

CHAPTER XIV.

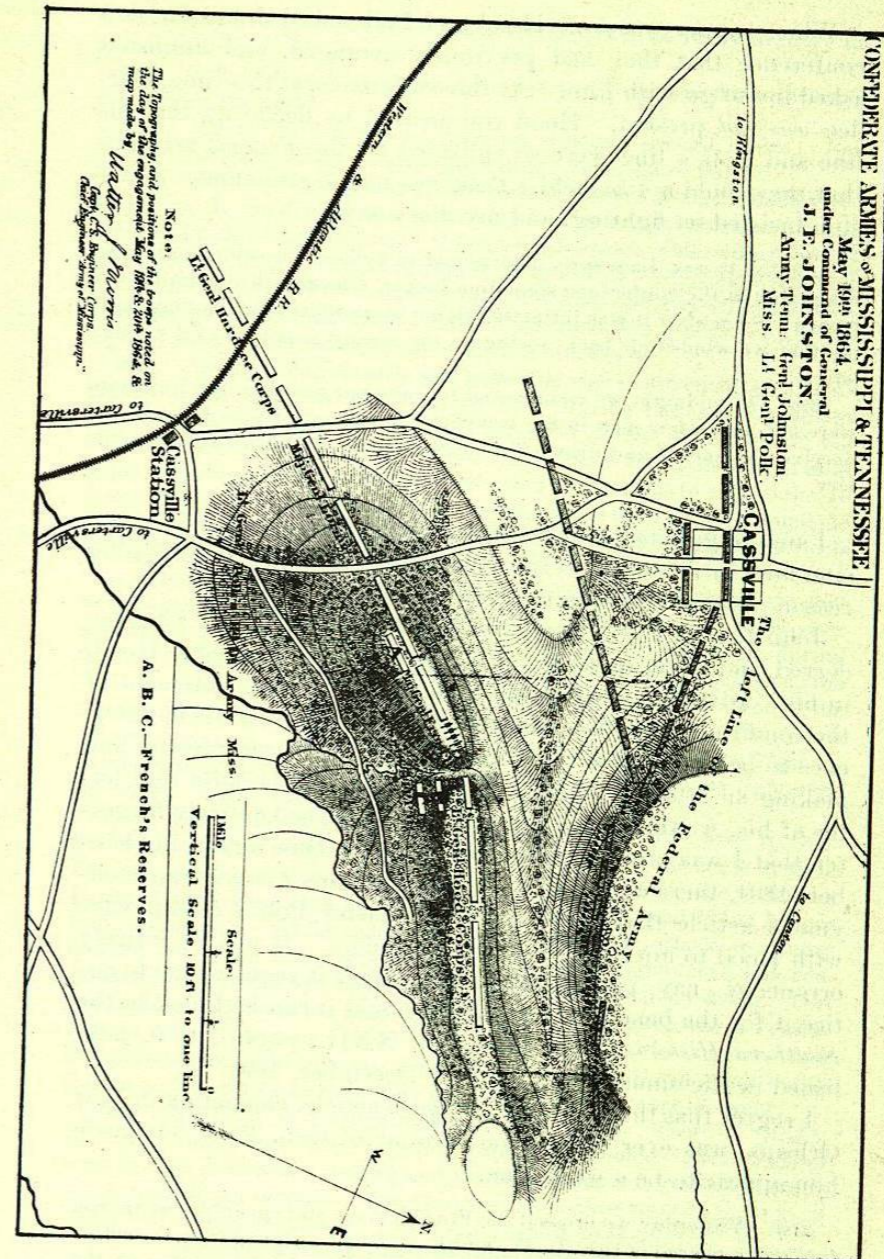
Cassville—The Line of Battle—Hood's Line Not Enfiladed—History of that Conference—Two Lieutenant Generals Invite Their Commander to a Council of War—Johnston Obligated to Fall Back—We Cross the Etowah River—Dallas—New Hope Church—Constant Fighting—Rain, Rain—Death of Lieut. Gen. Polk—Battle of the Latimer House—My Division Occupies Little and Big Kennesaw Mountains—The Battle—Incidents of the Battle—Confederates Save Wounded Union Soldiers from Burning—Kennesaw During Night Bombardment—Col. Martin's Noble Conduct—The Irony of Fate—Maj. Poten and French Soldier.

It will be seen that of those troops under Hood that were maneuvering to attack the enemy advancing on our right, I was the last to leave the position east of Cassville, for the whole line of battle was formed before I fell back, and I would have been in reserve entirely had Hood, as he should have done, extended his line to the left until it touched Canty's Division.

May 19, 1864. This morning the army was formed in line of battle. At first I was on the extreme right, but soon after, by change of dispositions, I occupied the line from the hills, on Loring's right, across the valley to the top of the first hill on my right. Hood's Corps was on my right, maneuvering to attack the enemy, but from some cause no fight was made. After this line was formed Cockrell, who was in reserve, was placed on a range of hills *south* of Cassville, and behind the town. At 4 P.M., I was ordered to fall back and form *behind* the division of Gen. Canty and Cockrell's Brigade, which I did. But as there was an interval between Hood's line and Canty without troops, I placed there in position Hoskin's Battery and half of Ector's Brigade. This left me Sears's Brigade and half of Ector's Brigade in reserve. Then came an order adding to my command the division of Canty, which was directly in front of me. Cockrell, on Canty's left, was put, for the occasion, under the orders of Loring.

About 5 P.M. our pickets from the extreme front were driven in toward the second line by the enemy's cavalry. Hoskin's Battery opened on the cavalry and checked them. About 5:30 P.M. the Federals, having placed some batteries in position on a ridge in front of Hood's right, opened fire on our line, and the shells from their extreme left (in *front* of Hood's right) enfiladed Hoskin's gun and the line that for a little while curved out to the battery. Hood's line was not a prolongation of Polk's line, because it *fell back* at the point of junction about twenty-five degrees. [See map in the "War Records."]

After dark, as I was returning from dinner, I met Gen. Hood, who asked me to ride over with him to see Gen. Johnston at Gen. Polk's headquarters, and take supper.



When supper was over Hood and Polk asked Johnston to a conference that they had previously arranged, and Johnston asked me to go with him. At the conference, at this time, Hardee was not present. Hood commenced by declaring that his line and Polk's line were so enfiladed by the Federal artillery that they could not be held. Polk was not so strenuous. Johnston insisted on fighting, and my diary says:

At 9 P.M. it was, I am sure, determined to fight at Cassville, and, after remaining at the conference sometime longer, I hastened to camp to entrench. Soon after it was intimated to me by an officer riding along past me that we would fall back, owing to the enemy moving so far on our left.

20th. At midnight we commenced to leave our position. Skirmishers were left, and a few men in the trenches were given axes to fell trees to deceive the enemy and drown the noise made in withdrawing the artillery.

I am obliged, before I proceed any further, to make a digression here in reference to the proceedings of this conference by reason of what has been published about it.

Johnston, in his "Narrative," gives his version of what occurred, and so far as what took place it is mainly correct. Hood, in his "Advance and Retreat," makes an incorrect statement of the condition of his line, and, whilst I was there, made no reference to being in a good position for acting on the aggressive and making an attack. His memory is defective, because in a letter of his, written to me ten years after, he had entirely forgotten that I was present at the conference. Then again, in October, 1894, there appeared in the New Orleans *Picayune* an anonymous article that endeavored to transfer Polk's concurrence with Hood to not fight on to my shoulders. It was so entirely erroneous—nay, purely imaginative—that it required me to notice it for the benefit of my children, and it can be found in the *Southern Historical Magazine*, Vol. XXII., pages 1 to 9, published in Richmond, Va., January–December, 1894.

I regret that this fabulous *Picayune* article, emanating in New Orleans, was ever written on account of Gen. Polk. It made him appear to be a weak man.

21st. Yesterday we crossed the Etowah river and encamped at an iron furnace in charge of Gen. G. W. Smith, who had resigned from the army. Remained in camp all day. There was some firing in the evening on the

river below where we crossed. I received orders to be ready to move in any direction.

23d. Left Allatoona to-day at noon and marched until dusk, then encamped for the night.

24th. Started at 4 A.M. and marched westerly toward Dallas. Encamped in line of battle. Heard guns in the direction of Dallas.

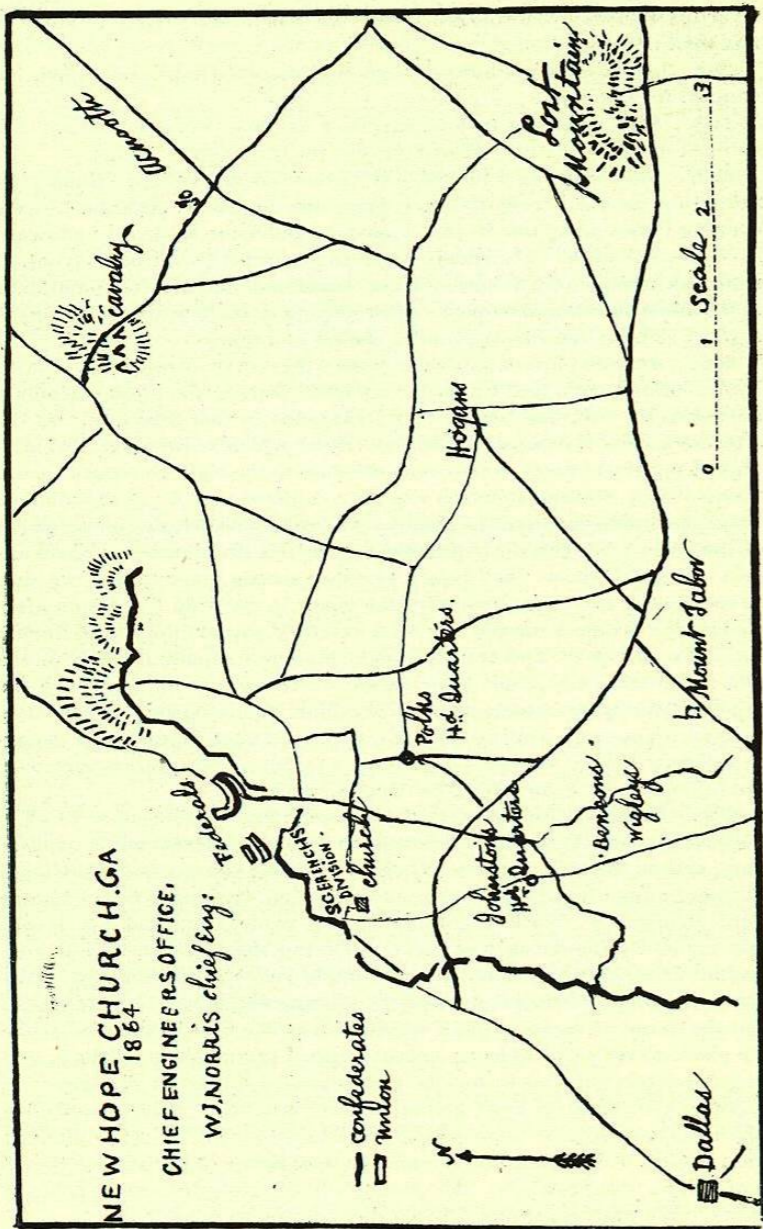
25th. This morning I moved still farther toward Dallas. Enemy reported on the road from Rome, striking for, or below, Atlanta. In the evening I rode along our front. I met Gen. Johnston while riding toward New Hope Church. The enemy made an attack on Gen. Hood's front. I returned immediately to hasten up my command, and arrived about dark in the midst of a thunderstorm. After placing troop in position during the night, I slept by the roadside under shelter of a fence.

26th. Assumed line of battle and passed the day in intrenching. Cheatham is on my right and Canty on my left. During the night Cheatham moved to the left, and on the 27th I extended in that direction. In the afternoon there was an attack on Gen. Hood, which he repulsed. At midnight I received orders to move my division to the right to relieve the division of Gen. Stevenson, which was not completed until 4 A.M. I found the line a miserable one, and the enemy's sharpshooters within twenty yards of the lines. I relieved his skirmishers and his division left. The Yankees called this place "hell hole," because, among other things, we shot twenty-one of their men, one after the other, in one rifle pit. Soon after sunrise the Federals opened fire with infantry and artillery, and during the day it increased, and once I thought we had to repulse a charge on the line. A great many shells have passed overhead and some through the top of a little apple tree at the foot of which we are sitting. They come without invitation. During the night there was such firing that I got up to ascertain if they were driving Loring's picket line in, on my right over the valley. I will remember New Hope Church.

29th. Firing not so heavy to-day as yesterday. I rode over to Gen. Polk's at 5 A.M. Yesterday there was an attack on the left made by Gen. Bate, and on the right by Gen. Wheeler. My line is a hard one to defend. In the evening after dark I was sent for by Gen. Polk, and found him at Gen. Johnston's. While there the enemy made an attack on Canty and my left. The firing was severe. During the night there was continuous firing on the left, and after midnight heavy artillery firing. Owing to the condition of the atmosphere, the roar of the guns was increased, and the sound of bursting shells overhead was like near by thunder, while the glare makes night hideous, consequently I got no sleep. This is getting to be interesting now, but the play is too long, it takes all night.

30th. Col. Riley, a most gallant officer, is killed. There is trouble again on Canty's line. Some people are always in trouble. After dinner I went to Gen. Johnston's, and he sent me to examine Canty's line. There is not much firing to-night. The enemy's line is close to ours in front of Canty. We want engineers. [Next day nothing to relate.]

June 1. I wrote to headquarters for tubes for Enfield rifles. This morning there is an artillery duel going on between one of our batteries and



those of the enemy. Enormous trees are falling from the shot. I formed an engineer company, and put Capt. Venet in command of it. I examined the whole line. Canty withdrew his line last night, leaving mine to be maintained, now quite six hundred yards in advance, connected only by their cross line.

2d. Gen. Ector was wounded this afternoon. An awful thunderstorm came up, the peals of thunder were frightful, and the Yankee tried to drown it with mimic artillery, as if one at a time was not divertisement enough. Some people can't be satisfied. The ditch is filled up to some depth with water. Over this I sleep on one board with my face turned up to the glare of the shells that shine through the closed eyelids.

3d. Firing as usual, and the enemy moving to our right. Another heavy thunderstorm is in progress. The roar of artillery shakes the rain out of the clouds. We drove in the enemy's skirmish line. One consolation the staff says we have is that no one comes to see us; the ride is not interesting. We see no one, and get no orders. That there is good in everything, including shells, is their doctrine. This battle has now lasted ten days.

4th. Rain again this morning. It was a disagreeable night in the trenches. There is firing in front. I have good news from Virginia. At 4 P.M. I received orders to withdraw our lines. It is raining to-night. This, with previous rains, rendered the roads as bad as they can well be, and the night was very dark. Mud, mud everywhere, and the soldiers sink over their shoe tops at every step. It took seven hours to move six miles. At 7 A.M. on the morning of the 5th we were in line of battle on Lost Mountain.

6th. I obtained a good night's rest. This morning I had to change the line of battle. The view from this lone mountain top is beautiful. It is about nine miles east of Marietta. It swells from the plain solitary and lone to the height of six hundred feet, affording a fine bird's-eye view of the surrounding country. To the north the encampments of the enemy are spread out below, and from hundreds of campfires the blue smoke rises to float away as gently as though all were peaceful. Beneath this silver cloud that hangs around the mountain, there is an angry brow; the demons of war are there.

7th. I slept in camp in the rear of the mountain, and for once all is quietness. At 10 A.M. I was ordered to the extreme right, and to the left at 1 P.M. All the information I can deduce from a single equation, to which I have reduced *five orders* received verbally from Polk's staff, is: X equal to a line to be formed in a dense wood 73 degrees northeast. I found Loring plunging about in quest of some center that is movable, and as invisible as the North Pole. As I could not determine the value of X at dark, I concluded to sleep the matter over on the ground where I am.

8th. This morning Maj. Prestman, engineer, examined the ground for my line. It is a weak, faulty, miserable line. The engineer took all my tools yesterday, so to-day I am unable to construct any works. I have reported the matter to Gen. Polk, but he is so much engrossed with fine-spun theories that he fails to attend to things requiring prompt attention.

Well! just think of it! This staff of mine, unreasonable fellows, wish they were back in the trenches again, where, for about eight days, they were not troubled with orders. Judge Wright came to see me. I have a high regard for him, and have seen him several times lately. He is from Tennessee.

9th. Everything was quiet last night, and I heard no guns until 3 P.M. My division was ordered to follow Loring's toward the railroad. Contradictory orders again from Gen. Polk's staff. I got into position at dark, and was called up at 2 A.M. to change again by moving Ector's Brigade to the right.

10th. Some skirmishing and artillery firing this morning. At 1 P.M. a violent thunderstorm came up, and the rain fell until dark. I believe it has rained now nine days in succession. The enemy is reported advancing to-day, and the firing shows it. In the evening I rode on the picket line with Gen. Ector. Firing continued until dark.

11th. Rain.

12th. Rain once more, and everything is drenched. Enemy firing with artillery from my front toward Kennesaw Mountain.

13th. Terrible rain last night and all day to-day till noon. Eleven days' rain! If it keeps on, there will be a story told like unto that in the Bible, only it will read,

It rained forty days and it rained forty nights,
And the ark it rested on the Kennesaw heights;

For to that place we are floating, it seems to me.

14th. This morning, by written orders (I am glad they have found paper to write on), Loring went to the right, Canty from the left to the center, and I extended to the right. No rain! Telegram of Forrest's victory. During the morning I rode over to Gen. Polk's quarters and asked him (when Gen. Johnston rode with him to our left) to come down my line. He said probably he would do so. Alas! "man proposes, God disposes." I heard at 12 M. that he had been killed. I sent an officer to his headquarters, and he returned saying that the report was true. I then went immediately to his camp and found that his remains had been sent to Marietta. I was very much shocked at his untimely fate. A universal sadness seemed to rest on the countenance of every one. He had accompanied Johnston to the left and gone on Pine Mountain, and while in front of our lines the party was fired on by one of the enemy's batteries, and the third shot fired struck the General on the left side and killed him instantly. Thus died a gentleman and a high Church dignitary. As a soldier he was more theoretical than practical.

I was ordered last night to be in readiness for an advance of the enemy at 3 A.M. He came not.

15th. All quiet at sunrise. Soon after desultory firing commenced along the line and continued until 3 P.M., when it became quite heavy. Featherston had his skirmishers driven in to their ranks. At 9 P.M. my skirmish line was attacked unsuccessfully.

16th. Early this morning the enemy opened on my front with a battery, and at 10 A.M. they shelled my picket line and skirmish line very se-

verely. At 3 P.M. they again shelled my line for an hour without serious damage. Cockrell is held in reserve for Gen. Hardee, and thus I am constantly holding a reserve for some one else; never yet has a brigade been held for me, and never, not once, have I asked for assistance.

17th. The now monotonous artillery awakened us this morning to reveille *before* we had made any parched — for coffee, the unfeeling hirelings of *toute du monde!* Last night all the troops on my left swung back and took a new line that placed me in command of a salient with an angle of about eighty-five degrees, liable to be enfiladed and taken in reverse.

18th. Early this morning both pickets and skirmishers on my left (Walker's Division) gave way and let the Federals in behind Cockrell's skirmishers, and thus the enemy gained possession of the Latimar House in my front. Ector's Brigade skirmishers also came in. The way being clear, the enemy soon advanced in line of battle, and with many guns enfiladed my line all day. This constant firing never ceased, but I could not induce them to come out and make an assault on my front with infantry, and ere night came my loss was 215 men. Capt. Guibor's Battery has lost more men (13) to-day than it did during the entire siege of Vicksburg. Men became in time so familiar with danger and death that, Gallio-like, they "care for none of those things." Toward evening I was ordered to withdraw from this line and occupy Kennesaw Mountain. This was done during the night.

19th. Early this morning the enemy followed us, and soon the skirmishing commenced, and by noon the artillery fire was severe. It ranged up the slope and over the mountain with great fury, and wounded Gen. Cockrell, and thirty-five of his men were *hors du combat*.

The position of our army to-day is: Hood is on our right covering Marietta or the northwest. From his left Polk's Corps (now Loring's) extends over both Big and Little Kennesaw Mountains, with the left on the road from Gilgal Church to Marietta. From this road Hardee extends the line nearly south, covering Marietta on the west. The left of my division was established on the Marietta road; thence it ran up the spur, or incline, of the mountain called Little or West Kennesaw, and thence to the top of the same; thence on up to the *top of Big Kennesaw*, where it connected with Gen. Walthall's troops. Featherston was on the right of Walthall and joined Gen. Hood. Walker, of Hardee's Corps, was on my left. Then in order, Bate, Cleburne, and Cheatham came.

Kennesaw Mountain is about four miles northwest of Marietta. It is over two and a half miles in length, and rises abruptly from the plain, solitary and alone, to the height of perhaps seven hundred feet. Its northwestern side is rocky and abrupt. On the northerly and southerly extremities it can be gained on horseback. Little Kennesaw, being bald and destitute of timber, affords a commanding view of all the surrounding country as far as the eye can reach, except where the view is hidden by the higher peak. The view from this elevation embraces Lost Mountain, Pine Mountain, and all the beautiful cultivated plain, dotted here and there with farmhouses, extending to the Allatoona Mountains, a spur of the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina.

20th. Busy this morning in establishing batteries to command the road,