his plantation and slave ownership, his martial behavior cannot simply be attributed to the habits of command acquired by being a master. Nor can his militancy be explained entirely in terms of his radical stance on sectional relations, since his early militia activities occurred at a time when he was supporting John Quincy Adams and the National Republican party. More could be said for the argument that Quitman somehow imbibed the lawless, frontier atmosphere of the Old Southwest. After all, Natchez-under-the-Hill, a part of his hometown beneath the bluffs of the Mississippi, was still a haven for prostitutes, gamblers, and other turbulent elements when he arrived.⁴³ But it is more useful to explore Quitman's pre-Mississippi past. Quitman, after all, was a transplanted northerner. There are clear indications that he was well on the road to becoming a militant northerner prior to his removal to Mississippi.

Early in life Quitman manifested many of the traits which would later come to full bloom in his Mississippi years. By puber-

⁴¹John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, May 12, 1842, Quitman Family Papers (SHC); John A. Quitman to F. Henry Quitman, September 24, 1849, John Quitman Papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania); *Journal of the Senate of the State of Mississippi, 1850*, 324; John A. Quitman to Robert J. Walker, February 13, 1850, Robert J. Walker Papers (New York Historical Society); [Varina H. Davis], *Jefferson Davis, Ex-President of the Confederate States of America: A Memoir By His Wife* (2 vols., New York, 1890), I, 470; John A. Quitman to J. C. Carpenter, R. P. Winslow, W. S. Langley, H. Napier, A. G. Haley and E. P. Russell, July 17, 1852, in Claiborne, *Quitman*, II, 170-71.

⁴²See particularly T. Harry Williams, *P. G. T. Beauregard: Napoleon in Gray* (Baton Rouge, 1955) for another martial southerner.

⁴³For Natchez-under-the-Hill, see D. Clayton James, *Antebellum Natchez* (Baton Rouge, 1968), 36, 169; Joseph Holt Ingraham, *The South-West. By a Yankee* (2 vols., reprint edition, Ann Arbor, 1966), 19-20, 54.

ty, Quitman was interested in the art of war. "When a boy. . . of eleven years of age," he later wrote, "I was Captain of a company of Cadets, armed with wooden guns, and have a distinct recollection of some skirmishes with a half-gipsy, half-Indian race of vagabonds living in the hills." At the age of twelve, according to his 1848 campaign biography, he formed a company of cadets among the students at a school he was attending in Schoharie, New York. And whether or not Quitman found feudal chivalric traditions appealing, it is clear that some time prior to his arrival in Ohio he had read Sir Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake*.⁴⁴

Quitman enjoyed hunting and shooting from an early age. A close friend from his boyhood days in Rhinebeck, New York, later reminisced how Quitman could "shoot more Robbins & Black Birds" than their joint acquaintances; his sister carried with her into middle age an image of Quitman and his brother Albert out hunting birds and game with their guns. When Quitman traveled from New York to Ohio he was castigated by a female traveller for hunting duck on Sunday, and the journal Quitman kept in Chillicothe, Ohio, shows that he regarded hunting as a regular activity rather than as an occasional pastime. Typical was this entry for December 10, 1819: "Borrowed a rifle and went out hunting. . . on the Paint creek hills. We saw many pheasants, partridges, and. . . turkies. . . . After dinner. . . I shot at a mark. I beat every shot but one." He was apparently an accomplished horseback rider by this time, because on at least one occasion he was hired to break a wild colt.⁴⁵

⁴⁴John A. Quitman to J. R. Simms, May 5, 1854, in *Historical Magazine* (January 1867), 41-42; *Brief Sketch of the Life, Civil and Military, of John A. Quitman, Major General in the Army of the U.S.* (Washington, D.C., 1848), 15; John Quitman Journal, November 10, 1819, Quitman Family Papers (SHC).

⁴⁵Walter C. Livingston to John A. Quitman, October 18, 1857, Louisa Quitman to John Quitman, August 4, 1849, Quitman Family Papers (SHC); John Quitman Journal, November 14, 1819, April 7, 20, November 25, 28, 29, 1820, June 9, 1821, and 1819-1820, *passim*, Quitman Family Papers (SHC).

Quitman also participated in the Ohio militia. By the late summer of 1820, he was describing his role in militia musters. On Independence Day, 1821, his diary announced: "On this day I was elected 1 Lieut. of the Independent Rifle corps of Delaware." Another entry shows that he served as company commander on a number of occasions when the captain was sick. Quitman was also in one brawl in Ohio (winning a black eye and a court appearance). And his journals show that Quitman had already developed his trait of using military figures of speech. On his trip from Ohio to Mississippi, for instance, he commented that geese and duck on sand bars of the Ohio river seemed to "be holding regimental muster," and that the crackling of cane on a fire resembled the "discharge of musketry."⁴⁶

It is quite possible that Quitman, had he settled in Ohio permanently, would have grounded a public career in military involvement as he did in Mississippi. There certainly were many northerners who showed the same type of militaristic characteristics as the stereotyped martial southerner. Indeed, it must be argued that historians need to pay more attention to Marcus Cunliffe's argument that all parts of antebellum America shared in a "martial spirit."⁴⁷ There was a national military zeal, not simply a southern military mood.

A look at John Quitman's return from the Mexican War further makes this point concerning the national militant culture. Recent historians have provided many valuable insights into the

⁴⁶John Quitman Journal, August 31, September 1, 14, 1820, January 1, July 4, August 4, 14, 1821, Quitman Family Papers (SHC). Quitman was formally commissioned by the governor of Ohio, and his company was in the third regiment, second brigade of the seventh division of the Ohio militia. Claiborne, *Quitman*, I, 67n.

⁴⁷Cunliffe, *Soldiers & Civilians*, 65-98. The influential military theorist, Emory Upton, is an excellent example of an antebellum northerner with a martial temperament. The interesting thing about Upton is that he came from a reform-inclined family which gave him an upbringing almost antithetical in an ideological sense to what might be expected of the southern slaveholding class. Yet he emerged a militarist. See Stephen E. Ambrose, *Upton and the Army* (Baton Rouge, 1964), 1-15.

coming of the Civil War by stressing the sectional divisiveness of the Mexican War, particularly relating to the Wilmot Proviso and the territorial question. Much attention has been given to northern disillusionment with the war effort and the strength of antislavery and pacifist opposition in that section.⁴⁸ Yet, paradoxically, this very focus has blurred the strong nationwide support the war continued to have up to and after its termination. Certainly there was no stigma attached to service in the war of the sort the country witnessed following its most recent foreign conflict. Four of the six major party presidential candidates between 1848 and 1856 were Mexican War generals. As one of President Polk's correspondents appropriately wrote from New York City in 1848, "Soldier fame is so dear to this people." Robert Johannsen has shown that the wartime triumphs of American armies stirred "deep feelings of national pride" throughout the nation, and when the Mexican War ended there was widespread agreement with President Polk's claim that the war demonstrated democracy's superiority over tyrannical government. Furthermore, Frederick Merk and others have demonstrated that while the war was in progress there was considerable northern support for conquering all of Mexico, particularly emanating from east coast cities like New York City.⁴⁹

⁴⁸John H. Schroeder, *Mr. Polk's War: American Opposition and Dissent, 1846-1848* (Madison, 1973); Chaplain W. Morrison, *Democratic Politics and Sectionalism: The Wilmot Proviso Controversy* (Chapel Hill, 1967); Kinley J. Brauer, *Cotton versus Conscience: Massachusetts Whig Politics and Southwestern Expansion, 1843-1848* (Lexington, 1967); Seymour V. Connor and Odie B. Faulk, *North America Divided: The Mexican War, 1846-1848* (New York, 1971), 133-170; Samuel Eliot Morison, Frederick Merk, and Frank Freidel, *Dissent in Three American Wars* (Cambridge, 1970), 35-63; John R. Collins, "Sectionalism and Political Fragmentation," in *The Mexican War: Changing Interpretations*, eds. Odie B. Faulk and Joseph A. Stout, Jr. (Chicago, 1973), 67-76.

⁴⁹Jane M. Storms to James K. Polk, February 8, 1848, James K. Polk Papers (Library of Congress); Robert W. Johannsen, "A New Era for the United States: Americans and the War with Mexico," Inaugural Lecture of the first James G. Randall Distinguished Professor of History (Urbana, 1975); Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History: A Reinterpretation* (New York, 1963), 144-49. See also William H. Goetzmann, *When the Eagle Screamed: The Romantic Horizon in American Diplomacy, 1800-1860* (New York, 1966), 38-73. Goetzmann views the Mexican War as a manifestation of a national romantic spirit.

Quitman's sudden emergence as vice presidential timber in 1848 was a product of his war record. He perceived himself, and many political supporters so regarded him, as the military agent of national progress. It was natural, therefore, for him to accept reward from the country for which he had risked his life. His war letters were untainted by sectionalism. When he advised the annexation of Mexico, he did so in the context of America's manifest destiny rather than because Mexico represented a potential region for slavery expansion.⁵⁰ Dreams of a southern tropical slave empire would not affect him until a couple of years after the war. It was patriotic pride, not sectional ambition, which led him to exclaim upon first arriving at the American army encampment on the Rio Grande: "Our glorious stripes and stars float over every town on the Rio Grande for 500 miles from its mouth. . . . Our country must make a decisive war of this. . . ." His political viability after the war was an outgrowth of his battlefield heroics in the nation's service. There was little public interest in his record of competent public service in Mississippi; and his sectional radicalism was played down because it would have alienated many fellow Democrats in both the North and the South. But as a war hero, he was "overwhelmed with civilities" and induced to "launch out upon the tempestuous ocean of politics." A trip northward in early 1848 hardly dampened his enthusiasm. In Washington, D.C., Vice President George M. Dallas (a Pennsylvanian) and other luminaries turned out for a public

⁵⁰John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, August 14, 1846, Quitman Family Papers (SHC). Quitman essentially viewed the Mexican masses as a dirty, lazy, and "enslaved" people who did not merit the beautiful country they inhabited. He wrote his daughter from Camargo that although Mexicans bathed every day, they were nonetheless "filthy & resemble much our Indians." He felt it was America's mission to take over and uplift the country, saying in another letter, "I am satisfied that we are but the instruments of a benevolent providence to improve this country." He did respect the Mexican upper classes, but also felt that they were enlightened enough to acknowledge the benefits which American rule would bring to their country. There was nothing, however, in his wartime letters about establishing slavery in Mexico after it would be annexed. John A. Quitman to Louisa Quitman, August 18, 1846, January 6, 1847, John A. Quitman to Eliza Quitman, February 27, April 29, May 2, October 11, 1847, Quitman Family Papers (SHC).

dinner in his honor, causing the antislavery *National Era* to complain that militarism was infesting the republic: "The drawing-room, the public walk, the Senate Chamber, are startled with the glare of military array." Thousands of citizens turned out to welcome Quitman at Albany, New York, when the general arrived there in his tour. He was invited to address the governor, a joint committee of the legislature, and the Albany Council at the state senate chamber. Quitman came in second in the Baltimore Democratic convention's vice presidential balloting that May. Forty-one of his seventy-four delegate votes came from the North.⁵¹ Even after 1850, when Quitman's secessionist ideology had gained nationwide attention, he still remained a possibility for national office because of his war reputation. Certainly he had strong support from the veteran vote. Every year the second regiment of Pennsylvania volunteers, which served under Quitman at Chapultepec, held a reunion commemorating the battle and gave a "bumper" toast to their Mississippi commander.⁵²

When Henry Hughes, a Mississippi secessionist, delivered his eulogy to John A. Quitman, he concluded that Quitman had shown that Mississippi's yeomanry were "born soldiers" and that her "quiet and busy home-spun citizens" could match "any drilled and spangled myrmidions." Quitman would have appreciated the eulogy, and might have applauded its implicit endorsement of the southern military tradition. On the other hand, Quitman was enough of a realist to recognize that the whole

⁵¹John A. Quitman to F. R. Backus, January 24, 1848, John Quitman Papers (Historical Society of Pennsylvania); Claiborne, *Quitman*, II, 10; (Washington) *National Era*, January 6, 1848; *New York Globe* quoted in *Natchez Free Trader*, February 29, 1848; Joseph G. Rayback, *Free Soil: The Election of 1848* (Lexington, 1970), 174-75, 191. The dynamics of Mexican War officers operating as a cohesive force in American politics in the late 1840s and early 1850s probably needs more attention. Roy Nichols found, for instance, that a group of Mexican War officers led by Gideon Pillow played an important role in swinging the 1852 Democratic presidential nomination to Franklin Pierce. Roy Nichols, *Franklin Pierce: Young Hickory of the Granite Hills* (Rev. ed., Philadelphia, 1958), 195-99.

⁵²Levi P. Knerr to John A. Quitman, December 16, 1855, John Quitman Papers (MDAH).

American nation responded to the martial impulse. Shortly before his death, he reminded the House of Representatives that the Mexican War had revealed the martial fervor of the whole American people, and argued that "republican institutions are best calculated to nourish the military spirit."⁵³

Had General Quitman lived to see the Civil War, he undoubtedly would have sought some major role in the Confederate war effort. It is unlikely that his participation would have significantly affected a losing cause. Those southern secessionists who were able to persuade themselves of a significant differential between the North and South in military spirit and tradition were indulging themselves in an exercise of self-delusion. Had they fully thought out the implications of John Quitman's career, they might have seen Quitman for what he really was, a militant southerner who was also a militant American.

⁵³*Natchez Free Trader*, September 9, 1858, *Cong. Globe*, 35 Cong., 1 Sess., 970.