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A state's loyalty during the Civil War is no longer as important as in the past. Nevertheless, 135 years after the end of the dreadful war, trips up North, like mine last month to Maryland, revive the question. Normally, the monuments around the courthouses give a clue, especially in the southern states where there's no doubt in the first place. But wandering around Baltimore, I found General George Washington's statue on a tall pedestal facing the bay was the big landmark and dominant sculpture.

I figured the voluminous stacks of the Peabody Library in the Mount Vernon section of town more than likely contained a record of the contents of every mess kit issued to the troops from the Continental Army onward into time, and all the details of Maryland's history. I found a few musty editions on the War, but nothing specific on Maryland's participation.

The library at Trinity University in Dublin housing the Book of Kells might be as large as the Peabody. For sure, the Irish are no match for the crotchety librarians guarding those stacks, backed by signs unknown to the other book depositories of the world: "Use Pencils Only For Notes." Please forgive me for having to round off two million six hundred thousand volumes for the number of books. The figure may include all of Johns Hopkins University's collection. I wasn't about to ask one of those ladies to loan me her pencil, or how many books she was guarding. (The shelves

were so high, silverfish had to come down to floor level for oxygen.)

After failing to find an answer at the Peabody, I walked a few blocks to the Maryland Historical Society. One room was devoted to the Civil War. A lighted poster read, "In 1860, secession was a close call in Maryland. About as many freemen existed as slaves in the state. An active underground railroad moving runaways went up the coast. The state was critical to preserving the Union, as Washington would be cut off by the confederacy if Maryland joined the Southern cause. For the duration of the war, President Lincoln kept Maryland under martial law to quell the rioting citizenry." I signed off, noting on my pad, "Courtesy of the Maryland Historical Society, ballpoints permitted in the museum."

Across the hall was a large cylinder wheel of postcards in front of the gift shop. The top four rows were devoted to photographs of General Robert E. Lee mounted on "Ol' Traveler," a picture of General Lee and his brother, plus one of General Stonewall Jackson's headstone in Virginia.

After choosing a dozen cards from the top row, I studied the cashier sitting on a stool behind the register reading a book.

He didn't look angry or friendly. There was no way to conceal my Southern drawl, unless I resorted to sign language. I knew my mother would have asked what he was

reading and said, "How nice." Odds are the Big Boss would have invited him down the street for a drink.

I shuffled the cards, cut them, walked up to the counter and spread them on the glass top face down. Drew from both bloodlines by saying, "You know, sir, I come from a long line of judges of horseflesh. I'll bet you a sixpack that ol' Traveler horse of General Lee's stopped on his front feet." The remainder of the checkout was short and silent. I am not going to repeat what he said when his book slipped closed to lose his place.

Finding a table in the restaurants became difficult due to the influx of parents and grandparents to celebrate graduation exercises at the colleges. Too, if they weren't booked, the vacancy probably reflected the food or the service, or both were bad.

I met a friend at a joint called *The Black Orchid* close to the Symphony Hall. Fodor's travel section on Baltimore reads, "The Black Orchid is crowded and requires reservations." The only thing "crowded" about the Black Orchid was our table jammed in against a wall and a plate glass window. Well, the hat rack was full of the help's raincoats and the restroom was too snug for comfort.

So much time elapsed between the soup and the main course, I fished two postcards from my kit and asked my guest to help make room so I could write the management to discipline the surly waiter and to inform Fodor's to drop the restaurant's rating. Lots of indignities go with this

age of rudeness, but my book is closed on taking any guff off a guy dealing plates off his arm. After dinner, the cards ready to post, I walked out in the night, satisfied that tomorrow the cook would hold that insipid waiter's head down in a dishpan of water.