

NAME
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Twitcheil

NO.

READING ROOM

Crucible of Reconstruction

*War, Radicalism,
and Race
in Louisiana*

1862-1877

Ted Tunnell

Louisiana State University Press
Baton Rouge and London

Marshall Harvey Twitchell
American Counsel to Kingston
late 19c.

costly and barren victory. Kellogg would rule the corpse of Republican Louisiana.

The debacle of the Warmoth years resulted from a failure to resolve a crisis of legitimacy. Louisiana Republicans, as did their counterparts elsewhere in the South, confronted enemies who challenged not only Radical policies but the very existence of the Radical regime, enemies who held Warmoth and all his party to be criminal usurpers. The Warmoth administration met the threat with a twofold strategy: the policy of force and the policy of peace. The strategy failed. The policy of force helped protect the regime, but at an unacceptable cost. The Republican election apparatus was so patently undemocratic that it made Northern voters as well as Southerners question the legitimacy of the Republican government. By the end of 1872 the crisis of legitimacy was fast emerging as a national, not just a regional, problem. The policy of peace, on the other hand, not only failed, on any significant scale, to conciliate white Louisianians, it destroyed the Republican party from within. The Warmoth strategies were in fact mutually contradictory; they negated each other and demolished his government.

254-55; T. Harry Williams, "The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873," *Journal of Southern History*, XI (August, 1945), 349-50; James D. Richardson (ed.), *A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, 1789-1897* (Washington, D.C., 1896-1897), VII, 223-24.

Showdown on the Red River

"We own this soil of Louisiana," proclaimed a St. Mary Parish newspaper in August 1874; civilization is the birthright of the white race, "and it is ours, and ours alone. . . . Therefore are we banding together in a White League army . . . acting under Christian and high-principled leaders, and determined to defeat these negroes in their infamous design of depriving us of all we hold sacred and precious on the soil of our nativity. . . . Upon the radical party must rest the whole responsibility of this *conflict*, and as sure as there is a just God in heaven, their unnatural, cold-blooded, and revengeful measures of reconstruction in Louisiana *will meet with a terrible retribution.*"¹ The Radicals would pay dearly for victory in the disputed election of 1872.

Like Warmoth, Governor Kellogg was an Illinoian (although he was born in Vermont). As a young lawyer in his twenties he had helped organize the Republican party in central Illinois. Lincoln appointed him chief justice of the Nebraska Territory, but when the fighting started he returned home and raised a regiment of cavalry. He resigned his commission in 1863 because of ill health; on the eve of that fatal visit to Ford's Theater, the president appointed him collector of the Port of New Orleans. Kellogg's reputation for being more honest than Warmoth may have to do with the fact that his personal papers have been purged of damaging material; whereas, some of the dirt remains in Warmoth's manuscripts. In any event, Louisiana whites cared neither about his virtues nor his real faults. He was "The Usurper," and they reviled him as they had never reviled Warmoth. "Surely such a miserable weak, contemptible creature," David F. Boyd confided morosely to his diary, "must go to pieces from his own rottenness." In 1873 he escaped an assassination attempt.²

1. *Senate Executive Documents*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 13, p. 31.

2. *Dictionary of American Biography*, X, 305-306; *Biographical Directory of the American Congress*, 1172-73; David F. Boyd Diary, 1874-1875, Troy H. Middleton Library, Loui-

The great depression of the 1870s further poisoned Kellogg's term. Under Warmoth the state's agriculture and commerce had partially recovered from the devastation of the war, and a mood of cautious optimism prevailed at the start of the decade. In the fall of 1873, the fragile economy of Louisiana collapsed along with the nation's. Hard times now presented another indictment of Radical rule; as the *Picayune* maintained, "Bad government is the sole cause of the universal wretchedness of the people of Louisiana." Throughout the state angry whites concluded that the end of Radical government was a prerequisite for recovery.³

Louisiana whites united in believing that the Radicals were corrupt; indeed, as they told the story, no people ever endured more venal rulers. The evidence was prima facie: Tax rates doubled and tripled; the cost of state and local government mounted; the state debt, \$10 million before the war, climbed to \$25 million by 1873; lawmakers took bribes, padded their expense accounts, and contrived per diem pay between sessions of the legislature. Never mind the dislocations of war and emancipation; the years that taxes remained in arrears; the failure of antebellum Louisiana to provide social services, including education, deemed essential in the North;⁴ and the dilemma of politicians whose constituents were land-poor black farmers: They either fed at the public trough or went hungry. Never mind that the Warmoth and Kellogg administrations were probably no more corrupt than past (or later) regimes and that graft acted as a prime lubricant of nineteenth-century politics. Never mind, too, that Louisiana corrupted the Radicals every bit as much as the Radicals corrupted the state. "I don't pretend to be honest," Warmoth announced testily in a bank law debate. "I only pretend to be as honest as anybody in politics." Here are the leaders of the banking community in New Orleans, he observed, publicly protesting the venality of their lawmakers while, behind the scenes, attempting to buy their votes. "I tell you these

siana State University, Baton Rouge, September 21, 1874; T. Harry Williams, "The Louisiana Unification Movement of 1873," *Journal of Southern History*, XI (August, 1945), 349-50; the Kellogg Papers consist of routine official letters and documents that reveal little about the man or his policies.

3. Joe Gray Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed, 1863-1877* (Baton Rouge, 1974), 350-63.

4. There is a good discussion of this in *ibid.*, 202-208, 260-65.

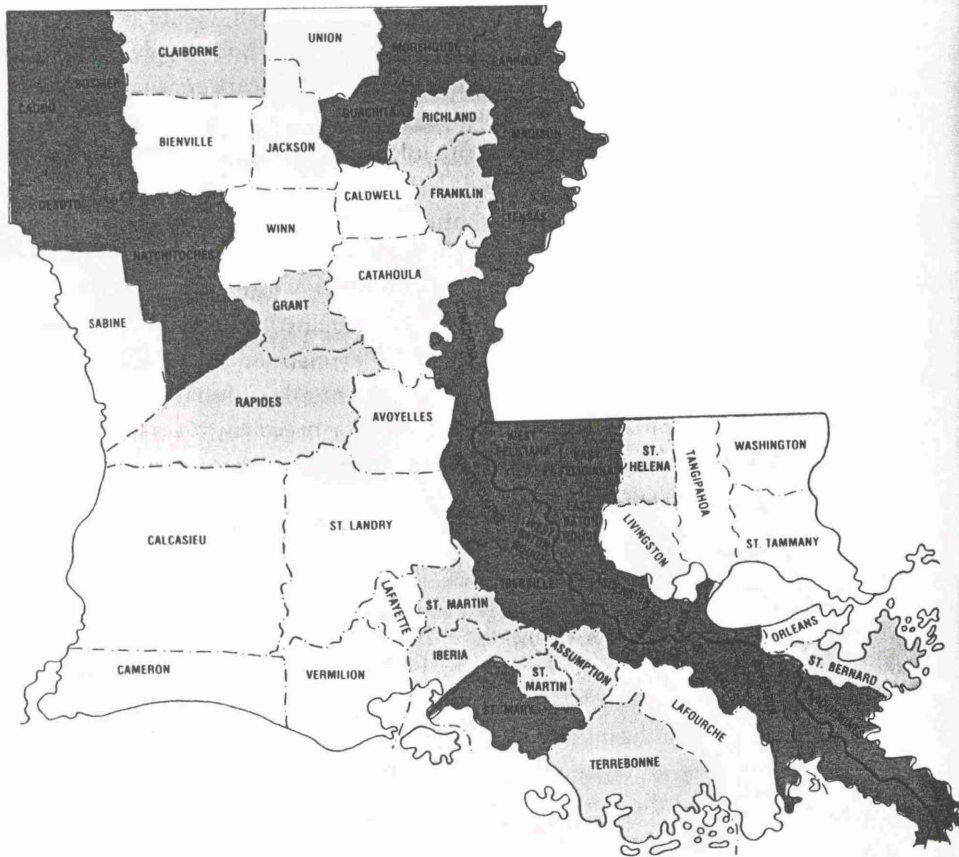
much-abused members of the Louisiana legislature are at all events as good as the people they represent. Why, damn it, everybody is demoralizing down here. Corruption is the fashion."⁵ The scapegoating of Radicals as thieves, one and all, served an important end, of course: that of justifying the deeper corruption of violence. The Knights of the White Camellia, the White League, and their kin crippled democracy in the state and the region for nearly a century. Armies of thieves could not have equaled their damage.

For most of the state's history, sectional politics in Louisiana has pitted the French-Catholic southern parishes against the Anglo-Protestant northern parishes. The politics of Reconstruction, however, as Maps 7 through 11 show, conformed to a racial sectional pattern. In 1870 the population was divided evenly between 364,210 blacks and 362,065 whites; the distribution, however, was skewed. New Orleans was 73.6 percent white, but the rest of the state remained 58.6 percent black.⁶ The Democrats generally won the Crescent City and other white areas; the Republicans usually dominated the alluvial Y. In 1872, excepting the two Baton Rouge parishes, the Radicals carried the heavily black areas along the Mississippi River from the Arkansas border to the gulf; the Fusionists, however, stripped them of the Red River Valley, the western arm of the Y. The loss, if permanent, reduced the Republicans to a minority party. In the ensuing years the Red River Valley emerged as the strategic battleground between the White League and the Radicals.

The Red River rises seven hundred miles northwest of Louisiana on the Llano Estacado, the Staked Plain, where its waters cut the deep gash in the Texas Panhandle known as the Palo Duro Canyon. When Warmoth became governor, this region remained the domain of the Antelope Comanche. For hundreds of miles it marked the boundary between Texas and unorganized Indian territory, nipping Arkansas, and entering the northwestern corner of Louisiana, flowing diagonally across the state. "Its waters are excessively turbid, and of a deep red

5. *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 973. Richard N. Current has written that "if Warmoth was corrupt, it would be nearer the truth to say that Louisiana corrupted *him* than to say that *he* corrupted Louisiana" (*Three Carpetbag Governors* [Baton Rouge, 1967], 63).

6. *Ninth Census, 1870, Population*, I, 33-34.



Map 7

Black Population of Louisiana, 1870

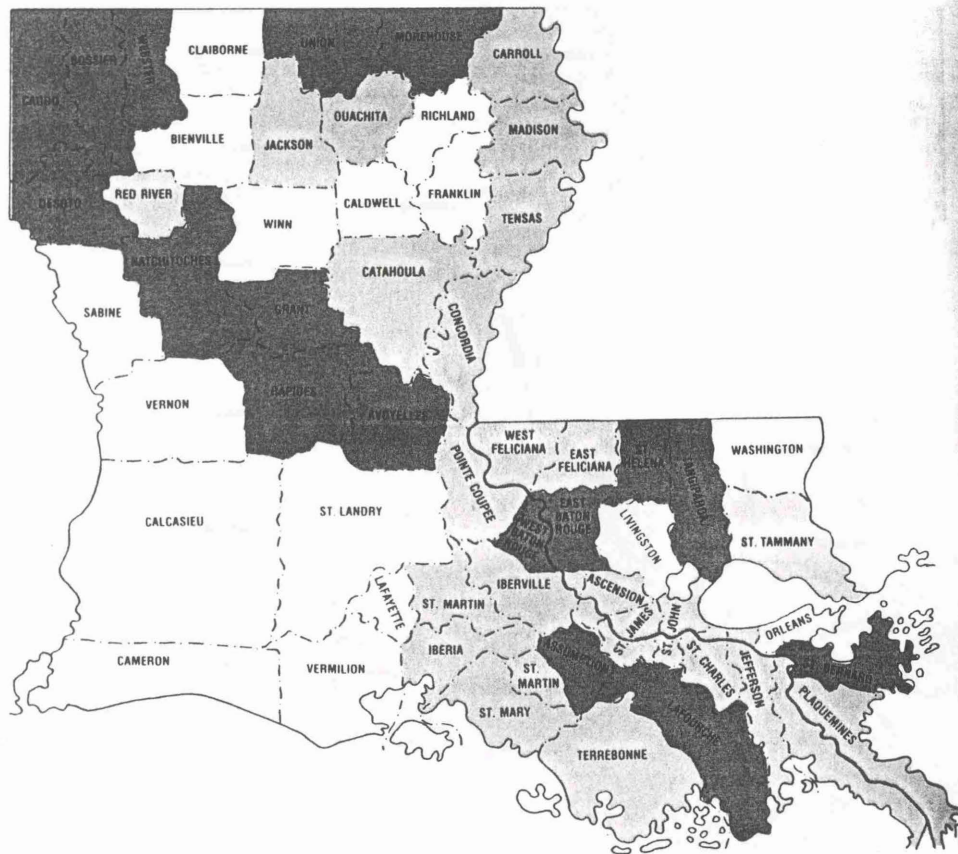
- 60% or more black
- 50% to 59% black
- less than 50% black



Map 8

Election for State Auditor in Louisiana, 1870
(Graham, Republican, vs. Jumel, Democrat)

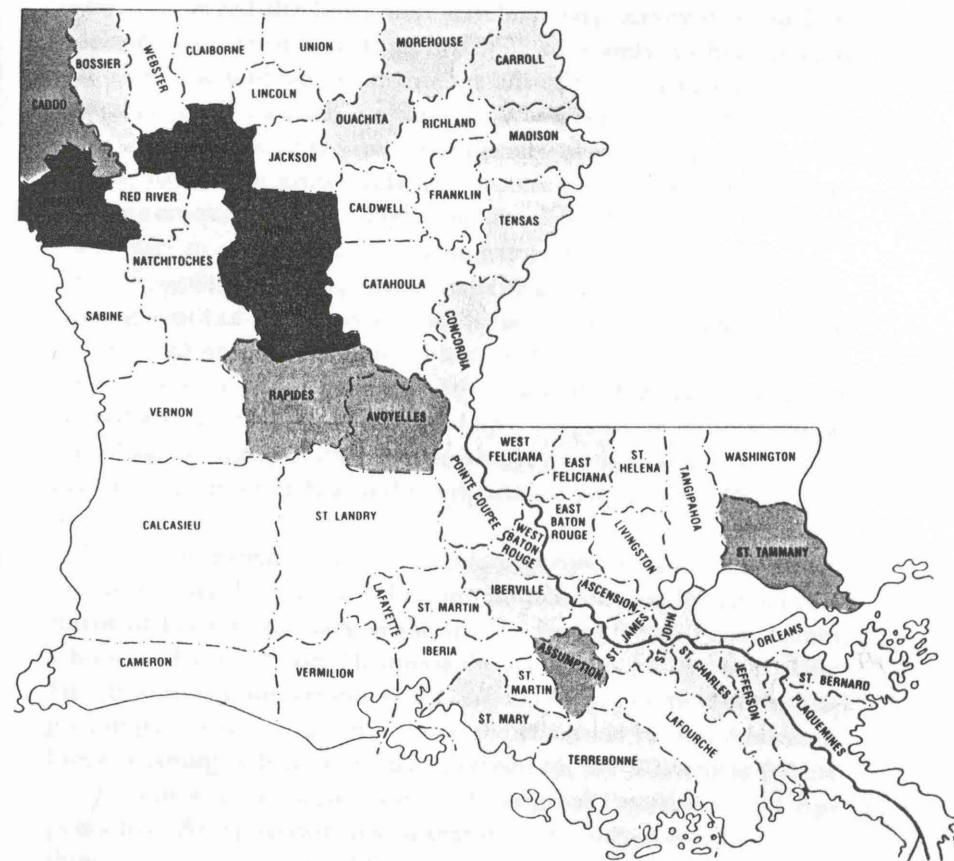
- Jumel received majorities
- Graham received majorities



Map 9

Election for Governor in Louisiana, 1872
(Kellogg vs. McEnery)

- McEnery received majorities
- Kellogg received majorities
- Contested, both candidates claimed majorities



Map 10

Election for State Treasurer in Louisiana, 1874
(Dubuclet, Republican, vs. Moncure, Democrat)

- Moncure received majorities
- Dubuclet received majorities
- Contested, both candidates claimed majorities
- Vote excluded because of fraud, violence, or other irregularities



Map 11

Election for Governor in Louisiana, 1876
(Packard, Republican, vs. Nicholls, Democrat)

- Nicholls received majorities
- Packard received majorities¹
- Contested, both candidates claimed majorities
- Vote excluded because of fraud, violence, or other irregularities

Source: Based on Democratic compilation and official Republican returns, December 21, 1876.
1. Republican returns give Lafourche to Packard; Democratic returns show vote tied.

color,” observed the Louisiana State Seminary surveyor Samuel H. Lockett; “its current is swift; its banks are constantly washing away at one point and building up at another; cut-offs . . . islands, old rivers, and abandoned channels are numerous.” Where it joins the Mississippi, its width exceeds a mile, but upriver, above the rapids at Alexandria, navigation grows difficult “on account of its narrowness and extreme crookedness. . . . Eighteen miles above Shreveport, the Great Raft offers an insuperable obstacle to navigation in the main channel.” The raft, acting like a huge dam, backs up the waters and forms a connecting series of lakes, bayous, and canals. In October 1865 an agent of the Freedmen’s Bureau named Marshall Harvey Twitchell received his orders in New Orleans, and the passage of a few days found him aboard a small stern-wheeler headed up the Red River, his destination the village of Sparta in Bienville Parish. At Alexandria he saw a workman nod his head at him and overheard the comment: “There goes one of our bosses.”⁷

Twitchell’s parents were Vermont farm people and antislavery Congregationalists. He attended the common schools, graduated valedictorian of Leland Seminary in the small town of Townshend, taught school, and studied law. He joined the army (the 4th Vermont) after First Bull Run at the age of twenty-one and fought in most of the major campaigns of the eastern theater: the Peninsula battles, Antietam, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, the Wilderness (where he received a severe head wound), the siege of Petersburg, and Appomattox. Army records reveal that he had sandy-colored hair, fair skin, hazel eyes, and stood five feet seven inches tall. He remained a sergeant for most of the war, and when another noncom received a lieutenantcy ahead of him, he asked for a commission in the United States Colored Troops. At Petersburg Captain Twitchell commanded a company of the 109th Colored Infantry. After Appomattox the 109th went to Indianola, Texas. That August Twitchell requested reassignment with the Freedmen’s Bureau in Louisiana.⁸

7. Samuel H. Lockett, *Louisiana as It Is: A Geographical and Topographical Description of the State*, ed. Lauren C. Post (Baton Rouge, 1970), 122–23; “Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell,” Marshall Harvey Twitchell Papers, Prescott Memorial Library, Louisiana Tech University, Ruston, 79–80.

8. “Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell,” in Twitchell Papers, 1–79; Civil

Late in the year the Vermonter rode into Sparta with a small detachment of black soldiers and took over the duties of provost-marshal and agent of the Freedmen's Bureau. No telegraph linked the community with the outside world. The former Confederate capital of Shreveport, now the occupation army's undermanned headquarters in northwestern Louisiana, lay forty miles away across swamp and Lake Bistineau. New Orleans was at least a three-day journey. Hundreds of ex-Rebel soldiers lived in the area, and few if any bore any love for the government that Twitchell represented. He wrote years later that had he known what awaited him, he would "have remained with [his] regiment."⁹

The task, as he understood it, was to inform the people of the region, black and white, of the new order: Former master and ex-slave were now employer and employee. As the agent of the government, he represented the arbiter of the free labor system; if landowner and laborer could not agree on wages, he "would fix the pay of the ex-slave" and compel obedience from both parties. Corporal punishment was a relic of the past; labor conflicts and punishment now came under the purview of the Freedmen's Bureau. Upon arrival, Twitchell inspected the jail and freed a young mulatto girl. A brief investigation had revealed the girl's crime: The wife of the town's most prominent citizen believed that she was the illegitimate daughter of her absent husband.¹⁰

Schooled on the gospel of free labor, the young Northerner's observations of his alien surroundings were invariably critical. Illiteracy characterized both races; the grandeur of the local aristocracy revealed itself in a few oversized log cabins; mulattos traced their origins to the elite of white society (not, as he had presumed, to the bottom rung);

War Pension Files, Record Group 15, National Archives. Students of Reconstruction are indebted to the late Jimmy G. Shoalmire, who discovered the Twitchell Papers, in the possession of Dr. Marshall Coleman Twitchell of Burlington, Vermont, and is responsible for their present availability in Prescott Memorial Library. Shoalmire's "Carpet-bagger Extraordinary: Marshall Harvey Twitchell, 1840-1905" (Ph.D. dissertation, Mississippi State University, 1969), remains a valuable work.

9. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 79-80.

10. *Ibid.*, 81-82. Twitchell's autobiography and other papers are very brief on his Freedmen's Bureau experience, and, unfortunately, the National Archives have failed to locate his correspondence in Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, Record Group 105.

the Methodist minister and his wife smoked tobacco; the landlady swore like a soldier. He had always wondered how a minority of slave-owners had manipulated the white masses; a few years hence he helped conduct the federal census and "discovered enough ignorance to explain the question." On occasion his critical comments were tinged with admiration. Despite their ignorance and the primitive ritual of foot-washing, Twitchell respected the Hard-shell Baptists of the region "for their honesty, industry and general law-abiding character"; because they had not owned slaves, they were freer from the corruption of slavery than other whites. In all, Bienville Parish confirmed a profound sense of New England superiority.¹¹

In mid-1866 the Freedmen's Bureau routinely relieved the Sparta agent and ordered him to New Orleans for mustering out of the army. That Twitchell did not at that point return to his native Vermont owed to a courtship and marriage worthy of a novel by John W. De Forest. Adele Coleman was a young music teacher at Sparta Academy, a high-spirited belle, and the daughter of one of the parish's first families. To the acute dismay of family and friends, Adele decided that the only man worthy of her hand was the hated Yankee captain of the Freedmen's Bureau. The result was melodrama. One evening while walking, for instance, Adele turned to Marshall and calmly asked for his army pistol, which he cautiously handed over. The young woman whirled and fired into the shrubbery of a nearby fence, flushing from hiding an embarrassed rival. The New Englander later concluded that had Adele hit the man, the community would have pronounced the shooting accidental. A young gentleman from one of the best families "could not have been so dishonorable as to have been cavesdropping, while she could not have intentionally shot him. A certain kind of pride and honor were of more importance than life to them." On a later occasion, Twitchell's orderly appeared at the door late one night with the news that a mysterious rider who refused to dismount wanted to see the captain outside. The mystery rider proved to be Adele in disguise, who had come to warn her beau that her brother Gus was gunning for him. The lovers spent the night riding in the moonlight. The

11. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 85-89, 99, 118-19.

Coleman family attempted to send their daughter to South Carolina, but the headstrong Adele refused to go. The family finally resigned itself to the match, and Twitchell married Adele that July.¹²

The Colemans soon rejoiced at their daughter's choice. For one thing, Isaac Coleman, Adele's father, and Marshall discovered that they liked one another. Even more important, the new son-in-law had capital and a head for business that was lacking among the Coleman men. Twitchell and Isaac Coleman purchased adjoining plantations on Lake Bistineau. The year 1867 proved to be a bad one, and Coleman was unable to pay his debts. "You Yankees are said to be awful cute," Mrs. Coleman chided; "[it] seems to me you might take Mr. Coleman's business and straighten it out." The Northerner accepted the challenge and took over the management of the Coleman estates, with notable success. "Thank the Lord the plantation is paid for 'every cent' and there will be no trouble about the balance that Pa owes," Adele wrote proudly to her sister in early 1868. Marshall "has paid off all the land notes and \$100 on the stock notes, besides taking up an old note of Barrett's against Pa." In addition, with the help of her brother Gus, he had cleared up her father's debts in Ringgold. "Pa says he don't know what in the world he would have done without his *Yankee* son in law."¹³ The alliance also benefited Twitchell, according him respectability and acceptance in the community, and he, too, profited financially.

Only one thing now disturbed the conservative Louisiana family about Adele's husband: He was a Radical. Twitchell entertained few doubts about the leading role that he and other Northerners took in Reconstruction politics. The ex-slaves were too ignorant to govern effectively, the native Unionists too few in number; both groups looked to the ex-Federal soldiers who, though young and politically inexperienced, had learned the lessons of organization in the Union army, or so the young carpetbagger assumed. Twitchell helped organize the

12. *Ibid.*, 91-97; Civil War Pension Files.

13. Twitchell's father died late in the war, and shortly after his marriage, he made an emergency trip to Vermont to settle property matters. The family was not well-to-do, but even a modest inheritance would have gone a long way in the Bienville Parish of 1866. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 72, 98, 100-101, 109, 115; Adele Twitchell to her sister Lou, January 8, 1868, in Twitchell Papers.

Republican party on the upper Red River; he became a member of the constitutional convention, parish judge, justice of the peace, president of the police jury, assistant marshal, president of the school board, state senator, and United States commissioner. He formed a lasting alliance with Edward W. Dewees, a young New Yorker who had succeeded him as the Freedmen's Bureau agent at Sparta. When the two men first met outside Assistant Commissioner Thomas W. Conway's office in the fall of 1865, neither foresaw the perilous events that would bind them together like brothers.¹⁴

The danger started soon enough. In May 1868 night riders on the upper Red River started the reign of terror that climaxed on the eve of the presidential election. Masked men invaded the home of a black leader named Moses Langhorne, shot him, and cut off his head. Twitchell's young mulatto messenger disappeared without a trace; rumor drifted back that he had been thrown into Lake Bistineau with his hands tied. Mounted men blasted a neighboring carpetbagger with shotguns one evening, luring him from his house by claiming they had a letter for him. They tried the same trick on Twitchell. The wily Vermonter sent a young Negro girl for the letter while he ducked out the back door with his pistol and rifle and circled around to the front. The riders grew uneasy and rode off. For the first time since their marriage, Marshall and Adele endured social ostracism. One Sunday morning at church the minister preached an entire sermon against the young wife for marrying an outsider. Twitchell avoided road ambushes that fall through a combination of luck and caution: He rode only in open country and never went near the woods. Once he read his obituary in the *New Orleans Republican*. As the election grew near, the danger was so great that he advised blacks to stay away from the polls. Recklessly disregarding his own counsel, he cast the only vote that Ulysses S. Grant received in Bienville Parish. The man was fiercely proud. Southern bullies would not intimidate Captain Marshall Harvey Twitchell.¹⁵

The political fury subsided after the election, and life on the upper

14. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 79-80, 102-106; *Official Register of the United States*, 1867.

15. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 105-113; *House Miscellaneous Documents*, 41st Cong., 2d Sess., No. 154, Pt. 1, pp. 62-66.

Red River resumed its routine. Twitchell's younger brother Homer and his brother-in-law George A. King joined him from Vermont. The carpetbagger now devoted much of his considerable energy to business. For \$21,000 he purchased Starlight Plantation, 620 acres of the best land in De Soto Parish on the west bank of the Red River. He invested in steam-powered machinery and put up, under King's management, Starlight Mills, which was a cotton gin, saw mill, and grist mill complex. He constructed a school and new houses for his black employees, scattering the new quarters over the entire plantation instead of putting them in a single cluster as had been done during the slavery period. With the Colemans he obtained a state contract and cleared the debris-clogged Lake Bistineau for navigation. The industrious Yankee also purchased valuable lots in the village of Coushatta, three miles below Starlight on the Bienville side of the Red River.¹⁶

In 1870 the rest of Twitchell's family moved from Vermont: his widowed mother, his sister Belle (Mrs. George A. King), and his sisters Helen and Kate and their husbands, M. C. Willis and Clark Holland. In the meantime, Dewees' younger brother Robert joined him. The New Yorkers purchased a half-interest in Starlight, and the two brothers joined the Vermonters in De Soto Parish. Other Northerners, Frank S. Edgerton, J. W. Harrison, and Henry A. Scott, settled nearby, creating a regular community. In the space of a few years the Yankee colony infused tens of thousands of dollars of capital into the short stretch of the Red River Valley that bordered De Soto and Bienville parishes. Most of it went into plantations, mills, and other properties that returned a profit, but substantial sums also went for levees, schools, public buildings, and churches. "There has not been a church or public building . . . in that part of the country," Twitchell stated, "that I have not donated money for." He pointed to the town of Coushatta, which when he first arrived had been an insignificant river landing with two houses and in the early 1870s emerged as one of the most prosperous towns on the Red River. Samuel H. Lockett, no admirer of the Radicals, confirmed that boast. Coushatta, he observed in

16. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," 115-18; *Gillespie vs. Twitchell*, *Louisiana Annual Reports*, vol. 34, pp. 288-300; *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 385; Shoalmire, "Carpetbagger Extraordinary," 93, 105.

his 1872 topographical survey, "has but recently sprung into existence, but it is one of the prettiest and most enterprising small towns in the state."¹⁷

Red River Parish, created in 1871, consolidated the political power of Twitchell's Yankee clan. Incorporating parts of De Soto, Bienville, Caddo, Bossier, and Natchitoches parishes, it straddled a twenty-five-mile span of the upper Red River Valley. Its economic and political center of gravity ran northwest to southeast following the alluvial bottomlands through Starlight Plantation and Coushatta, the parish seat. Every member of Twitchell's family held a political office. Dewees was a state representative and member of the police jury. Scalawags and blacks, although they were not excluded, danced to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy." Even so, as events showed, Twitchell achieved what the Radicals in Louisiana rarely achieved: white support for the Republican party, which was probably at least a fourth and possibly two fifths of the white voters.¹⁸

Red River Parish was nearly 70 percent black. No equalitarian, Twitchell was a paternalist who assumed that blacks "wanted a Northern man for their leader." He referred to blacks as Negroes or colored men, never "niggers" (at least not in any surviving document), and on one occasion he referred to a black Republican as "Mister." In exchange for votes, he secured minor offices such as justice of the peace, recorder, coroner, or alderman for black leaders. Starlight Mills and the Northern-run plantations provided employment to several hundred Negroes on both a wage and a share basis; Twitchell also sold land to blacks. In Red River the authorities treated violent crime against freedmen as serious business; indeed, the carpetbagger claimed that for a time they drove the Negro-baiting element out of the parish. Twitchell made no effort to establish desegregated schools, but he did

17. *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 385-87; "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 120, 124-25; Twitchell Interrogatories, court records relating to *Stafford vs. Twitchell*, in Twitchell Papers; Lockett, *Louisiana as It Is*, 67. Twitchell estimated that the Yankees' real estate holdings alone were worth \$100,000.

18. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 119-23; *House Reports*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 816, pp. 649-53, 699, 707; *House Executive Documents*, 44th Cong., 2d Sess., No. 30, pp. 250-52; *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 386-87, 394-95.

establish schools, two in each ward, one for blacks and one for whites. Initially whites assumed that the black schools would fail for lack of attendance, but when Negro enrollment climbed, rumors abounded that the colored schools would be destroyed. Twitchell announced that if any black school was busted up, tax money would be withdrawn from the white school in that district. That ended the matter. Blacks on the upper Red River voted with their feet too; they "came from Sabine and other parishes," the Yankee boss boasted, "until we did not lack labor at all—we had [an] abundance of it."¹⁹

Whites alleged every manner of crime against Twitchell, from dictatorship to embezzlement of school funds. He was not a dictator but a political boss who ruled through essentially democratic means. He made most of his fortune before consolidating his political power, and the charges of corruption were never substantiated. In truth, as the commander of the Upper Red River district, Major Lewis Merrill, explained, it made not a particle of difference to whites whether Twitchell and other Radicals were honest or not. No Republican, the major claimed, "whatever his actual character may be . . . could have the reputation of being honest in this state."²⁰

Twitchell's real crime was that he made Radical Reconstruction work at the parish level. As late as 1874 most parts of the Red River Valley had no rail or telegraph connections with the outside world. To the people in these communities, black and white, the police jury, the sheriff, the tax collector, and the school board were of more immediate concern than the State House in New Orleans. In 1872 many whites in the region had been willing to concede Governor Warmoth the top spot on the Fusion ticket in order to free parish government from Radical rule. At a state convention in June 1872, one earnest Warmoth

19. *Senate Reports*, 45th Cong., 3d Sess., No. 855, Pt. 1, p. 566; "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in *Twitchell Papers*, 105, 109, 117, 123-25, 181; *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 385; *House Reports*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 816, pp. 709-710, 719-21; Marshall Harvey Twitchell to Thomas W. Conway, May 25, 1870, in *Historical Records Survey*, State Department of Education Records, Louisiana State Archives, Baton Rouge; Shoalmire, "Carpetbagger Extraordinary," 107-114.

20. *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 179-80. Shoalmire gives the corruption charges somewhat more credence than I do, but he too concludes that most of the charges were exaggerated or based on misinformation (Shoalmire, "Carpetbagger Extraordinary," 118-32).

supporter urged whites in New Orleans to consider the plight of the river parishes:

Go to the upper border of this state, and come down the Mississippi river; go to the Red, Ouachita and the Teche rivers, and what do you behold? Immense negro majorities in every parish. . . . Now, I ask the delegates from these parishes if they can elect a single police juror or constable in all of these parishes put together?

[G]entleman of the City of New Orleans, are we to insist that all of these parishes shall be consigned to negro rule, with negro judges, sheriffs, constables[?]²¹

Against the Democratic-Fusion parties, Twitchell's stronghold was the only part of the Red River Valley that remained solid for Kellogg. Elsewhere, along the entire length of the Red River, dual Kellogg and McEnery governments existed throughout the spring of 1873. One of these disputed areas was Grant Parish, directly southeast of Coushatta, which was created in 1869 and named in honor of Ulysses S. Grant. Colfax, the parish seat, named after the vice-president, was not really a town but a collection of old plantation buildings atop the steep east bank of the Red River. The stable, a one-story brick rectangle about seventy-five feet long, served as the courthouse. Three quarters of a mile upriver lived a small community of blacks at Smithfield Quarters. About March 25, some white Republicans broke into the courthouse, which had been locked by the McEneryites, and claimed possession of the parish seat. On the last day of the month, fearing retaliation by the Fusionists, the Radical sheriff deputized some blacks to defend the town. Two days later black deputies and whites exchanged gunfire at long range, but no one was hurt. By this time, blacks in the countryside, fearful of remaining in their cabins, started to gather at Colfax for protection. Their fears proved justified; on April 5, three miles from the town, armed whites came upon a black farmer named Jesse McKinney, who was engaged in building a fence. One of the whites killed the unarmed man with a shot through his head.²²

21. *New Orleans Daily Picayune*, June 7, 1872.

22. United States District Attorney J. R. Beckwith, a Unionist-Scalawag, prosecuted the Colfax defendants in the federal courts and probably learned more about the mas-

At least 150 black farmers now camped at Colfax with their families. A white force of at least equal size lurked nearby. Most of the blacks were armed with shotguns; the whites carried rifles and were unencumbered with women and children. For about a week the two mini-armies faced one another in an apparent stalemate. The day before Easter the blacks put up low earthworks around the courthouse. By this time most of the white Republicans who had helped initiate the conflict and who now sensed Armageddon, had slipped away. When Easter Sunday dawned on April 13 at Colfax courthouse, Negroes in Grant Parish fended for themselves.

In the late morning Levin Allen, a leader of the blacks, met Columbus C. Nash, a white spokesman, under a flag of truce at Smithfield Quarters. Nash demanded that the Negroes lay down their weapons and surrender the courthouse. Allen, remembering the fate of Jesse McKinney, refused. Nash gave him thirty minutes to get the women and children to safety. It was almost noon.²³

The attack commenced on schedule. The McEneryites formed a skirmish line that was several hundred yards from the black entrenchments and beyond shotgun range, and they opened fire. The Negroes fought back with their ineffective shotguns and about a dozen Enfield rifles. The whites had taken a small artillery piece from a steamer, mounted it on a wagon, and cut two-inch pieces of iron for missiles. Early in the battle they maneuvered it along the riverbank to a position where it enfiladed the blacks behind their earthworks. A few blasts of iron shot directly in their midst "created consternation and panic among the negroes, and they broke and ran, a portion of them starting down the river, the only portion of the town not environed or besieged, and about sixty . . . retreated into the court-house. . . . The white forces that were mounted immediately pursued the fugitives going down the river and slaughtered all within their reach but

sacre than anyone else. The account that follows is based mainly on his testimony in *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 409-421. The quoted material is all from Beckwith, whose account agrees in every major detail with Judge W. B. Woods' charge to the jury (*Ibid.*, 856-65). See also Manie White Johnson, "The Colfax Riot of April, 1873," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XIII (July, 1930), 391-427.

23. *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 409-413, 858-59.

one . . . some of them got into the woods, and some of them escaped after they were wounded."²⁴

The old stable proved to be a death trap. Promising to spare his life, the whites forced a captured Negro named Pinckney Chambers to crawl across the battlefield with a torch and fire the roof of the courthouse. "The negroes in the building then found themselves in this situation; with the walls of the court-house and every opening, a target for a very rapid fire of small-arms, and the court-house on fire over their heads. They made an effort to extinguish the fire by knocking off the shingles on that portion of the roof that was burning, but a fire of bullets was then opened upon that portion of the roof which drove them away." The desperate blacks improvised two white flags from a torn shirt and a page ripped from a book.

The firing ceased then, and some of the white people came up and shouted to the negroes that if they would lay down their arms and come out they would not hurt them. A condition of panic . . . existed inside the building, and the door was opened at once, and the negroes, unarmed, rushed out, to be met with a volley the moment they made their appearance. In that volley several of them were killed. The negroes that were not in the immediate vicinity of the door rushed back and waited a moment, and then made another rush out, and all, excepting some who were secreted under the floor, got out. Again there were some of them killed, and some taken prisoners: the prisoners, as fast as they were taken, were taken out near a cottonwood tree, in a cotton field, and put under guard.

A handful of the trapped men never came out, choosing the fire over the whites outside. "At about three o'clock in the afternoon . . . the last particle of resistance . . . had ceased, and the condition was, then, a burnt or burning court-house, the ground strewn with dead negroes, and a number of negroes, prisoners and under guard, out in the cotton-field."²⁵

The prisoners numbered at least thirty-seven and perhaps as many as forty-seven. They remained under guard in the cotton field for about seven hours. That night at about ten o'clock their captors called them out by name in pairs of two and marched them down the road

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

past the burned-out courthouse in the direction of a cotton gin about a mile away, creating a procession of marching prisoners and guards. Gunfire could be heard from the head of the column. An old black man named Benjamin Brimm, who was marching in the middle of the column, asked the nearest guard if the captives were being killed. The unreassuring reply was that "they were only killing the wounded." The shooting advanced down the column. Brimm "heard a pistol cocked, and as he turned around to beg for his life, the man behind him shot him. The bullet passed in under his left eye and through the nasal passages and out under the angle of his jaw." The old man collapsed, feigning death, while the bloodletting continued. Blood coagulated in his nose and he struggled to breathe. The noise attracted attention: "This nigger is not dead yet," a horseman cried, and shot the suffering man in the back, barely missing the spinal cord. Miraculously, Brimm refused to die. Hours later he crawled away to a ditch, covered himself with brush, and lay concealed all the next day while whites milled about; some looting the dead. Monday night he dragged himself away. The elderly freedman lived to tell his story to a grand jury.²⁶

Two days after the massacre a United States commissioner and a deputy marshal arrived at the scene. The dead still littered the landscape. With the help of some freedmen, they buried fifty-nine bodies in a ditch. Their count of the dead did not include the charred remains found beneath the burned-out stable, the bodies that had been carried away by mourning families, or the estimated 15-to-20 bodies that had been lost in the river. Nor could the two officials count those who escaped but later died of their wounds. A subsequent and very thorough investigation by Lieutenant Edward L. Godfrey of the Seventh Cavalry documented the deaths of "at least" 105 blacks and 3 whites. Two of the dead whites, leaders of the McEneryites, were probably shot by overeager attackers rather than by black defenders. The massacre at Colfax courthouse ranks as the worst single day of carnage in the history of Reconstruction, exceeding in violence the massacres at New Orleans (1866), Memphis (1866), and Meridian, Mississippi (1871).²⁷

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Ibid.*; *House Executive Documents*, 44th Cong., 2d Sess., No. 30, pp. 436-38; on the Meridian Massacre see the accounts of Vernon Lane Wharton, *The Negro in Missis-*

The Colfax Massacre affected the fate of Republicans throughout the South. Federal authorities indicted ninety-eight persons under the Force Act of 1870 and brought nine of them to trial. The first effort resulted in a mistrial, but in the second a jury convicted three of the murderers for violating the civil rights of Negroes. The case went to the United States Supreme Court, which, in the *United States v. Cruikshank* (1876), ruled in favor of the defendants. "The fourteenth amendment," stated Chief Justice Morrison R. Waite, "prohibits a State from depriving any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; but this adds nothing to the rights of one citizen as against another."²⁸ In other words, because a private army and not the State of Louisiana committed the massacre, the federal government was powerless to act. This racist and morally opaque decision reduced the Fourteenth Amendment and the Force Acts to meaningless verbiage as far as the civil rights of Negroes were concerned.

A week after the massacre, Marshall Harvey Twitchell received a warning from an anonymous source who claimed, "I was in the fite at Colfax and if the lord will forgive me for that I wil never be guilty of such a thing agane." The informer stated that a lawyer and a deputy sheriff from Red River Parish had participated in the slaughter and now intrigued with the assassins to overrun Coushatta: "They intend to kill all the yankees and Nigger officers [and] you had better make your escape." Local Democrats verified the threat but assured Twitchell that if he and his family remained indoors, only troublemaking Negroes would be killed. The Vermonter, however, was made of tougher leather than the white Republicans in Grant Parish. He posted the roads from the southeast and put out word that if the Colfax desperadoes entered Red River they would meet fierce resistance. Black couriers rode through the countryside telling the freedmen to keep their powder dry and remain in readiness to assemble in Coushatta at a moment's notice.²⁹ The invaders never came.

In March 1874 a trio of ex-Confederate soldiers in the lower Red

sippi 1865-1890 (Chapel Hill, 1947); and William C. Harris, *The Day of the Carpetbagger: Republican Reconstruction in Mississippi* (Baton Rouge, 1979).

28. *United States v. Cruikshank et al.*, *United States Reports, Supreme Court*, vol. 92, p. 554.

29. "A True Friend" to Marshall Harvey Twitchell, April 16, 1873, in Twitchell Papers; "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," *ibid.*, 127-28.

River town of Alexandria established a newspaper called the *Caucasian*. The history of Louisiana since 1867, the journal charged in its first issue, was a record of "crime, venality, corruption, misrule, and official debasement." A continuation of Republican rule would witness the Africanization of the state. The newspaper challenged whites to discard the party labels of the past, form a "white man's party," and make the next election a "fair, square fight, Caucasian versus African." The *Caucasian's* appeal ignited the state. In Shreveport the *Times* and the *Comet*, in Opelousas the *Courier* and the *Bulletin*, in Franklin the *Enterprise*, in Natchitoches the *People's Vindicator*, in New Orleans the *Daily Picayune*, the *Morning Star*, and the *Catholic Messenger*—all reiterated the summons to a white man's party. It started in Opelousas in April, and by late summer the White League or the White Man's party had spread throughout the Red River Valley, to New Orleans, and over most of the state.³⁰

The appearance of the White League coincided with a melancholy in Twitchell that had no connection with politics. He and Adele had been married seven-and-a-half years; his relations with her family remained strong; in fact, the Colemans had become important scalawags in Bienville Parish. Although Adele had borne him three sons (the youngest of whom died in 1870), she had never been a healthy woman. The threat of tuberculosis had hung over her for years. In February 1874, after a long struggle, she finally succumbed to the disease. A month later, tragedy visited tragedy, and the youngest surviving son, Daniel, died. Little Daniel's death marked the fourth in as many years; Twitchell's sister Belle had died in 1871. In his autobiography Twitchell claims that he resolved to abandon politics and devote himself to business. No reason exists to doubt his sincerity. He was a superb businessman, and although he was successful at getting votes, he lacked the temperament of the professional politician. Still, Red River had become the nerve center of the Radical party in northwestern Louisiana, and Twitchell the indispensable man in Red River. Party leaders in De Soto, Red River, and Bienville parishes pointed to the growing

30. Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 281–86; Oscar Lestage, Jr., "The White League in Louisiana and Its Participation in Reconstruction Riots," *Louisiana Historical Quarterly*, XVIII (July, 1935), 637–49; *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 906.

strength of the White League and begged him to continue. Unwilling to abandon his friends and allies in the face of danger, he again accepted the Republican nomination for state senator.³¹ In later years, he must have reexamined that decision so many times.

On the eve of the White League revolt, Twitchell recalled, few individuals in north Louisiana stood higher in the esteem of the community than he. As chairman of the senate finance committee, he claimed much of the credit for the Funding Act of 1874 that eventually scaled down the state debt to about \$12 million. The social ostracism of earlier years had died away; indeed, the Yankee now found himself eagerly courted by prominent whites. If politics had at times divided the Vermonter and his white neighbors, business had just as often united them. The local Democratic merchants had been just as anxious as the carpetbagger to get the new parish created with Coushatta as the parish seat. They had raised a thousand-dollar slush fund and had appreciated the skill with which their Radical state senator used it to wine and dine politicians in the Crescent City. Twitchell had also come to a new appreciation of his Southern neighbors. That spring of 1874, as often occurred, farmers in the hill country ran short of corn, the main staple of their diet, and most of the local merchants denied them credit. The Yankee had learned in years past to buy corn cheap in the fall, store it through the winter, and sell in the spring when the price rose. He gave the desperate farmers corn on credit, accepting only their word of repayment. Experience had taught him that they would often ignore a legally secured debt but would repay a debt of honor. Many whites had probably learned too that the Radical boss represented less of a political threat than they had at first assumed. In the paternalistic Red River system, blacks voted, held minor offices, and worked in comparative security, mainly for white landowners, while political and economic control remained in white hands.³²

31. James Brewster to William G. Brown, April 24, 1874, and James Brewster to M. C. Cole, August 27, 1874, in HRS, State Department of Education Records; "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 116, 130–31; Twitchell genealogy papers, in the possession of Dr. Marshall Coleman Twitchell, Burlington, Vermont.

32. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 130–31; *House Reports*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 816, p. 652.

Still, the carpetbagger, as he later realized, exaggerated his acceptance in the community. Undercurrents of fear, resentment, and hatred swirled just beneath the surface, and most whites remained deeply ambivalent about the shrewd, enterprising Yankee in their midst. A prominent Coushatta businessman expressed this schizoid attitude in his testimony before a congressional committee:

Q. Are you acquainted with Mr. Twitchell?

A. I am.

Q. Have you financial confidence in him?

A. I have the utmost.

Q. Have you confidence in him as a politician?

A. Not at all.

Of far greater consequence, however, was that whites outside Red River increasingly saw the Radical boss as a symbol of something far more threatening than Radical corruption, incompetence, and failure: Radical strength, efficiency, and achievement.³³

The first White League meeting in Coushatta on July 4 attracted about ninety whites, according to Twitchell's spies. To test white Republican strength the Yankee called a Republican meeting the same night on Black Lake, attended by some sixty whites. Despite the initial support, he soon noticed a change of attitude in the country. Men whom he considered to be his friends started to avoid him, and several confessed that they feared to be seen with him. Staunch Republicans moved out of the parish, and many others avowed that, unless the climate changed, they too would leave. Twitchell understood the pressure: "You will have to come out and be a White-Leaguer," he said ruefully to a Democratic friend, "or they will drive you out of the country." By mid-July the White League was organizing throughout the parish.³⁴

The mounting crisis on the Red River coincided with plans for the August meeting of the Republican state convention in New Orleans.

33. *House Reports*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 816, p. 721. W. E. B. Du Bois' idea that conservative whites feared black honesty and achievement much more than they feared black corruption and failure also holds true for carpetbaggers (*Black Reconstruction in America* [New York, 1935], 624-25, 633).

34. *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 386-94; *House Reports*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 816, p. 654.

Amid reports of impending White League violence, Twitchell boarded a steamer for New Orleans on July 27. (Dewees traveled separately.) Hours later the vessel docked at Campti, and he learned that on that very day a White League mob had forced the resignations of Republican officials at Natchitoches, some miles downriver. For a few anxious minutes he agonized over whether to continue or turn back to Coushatta. The steamer pulled away from the shore, and he went on to New Orleans.³⁵

The decision almost certainly saved his life, but it made sense for other reasons too. Natchitoches had been a bloodless coup, not another Colfax Massacre. If Red River stood next on the White League agenda (as informants reported), the tactic of forced resignations lost much of its effectiveness with both Twitchell and Dewees in New Orleans. In the capital, moreover, the two carpetbaggers could personally appeal for federal troops. That thought must have given the White League pause, because the showdown at Coushatta did not occur until a month after the Natchitoches resignations. Twitchell probably counted on the Coushatta Democrats not to harm his family and friends, unaware that White Leaguers from Coushatta had been present at Natchitoches and had received blunt warning to clean out the Radicals in their midst or have their neighbors do it for them.³⁶

The situation at Coushatta, as Twitchell soon learned, was in fact desperate. The local White League is "red hot and on the war path," Sheriff Edgerton informed him. Their words are

too strong for us to doubt their meaning any longer. It is simply extermination of the Carpetbag & Scalawag element. Nothing more nor less. You know how we are situated here. The negroes will support us to a man, but it is useless for us to involve them in a conflict which would be simply a massacre unless we had ammunition so that we can hold out until reinforced. On the other hand if driven to the wall what whites there is of us could and probably will form ourselves into a band and take [to] the woods and go to bushwhacking. But unless we are going to get some aid from U.S. or State forces we would gain nothing as it would be impossible for us to hold out any length of time. My intentions at pres-

35. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 132, 134, 138.

36. *Ibid.*; *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 386.

ent are to hold out as long as possible and if necessary make them commit *murder* before they make any man resign. It is barely possible we can keep the crisis off for 10 days and perhaps two weeks. (In the language of Warmoth) if Kellogg is Governor Show it. Urge upon him the necessity of action and that prompt and vigorous. We are on the verge of Civil War. An accident a drunken man, or a crazy fanatic is liable to start it at any moment.

The sheriff added, "It is generally believed here that you have gone after troops. It is my firm belief that you can live here only on horseback in the woods if you do not get them."³⁷

Twitchell's reply could hardly have reassured the beleaguered sheriff: "Have seen the governor and United States Marshall. As soon as some overt act has been committed, a United States marshall can be sent up there, and will, doubtless, take United States troops with him." He advised Edgerton to resign if necessary to save his life.³⁸

In point of fact, General William H. Emory had taken almost every soldier in the state to Holly Springs, Mississippi, to wait out the yellow fever season. Moreover, the president and the army remained unimpressed by the White League and Governor Kellogg's pleas for help. Twitchell thus found himself in a terrible dilemma: The longer he remained in New Orleans, the more the White League upriver suspected the soldiers were not coming. Yet if he returned empty-handed, he exposed his own bluff. As parish attorney F. W. Howell warned, "Just as sure as you return without United States Soldiers the trouble will then commence." Howell observed darkly, "Strange Ruffians are often in our town and say that they have come to kill Republicans."³⁹

The last weekend in August, exhausted and dispirited by futile appeals for troops, Twitchell and Dewees went to Pass Christian, Mississippi, a small resort on the Mississippi Sound where Dewees had a house. On Monday morning, August 31, a telegram arrived inform-

37. Two letters of same date, Frank S. Edgerton to Marshall Harvey Twitchell, July 30, 1874, in Twitchell Papers. I have taken the liberty of adding punctuation.

38. Marshall Harvey Twitchell to Frank S. Edgerton, August 4, 1874, in *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 885.

39. According to Joseph G. Dawson III, only 130 bluecoats remained in the state at Colfax, Baton Rouge, and New Orleans (*Army Generals and Reconstruction: Louisiana, 1862-1877* [Baton Rouge, 1982], 156-58); F. W. Howell to Marshall Harvey Twitchell, August 17, 1874, in Twitchell Papers.

ing Twitchell that his brother Homer, his brothers-in-law Clark Holland and M. C. Willis, Dewees' brother Robert, Sheriff Edgerton, and parish attorney Howell had been murdered the previous day.⁴⁰

The trouble had started the previous Tuesday at a boat landing about ten miles from Coushatta. Marauding whites murdered two black men, one of whom had the audacity to defend himself and kill one of the attackers with a shotgun. Shouting Negro revolt, White Leaguers descended on Coushatta from every part of the upper Red River Valley, and by Thursday night virtually every Republican leader in the parish was under arrest. On Saturday a White League mob hanged two black Radicals after a mock trial, and the next night they killed another Negro named Eli Allen. Some time before that a white horseman had attempted to run down Allen on the street in Coushatta. The muscular black man had grabbed the horse's bridle and pushed the animal away, causing the rider to fall off and break his leg. "Mr. Allen," Twitchell explained, "was a republican, under any and all circumstances, and it requires a brave colored man to say that in North Louisiana." His killers shot him, broke his arms and legs, and tortured him over a fire before he died.⁴¹

The white Republicans caught in the dragnet were Sheriff Edgerton, the parish attorney, the four members of the Twitchell and Dewees families, and Henry A. Scott, another Vermonter (some accounts mention an eighth figure). They remained prisoners in Coushatta through the weekend, first in a basement, then on the second floor of the hotel. They were permitted to write to but not to see their families. "Katie you can not come up here and don't think of coming for one moment," Clark Holland warned his wife. "We are all right and perfectly safe. . . . Everything will turn out right." "Darling Husband," she replied, they had passed a terrible night at Starlight. "When *Can* I see you?" Scott reassured his wife, too: "I think they mean to give us a fair show and I think we can convince them that we are not to blame for

40. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 139; *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 902-905; *Senate Executive Documents*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 17, pp. 16-17.

41. *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 388-89, 902-905; *Senate Executive Documents*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 17, pp. 16-17; Lestage, "White League," 671-75.

what has happened. Keep up good cheer and trust in God . . . He will deal justly with us."⁴²

The captives resigned their offices on Saturday and swore in writing to leave the state. Some leaders of the local White League probably hoped no harm would come to them, but events were beyond their control; the mob on the street numbered in the hundreds and included men from as far away as Texas, and they were clamoring for blood. On Sunday morning, escorted by over thirty guards of their own choosing, the prisoners (except Scott, who remained behind and was allowed to escape) crossed the Red River and rode up the west bank toward Shreveport, planning to cross to the railhead at Monroe and leave Louisiana. "I think that we will get through without any trouble," Clark Holland had written Kate. "I am glad that I have not got another night to spend in Coushatta. . . . This will be the last time I can write before I go. Goodbye and may God bless you all and hope it will not be long before you can be with us." The captives carried a small fortune in cash and jewelry for the journey.⁴³

The party crossed the Red River line into Caddo Parish in midafternoon, about thirty miles below Shreveport. A few miles farther on the leader called a halt, ostensibly to rest men and horses, but in fact to allow a lynch mob led by a notorious man called "Captain Jack" to catch up. Robert Dewees spied the forty-odd horsemen rushing upon them: "Mount and ride for your lives!" The prisoners bolted for their horses, but too late. Gunfire blasted Dewees from his horse before he fully mounted. "Give me a gun, I don't want to die like a dog!" shouted Homer Twitchell, before a bullet struck him in the face. Edgerton flung himself "flat on his horse, escaped the first volley, and made considerable distance before he was finally shot from his horse, answering back to their calls of surrender that he would die first." Holland,

42. Clark Holland to Kate Holland, [August, 1874]; Kate Holland to Clark Holland, [August, 1874]; Henry A. Scott to Emma Scott [August, 1874]; all in the possession of Clark Holland, the great grandson of Twitchell's brother-in-law, Medfield, Massachusetts.

43. *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 902-905; *Senate Executive Documents*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 17, pp. 16-17; Clark Holland to Kate Holland, [August, 1874], in the possession of Clark Holland.

Willis, and Howell surrendered. At no point did the guards offer the slightest resistance to the attackers.⁴⁴

"Captain Jack" and his crew escorted the three captives to a place called Ward's Store and passed several hours debating their fate. A planter named Stringfellow offered \$1,000 for the life of each man, but as he lacked the money in hand, the cutthroats decided to rob and murder them instead. They formed a makeshift firing squad and executed Howell and Willis. Desiring sport, they offered Holland the chance to make a run for it. "No," he replied, "you have murdered my friends now you may kill me." He asked only that his wife and son be allowed to escape unharmed to the North. He walked forward to the bodies of Willis and Howell and died.⁴⁵

Stringfellow and some of his neighbors buried the six Republicans in two graves about two miles apart. They lay undisturbed for over two months. In mid-November a detachment of the Seventh Cavalry rode down from Shreveport and disinterred the bodies. The lieutenant in charge reported that the victims had been robbed (\$800 from Homer Twitchell alone) and mutilated: "One of the bodies (name unknown) was so perforated and gashed with bullets that it was only with great care that it could be moved without falling to pieces, while the private parts of another (name also unknown) were mutilated, shot off."⁴⁶

The massacre shattered Republican morale throughout the state. Radical officials had been murdered before, of course: the sheriff and the judge of St. Mary Parish in 1868, and Judge Thomas S. Crawford and District Attorney A. H. Harris in a Franklin Parish ambush in the fall of 1873. But never had six white Republicans, the officials of an

44. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 146-48. Twitchell learned the details of the massacre from eyewitnesses, probably the guards and members of the burial detail who had been at Ward's Store. He never identified his informants because it would have exposed them to certain death (*House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 395). While no such account could be completely accurate in every detail, Twitchell's version agrees with all the known facts and is as close to the truth as we are ever likely to get. Incidentally, "Captain Jack's" last name was Coleman, but he was not related to Twitchell's in-laws.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Senate Executive Documents*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 17, p. 13.

entire parish, been murdered. The killings struck fear into every carpetbagger and scalawag in Louisiana. Who would the next victims be? The impact was no less dramatic on blacks. White Republicans like Twitchell substituted for the paternalism of the antebellum plantation the paternalism of the local Republican machine. The events at Coushatta cracked the foundation of that system. Negroes, Twitchell explained, looked to white Republicans for protection and security; they perceived, however, that "if the White League was strong enough to take their leaders from them, and murder them in cold blood, they were strong enough to reduce them to slavery, or anything else they chose." Major Lewis Merrill reported that all along the upper Red River for many weeks after the massacre, "scarcely a negro, and in no instance a negro who was at all prominent in politics, dared to sleep in his home."⁴⁷

By September the White League had overturned or crippled the Radical governments of at least eight parishes. Inspired by success and by President Grant's failure to send troops, the White League in New Orleans planned an even bigger coup: the forced resignation of Governor Kellogg and the overthrow of the Republican state. Organized into militia companies and well equipped with arms from the North, the White League demanded Kellogg's resignation in the early afternoon of September 14. Three hours later some 3,000 black militia under General Longstreet and 500 Metropolitan Police engaged a superior White League force. The result was a rout of the Radical defenders and the temporary overthrow of the state government. For three days the White League ruled supreme in New Orleans. The overthrow of Kellogg inspired the eviction of still more Radical officials in the hinterlands.⁴⁸

The news of the Battle of Canal Street reached Twitchell at Pass Christian. He and Dewees had gone to New Orleans immediately after learning of the Coushatta massacre, but unable to go upriver without troops, they had returned to Mississippi. The day after the

47. *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, pp. 176, 389.

48. Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 167-78; Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 291-96; Otis A. Singletary, *Negro Militia and Reconstruction* (Austin, 1957), 74-79; see Stuart Omer Landry, *The Battle of Liberty Place: The Overthrow of Carpet-Bag Rule in New Orleans, September 14, 1874* (New Orleans, 1955).

battle Twitchell caught the New Orleans train, stepped off at the Canal Street Station, and ignoring the triumphant White Leaguers on every street, walked briskly and alone through the heart of the city to the Louisiana Safe-Deposit Company. He removed some securities and carried them to the Custom House, which was crowded with Republicans seeking refuge on federal property, and put them in the safe. The Vermonter then walked alone to the station and took the train back to Pass Christian. Friends and enemies alike who witnessed this strange peregrination gaped in astonishment at the solitary figure. Perhaps he was concerned only for the safety of his investments, but one suspects a deeper motive: that his defiance of the White League was the act of a man tormented by guilt, courting death as absolution.⁴⁹

Nothing on the scale of the insurrection in New Orleans had occurred since the Civil War. Grant now had no choice, and six regiments of federal troops rushed back into Louisiana by the end of September. The District of the Upper Red River was created under the command of Major Lewis Merrill, a veteran of the 1871 Ku Klux uprising in South Carolina. A staunch Republican, he had earned the epithet "Dog Merrill" from South Carolina Democrats. The major established Seventh Cavalry headquarters at Shreveport on the eve of the 1874 election. "This whole community is practically an armed mob," he reported. Believing a virtual state of war exists, the people here recognized "no such thing as the existence of law, or any authority save individual will"; the entire region bordered on anarchy. Terrified blacks slept in the woods at night, and one cavalry troop, entering the Campo Bello precinct of Caddo Parish, reported the astonishing sight of freedmen flinging "themselves on the ground shouting with joy" at the sight of Union soldiers.⁵⁰

With eight undermanned companies the major attempted to restore law and order. He helped reinstate Kellogg officials at Shreveport and Natchitoches and suppressed the most overt forms of White League violence. Yet he could not stop white landowners from routinely

49. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 149-50.

50. Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 173-80, 185-89; *Senate Executive Documents*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 17, p. 5; *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 175.

cheating black farmers of a year's labor or discharging them for voting Republican. The major estimated that 500 black families in Caddo and De Soto parishes were driven from their homes that fall and winter for political reasons. He perhaps exaggerated; on the other hand, Caddo and De Soto were both over 65 percent black and both went Democratic in 1874. In truth, the Republican position on the Red River lay beyond the skill of a few Union companies to restore, no less than Louisiana lay beyond the skill of a few regiments. As Merrill told a United States House committee, "There is not in Louisiana to-day any such thing as a government at all. . . . A government has among its attributes power to enforce at least some show of obedience to law, and that does not exist to-day in Louisiana. The State government has no power outside of the United States Army, which is here to sustain it—no power at all. The White League is the only power in the State." A pro-Democratic officer who investigated the Louisiana situation that December arrived at an identical conclusion: "The present State government cannot maintain itself in power a single hour without the protection of Federal troops."⁵¹

Events in New Orleans soon proved the aptness of these judgments. The Kellogg Returning Board countered White League terrorism in the 1874 election by recounting the votes, thereby converting a solid Democratic majority in the lower chamber into a fifty-three-to-fifty-three tie, with five contested seats to be decided by the house itself. When the legislature met in January 1875, enraged Democrat-White Leaguers attempted a forcible takeover of the house. Federal troops entered the State House and thwarted yet another coup (although the Democrats later gained control of the house anyway). General Philip H. Sheridan, on the scene at Grant's order, took command and without mincing words proposed that Congress or the president declare the ringleaders of the White Leagues in Louisiana, Arkansas, and Mississippi "banditti" and then let the army deal with them under martial law. "Little Phil's" actions created a furor North and South. The North's eagerness to disengage itself from Reconstruction may be

51. *Senate Executive Documents*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 17, pp. 58, 73; *House Reports*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 261, Pt. 3, p. 179.

measured by this: The controversy above the Potomac centered on Sheridan's actions and not those of the White League conspirators.⁵²

Twitchell returned to Coushatta in October 1874 in the company of soldiers. In time he restored a semblance of control over the parish, but all attempts to bring the Coushatta murderers to justice ended in failure. Moreover, he lived in continual fear of his own life, never again residing for any length of time at Starlight. In the summer of 1875 he visited Vermont, purchased a home, and moved his mother and son and two orphaned nephews into it.⁵³ During the trip he renewed his relationship with Henrietta Day, his sweetheart from seminary days. When he returned to Louisiana, they were engaged to be married.

A letter survives that Marshall wrote Henrietta from New Orleans that October; it reveals a man tortured by guilt and mercilessly hounded by threats against his life: "I am just in from the streets where I have been looking for a danger of which I was warned last night. . . . I received a telegram in cypher from Coushatta telling me to 'load my pistol, refuse all company and stay in my room.' I armed myself and went all over town last night and again this morning looking for the danger of which I was warned. [I] can't find it, but I fear this continual harrasing will make a demon of me." Perhaps from his own guilt, he believed that his sisters blamed him for the deaths of their husbands. He was tempted to put "aside as my enemies do, the laws of God and man, and . . . become an avenger." He had fallen asleep the previous night "thinking of it, and strange for me, commenced dreaming." In the dream he stood in a room before his weeping mother and sisters and frightened son. He had resolved to avenge the murders of his family members. "I turned to go and you stood before me attempting to put your arms around my neck. I attempted to avoid you, but at every turn you were in front of me. I felt if you once had your arms around my neck my resolution would fail." No matter which way he turned, Henrietta blocked the door. "I awoke and was thankful it was only

52. Taylor, *Louisiana Reconstructed*, 304–307; William Gillette, *Retreat From Reconstruction, 1869–1879* (Baton Rouge, 1979), 122–29, 134; Dawson, *Army Generals and Reconstruction*, 199–210; *Senate Executive Documents*, 43d Cong., 2d Sess., No. 13, p. 23.

53. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 164.

a dream." A few weeks later Twitchell received another telegram from Coushatta: His sister Kate Holland had died of yellow fever at Starlight.⁵⁴

In the winter of 1876 the Vermonter attended another crisis session of the Louisiana legislature. In February he played a major part in the one-day impeachment and acquittal of Governor Kellogg. He returned to the upper Red River in late April, intending to remain only a week or two and then escape to the North until after the 1876 election. On May 1, Twitchell observed an unusual number of prominent Democrats in Coushatta, for no apparent reason. Asking the occasion, he received the reply that an issue of long standing was being decided. It later occurred to him that the question under discussion was the fate of Marshall Harvey Twitchell.⁵⁵

The following morning the carpetbagger and his surviving brother-in-law George King left Starlight for a meeting of the police jury in Coushatta. A few miles downriver the two men boarded a ferry-skiff with its Negro operator opposite the town. As the ferry neared the Coushatta shore Twitchell noticed a strangely garbed figure walking on the bank above. Witnesses agreed that the man wore a long rubber or oilcloth coat that nearly touched the ground, a false beard, eye goggles, and a hat pulled low over the face. He had ridden into town that morning and waited at the blacksmith shop until he observed Twitchell and King leave their buggy across the river and board the ferry. As the skiff thudded into the Coushatta bank, Twitchell saw him take a Winchester repeater from his coat. "Down in the boat!" he shouted to King. Twitchell was hit almost immediately. King drew a pistol and fired at least once before the assassin above put a bullet in his head, killing him almost instantly. Wounded in the leg, Twitchell, in his own words, "jumped into the water and went under the boat, holding to the edge of the boat first with one hand and then with the other, until he had broken both [my] arms by shots, shielding my body by remaining under the skiff." Children playing not far off thought the

54. Marshall Harvey Twitchell to Henrietta Day, October 12, 1875, in Twitchell Papers; "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," both in Twitchell Papers, 164.

55. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 169-73, 176.

man on the bank was shooting an alligator: "It is an alligator. Let us go and see the alligator." A housewife commenced screaming, believing the man with the rifle was shooting her husband. A man rode up from town to investigate the shooting; the disguised figure turned and leveled the rifle on him, telling him, "God damn you, go back!" The rider quickly retreated.

The assassin emptied his rifle and started shooting a pistol. Mrs. E. J. Merrell appeared on the bank: "I saw a man who looked to be dead in the skiff. I said to the ferryman, 'For God's sake save that drowning man.'" She pleaded with the man in the coat to stop firing. The black ferryman reached down and grabbed the wounded and exhausted Twitchell, but a pistol ball through his hand broke his grip. William L. Mudgett, a carpetbagger and a close friend of Twitchell, appeared on the opposite bank and fired his pistol at the assassin across the wide expanse of the Red River. By now a number of people had gathered at the scene. Coaxed by Twitchell, the ferryman called out that the man in the water was dead. The assassin walked to his horse, mounted, and rode calmly away. Mrs. Merrell's servant asked him as he rode past if it was not an alligator. "Yes," he said, "it is a damned black alligator."⁵⁶

Twitchell drifted free in the current, feigning death. The wounded ferryman maneuvered the skiff alongside and somehow got him aboard. He had been hit six times, twice in each arm, once in the leg, and once in the back of the neck. Northern friends carried him to a cabin on the Starlight side of the river and sent for an army surgeon. For nearly a month he struggled for life, and more than once his sister and the friends who nursed and guarded him gave him up for lost. He lived, but the surgeon amputated both arms, and he never fully recovered the use of his injured leg. The first week in June he was carried on a litter before a United States house committee whose members had journeyed upriver to investigate this most recent "Coushatta Affair." Since the 1874 election, the House of Representatives, like the lower chamber in New Orleans, contained a Democratic majority. The Democratic-controlled committee concluded that the murder of

56. *Ibid.*, 176-80; *House Reports*, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., No. 816, pp. 645-46, 649-51, 657-62.

King and the attempted assassination of Twitchell were "not of a political character."⁵⁷

A few weeks later, carried on a litter, Twitchell left Red River Parish under military guard, never to return. He and his sister Helen Willis boarded a North-bound train in New Orleans. Helen, however, never finished the journey. Mentally and physically exhausted, she fell gravely ill in Indianapolis and died. Of the nine members of the Twitchell clan who had settled in Louisiana, only Marshall and his mother, Elizabeth, now survived. For her brother, Helen's death was both the most difficult to bear and a catharsis.

I do not think that I am lacking in affection for my friends and relatives, but the manner in which they were taken away, the venom of the Southern press and the fact that so many people of both races were looking to me for protection, support and encouragement, dried up the fountain of my tears, and every fresh outrage but stimulated me to greater exertions for the acquisition of wealth and power for the punishment of the wrong-doers. Until I was rendered so helpless by their last attack I firmly believed that right would finally prevail and that I would see the murderers legally punished for their crimes in the judicial district where those crimes were committed. When informed that Helen was dead, that the last of my family was gone, the only hands which I could trust to do my bidding powerless in death, I fully recognized that justice for the murder of my family would never be done and for the first time tears came to my relief.⁵⁸

Recovered by that autumn, Twitchell was fitted with artificial limbs at the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. Soon afterward he married Henrietta Day (she would bear him two children, but only one would survive to adulthood). In January 1877 he returned to New Orleans for what proved the last crisis session of the Radical senate. Most of his Republican colleagues had not seen him since the loss of his arms, and many could not keep back the tears when he entered the senate chamber. The Democratic senator Edward D. White, later an associate justice of the United States Supreme Court, crossed the aisle and attempted to greet him, but "his emotions would not allow him to

57. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 176-80; *House Reports*, 44th Cong., 2d Sess., No. 816, pp. 648-57.

58. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 200-202.

speak and he returned to his own side of the chamber." In 1878 President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed Twitchell the American consul at Kingston in Ontario, Canada. The location enabled him to travel easily to Vermont.⁵⁹

Like the biblical Job, the carpetbagger's misfortunes seemed never-ending. Sensing trouble, he had transferred the titles of his most valuable Louisiana holdings, Starlight and Briar Bend to his mother. Even though he had purchased both estates legally and paid good money for them, the original owners or their heirs brought suit to regain both properties. Unable to live in or even visit Red River Parish, Twitchell had left his lands under the management of attorney J. W. Harrison, another Vermont carpetbagger. In 1878 Harrison was assassinated. Thereafter, Gus Coleman (the Coleman family remained loyal to the end) and William L. Mudgett looked after Twitchell's interests. The litigation dragged on into the early 1880s, and in every instance the state courts ruled against the Vermonters, and the Louisianians foiled repeated attempts to get the cases into the federal courts. Legal fees consumed the remainder of Twitchell's Louisiana holdings. The fortune he estimated at over \$100,000 vanished in the space of a few years. The one-time political boss and wealthy landowner lived the rest of his life as the consul at Kingston. At the turn of the century he gathered his papers and newspaper clippings about him and wrote his autobiography, telling his version of Radical Reconstruction on the upper Red River. He died in 1905 and lies buried at the foot of Twitchell Mountain in Townshend, Vermont.⁶⁰

59. *Ibid.*, 225-27, 229-30; Civil War Pension Files.

60. "Autobiography of Marshall Harvey Twitchell," in Twitchell Papers, 229-30, 233; *Stafford vs. Twitchell*, *Louisiana Annual Reports*, vol. 33, pp. 520-32; *Gillespie vs. Twitchell*, 288-300; L. Watkins (attorney) to Marshall Harvey Twitchell, September 24, 1878, and A. F. (Gus) Coleman to Marshall Harvey Twitchell, January 25 and April 14, 1880, all in Twitchell Papers; Twitchell Interrogatories, in Twitchell Papers; Shoalmire, "Carpetbagger Extraordinary," 229-37.