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# THE BATTLE OF FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE

November 30, 1864

A statement of the erroneous claims made by  
General Schofield, and an exposition  
of the blunder which opened  
the battle

BY

CAPTAIN JOHN K. SHELLENBERGER

One hundred, twenty-five  
copies privately printed for the author by  
THE ARTHUR H. CLARK COMPANY  
CLEVELAND: 1916





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## PREFACE

This monograph on the Battle of Franklin was read first at a meeting of the Minnesota Commandery of the Loyal Legion, December 9, 1902. Written after an exhaustive investigation begun many years before, the straightforward truth was told without fear or favor. The disgraceful and costly blunder with which the Battle of Franklin opened should have been investigated by a court of inquiry. The only action taken, however, was the deposing of General Wagner, the junior in rank and the weakest in influence among the generals implicated, from the command of his division, with the statement that the blunder was due to his disobedience of orders. With this action the matter was hushed up.

I have no personal grudge against General Schofield, whose obstinate reliance on his ability to foresee what General Hood would do, was the prime cause of the blunder. My feeling towards him is the same that any honest student will experience when he becomes convinced that an undeserved promotion was secured by dishonest methods. I began my investigation with no thought of him but to secure evidence to disprove statements that I knew to be false, dishonoring the brigade to which I belonged. These had been made by General Cox in *The March to the Sea—Franklin and Nashville*, and by Cap-

tain Scofield, a member of Cox's staff, in a paper entitled "The Retreat from Pulaski to Nashville," published in the second volume of *Sketches of War History*, issued by the Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion.

"Misery loves company," and these two officers of the twenty-third corps, undoubtedly working in collusion, sought to mitigate their misery by putting two brigades of the fourth corps into the same class with their corps, whose battle line had proved unequal to the strain of the two brigades passing over it when driven in from the front by the assaulting rebel army. That part of Cox's line broke in a panic at the sight of what was coming and abandoned a good line of breastworks before firing a single shot. Cox and Scofield wished to make it appear that the two brigades also became panic stricken and that they never stopped running until they were stopped by the river. That they were both capable of deliberately bearing false witness needs no other proof than that furnished by themselves — by Cox in the contradictory statements made in his two official reports of the Battle of Franklin, and by Scofield in his false map of Spring Hill, which he claimed was drawn to scale, but which he had forged to uphold his claim for extraordinary services rendered by the regiment to which he belonged in the Battle of Spring Hill the day preceding the Battle of Franklin.

The discovery of the discreditable part played by General Schofield in the Battle of Franklin was the greatest find of my investigation. There is not a bit of doubt that he remained heedless at his headquar-

ters in Franklin while the enemy was engaged in preparations for assault in plain sight of our front. If he had given the proper attention to the important reports of General Cox, delivered in person, and of Colonel Lane, delivered by Captain Whitesides, he would have ridden to the front, which he could have done in less than ten minutes, to see for himself what was going on there. One look must have convinced him of the mistake he was making as to General Hood's intention. He then might have remedied the blunder he made, when he ordered Wagner's division into the position occupied by the brigades of Lane and Conrad. Yet his blunder went on to its logical finish and many hundreds of Union soldiers were needlessly killed, wounded, or captured; the army, on the crumbling brink of destruction, was saved by the independent action of Colonel Opdycke, one of the brigade commanders.

In 1890 the *National Tribune* published my article on the Battle of Franklin, containing the same charges against Schofield that are made in this pamphlet. Among many letters then received was one from General Stanley in which he wrote that he was surprised at the accuracy with which I had stated my points. One of the most important of those points was the statement of Doctor Cliffe, which is confirmed by General Stanley's official report:

From one o'clock until four in the evening the enemy's entire force was in sight and forming for attack, yet in view of the strong position we held, and reasoning from the former course of the rebels during this campaign, nothing appeared so improbable as that they would assault. I was so confident

in this belief that I did not leave General Schofield's headquarters until the firing commenced.

The headquarters mentioned were at Doctor Cliffe's house. In my personal interview with him, I found him a very reluctant witness. He was evidently proud of having entertained two major-generals and showed no inclination to say anything against either of them. He had told his story to a few of his intimate friends and one of them had repeated it to me. It was not until I had told him what I had heard and who my informant was that I could get him to talk. He then confirmed what I had already heard and added a few additional particulars, the most important one being his statement that Cox was at his house conferring with Schofield shortly before the battle began.

A thousand copies of the *Tribune* article were obtained and a copy was mailed to every member of the Ohio Commandery and to many others, including General Schofield. Many members of the Ohio Commandery were residents of Cincinnati or Cleveland. At that time Schofield was commanding the army and was a resident of Washington City. He took notice of this article by getting Washington correspondents of Cincinnati and Cleveland papers to write letters in his praise. Those letters contained nothing to refute the specific charges made in the *Tribune*, but dealt in glittering generalities about the important services rendered by Schofield during the war. Moreover in his *Forty-six Years in the Army*, while devoting many pages to the Battle of Franklin, Schofield has nothing to say about his



failure to give some personal attention to the very extraordinary situation that developed right under his nose, so to speak. The audacity he displayed in claiming credit for the victory, while in Washington soon after the battle and finding that the administration was ignorant of its details, was a brilliant stroke of genius of its kind—but not such genius as any lover of his country will wish to see encouraged among the ambitious officers in our army.

Cox was with Schofield in Washington and must have rendered invaluable assistance. No doubt each certified to the meritorious services of the other and Cox got his share of the reward in his promotion to the command of the twenty-third corps. Is it any wonder that two such able but unscrupulous men, while working together, with no one present to question their claims, should score such a success in deceiving President Lincoln? Was it for the meritorious services Schofield rendered, while sitting idly in Doctor Cliffe's house, utterly indifferent to the reports coming to him of the preparations of the enemy for assault; and was it for the gallantry he displayed when he skedaddled to the fort across the river as soon as the firing began, thereby abandoning the conduct of the battle to his subordinates, that they claimed the promotion he was given? If he had received the award his conduct that day so justly merited, would it not have come in the verdict of a court-martial such as he declares in his book ought to have been given to Wagner, Lane, and Conrad? "According to the established rules of war these three commanders" and Schofield and Cox "ought to have

been tried by court-martial and, if found guilty, shot or cashiered for sacrificing their own men and endangering the army."

If any of the blame attached to General Stanley, he washed it away gallantly with the blood of his wound.

JOHN K. SHELLENBERGER.

Hampton, Virginia, November 5, 1915.

## THE BATTLE OF FRANKLIN

Any facts or information concerning the Battle of Franklin coming my way has always been devoured with a greedy interest, and because of this interest, I have given far more research to this battle than to any other in which I was engaged. On account of the open character of the battle-field, the limited area, where the fighting raged, and my presence in the midst of that area, the leading features of the battle came under my personal observation, but wherever that observation was wanting for giving a clear account I have supplied the deficiency with information gathered from other reliable sources.

I was commanding Company B, Sixty-fourth Ohio regiment, Conrad's brigade, Wagner's division, Fourth corps. Wagner's division was the rear guard on the retreat to Franklin, and about mid-forenoon of November 30, 1864, arrived on top of the Winsted Hills, two miles south of Franklin. Halting there long enough to snatch a hasty breakfast, the division then hurried into battle line to delay the columns of the enemy, in close pursuit, by compelling them to deploy. The position was held as long as possible without bringing on a battle and then Wagner began to retire slowly towards Franklin. The town lies nestled in a little valley in a bend of Harpeth River. A stand was made to get the artillery and the long

wagon train over the river and while our commanding general, Schofield, was giving his personal attention to the facilities for crossing, the main body of the army, under the supervision of General Cox, was engaged in establishing our defensive line, which stretched across the river bend, in the arc of a circle, inclosing the town. As fast as the troops arrived and were placed in position they hurried to cover themselves with breastworks, and by the time the enemy was ready to attack, Cox's line was well intrenched. The train got over the river in time for the troops to have crossed before the enemy appeared, but the opportunity thus offered for securing a much stronger defensive position, with the river in front instead of in rear, was not improved.

By one o'clock Wagner had fallen back so close to Cox's line that he began a movement to withdraw his division behind that line. Conrad's brigade had been called in from the left flank and was marching in column of fours along the Columbia Pike, with the head of the column approaching the breastworks, when Wagner received an order from Schofield to take up a position in front of Cox's line. In obedience to this order Conrad counter-marched his brigade a short distance and then deployed it in a single line of battle, having a general direction nearly parallel with Cox's line. Five of the six regiments composing the brigade were posted on the east side and one on the west side of the pike, four hundred and seventy yards in advance of Cox's line, as measured along the pike. Lane's brigade, following Conrad's, was posted on Conrad's right, Lane's line trending

backward on the right in general conformation with Cox's line. When General Hood assaulted, Conrad's five regiments east of the pike proved to be in the direct pathway of his assault and they were overwhelmed before the line west of the pike, which was greatly refused as to that pathway, became fully engaged.

When Opdycke's brigade, the last to withdraw, came up to the position occupied by Conrad and Lane, Wagner rode forward and ordered Opdycke into line with them. Colonel Opdycke strenuously objected to this order. He declared that troops out in front of the breastworks were in a good position to aid the enemy and nobody else. He also pleaded that his brigade was worn out, having been marching for several hours during the morning in line of battle in sight of the enemy, climbing over fences and passing through woods, thickets, and muddy cornfields, while covering the rear of our retreating column, and was entitled to a relief. While they were discussing the matter they rode along the pike together, the brigade marching in column behind them, until they entered the gap in the breastworks left for the pike and finding the ground in that vicinity fully occupied by other troops, they kept along till they came to the first clear space which was about two hundred yards inside the breastworks. There Wagner turned away with the final remark, "Well, Opdycke, fight when and where you damn please; we all know you'll fight." Colonel Opdycke then had his brigade stack arms on the clear space, and his persistence in thus marching his brigade inside the

breastworks proved about two hours later to be the salvation of our army.

When Conrad's brigade took up its advanced position we all supposed it would be only temporary, but soon an orderly came along the line with instructions for the company commanders and he told me that the orders were to hold the position to the last man, and to have my sergeants fix bayonets and to instruct my company that any man, not wounded, who should attempt to leave the line without orders, would be shot or bayoneted by the sergeants.

Four of Conrad's regiments, including the Sixty-fourth Ohio, had each received a large assignment of drafted men so recently that none of these men had been with their regiments more than a month and many had joined within a week. The old soldiers all believed that the harsh orders were given for effect upon these drafted men, as we never before had received any such orders on going into battle.

We then began to fortify. On the retreat that morning we had passed an abandoned wagon loaded with intrenching tools, and by order each company had taken two spades from the wagon, the men relieving each other in carrying them. These spades were the only tools we had to work with. The ground we occupied was a large old cottonfield not under cultivation that year, and had been frequently camped on by other troops who had destroyed all the fences and other materials ordinarily found so handy in building hasty breastworks, so that on this occasion our only resource was the earth thrown with the few spades we had.

Under the stimulus afforded by the sight of the enemy in our front preparing for attack, the men eagerly relieved each other in handling the spades. As soon as a man working showed the least sign of fatigue, a comrade would snatch the spade out of his hands and ply it with desperate energy. Yet in spite of our utmost exertions when the attack came we had only succeeded in throwing up a slight embankment, which was high enough to give good protection against musket balls to the man squatting down in the ditch from which the earth had been thrown; but on the outside, where there was no ditch, it was so low that a battle line could march over it without halting. The ground ascended with an easy grade from our position back to Cox's line, and all the intervening space, as well as a wide expanse to our left, was as bare as a floor of any obstruction. In our front was a wide valley extending to the Winsted Hills. This valley was dotted with a few farm-buildings, and there were also some small areas of woodland, but much the greater portion of it consisted of cleared fields. As our line was first established the Sixty-fifth Ohio was on the left of the brigade, but it was afterwards withdrawn, leaving the Sixty-fourth Ohio on the left and three companies, H, K, and B, were partially refused to cover the left flank. My position was at the refused angle.

About the time that we began to fortify, my attention was called to a group of mounted officers in a field on the side of the Winsted Hills, to the east of the Columbia Pike, and about a mile and a half in our front. This group undoubtedly consisted of

General Hood and his staff. An officer who was present with Hood has stated that from their position they had a good view of Cox's line and that after giving this line a hasty survey through his field-glass, General Hood slapped the glass shut with an emphatic gesture and decisively exclaimed, "We will attack!" Staff officers then began to gallop forth from the group with orders for the troops to form for assault.

At the angle where I was, the view of the valley directly in our front and to our right was shut off by a piece of woodland a short distance in advance of our position, so that we did not see anything of the movements of Cheatham's corps, which formed astride the Columbia Pike. Looking up the valley to our left front was a wide expanse of cleared fields and in these fields we plainly saw the movements of a large part of Stewart's corps. They first came into view from behind a body of timber over towards the river, deploying from column on the right by file into line on double quick. As fast as the troops could be marched up from the rear Stewart extended his lines over towards the pike. We could see all their movements so plainly, while they were adjusting their lines, that there was not a particle of doubt in the mind of any man in my vicinity as to what was coming. Moreover the opinion was just as universal that a big blunder was being committed in compelling us to fight with our flank fully exposed in the midst of a wide field, while in plain sight in our rear was a good line of breastworks with its flank protected by the river. The indignation of the men grew



almost into a mutiny and the swearing of those gifted in profanity exceeded all their previous efforts in that line. Even the green drafted men could see the folly of our position, for one of them said to me, "What can our generals be thinking about in keeping us out here! We can do no good here. We are only in the way. Why don't they take us back to the breastworks?"

The regiment contained a number of men who had not reënlisted when the regiment had veteranized and whose time had already expired. They were to be mustered out as soon as we got back to Nashville and, with home so nearly in sight after more than three years of hard service, these men were especially rebellious. First Sergeant Libey of Company H, was a non-veteran, and was also a fine specimen, mentally and physically, of the best type of our volunteer soldiers. When the enemy was approaching he twice got up from the line and started for the breastworks, vehemently declaring that he would not submit to having his life thrown away, after his time was out, by such a stupid blunder. The little squad of non-veterans belonging to the company both times got up and started to go with him and both times they all returned to the line on the profane order of their captain, "God damn you, come back here." A few minutes later the sergeant was killed while we were retreating to the breastworks.

It took two hours, from two till four o'clock, for the corps of Cheatham and Stewart to come up and get into position and then they advanced to the assault in heavy lines of battle. We kept the spades

flying until they had approached within range of our skirmish line, which fired a few shots and then began to retreat rapidly. Then the spades were dropped and the men taking their muskets squatted down behind the low streak of earth they had thrown out to receive the coming onset. A little later Company E, from the skirmish line, came scurrying back, the men, with very serious looks on their faces, settling down with the line like a covey of flushed birds dropping into cover.

All that has been related concerning Conrad's brigade took place in full view of that part of Cox's line extending from the river on our left to the Columbia Pike, and if there had been any previous doubt in the minds of any of these on-looking thousands as to Hood's intention, his determination to assault was as plainly advertised as it possibly could be during the intense minutes that it took his army to march in battle line from the place of its formation to our advanced position. General Cox has claimed that Wagner's division was ordered to report to him and that he was in immediate command of all the troops engaged in the battle. By his own statement he was on a knoll in the rear of Stiles' brigade, on the left of his line, where he had the best view of the whole field. From this knoll he had been watching the preparations for attack, and all the time directly under his eyes was Conrad's brigade busily engaged in fortifying to resist that attack. If Wagner was disobeying his orders by remaining in front too long, as was given out a few days later when he was made a

scapegoat for the blunder of his position, Cox was watching him do it and took no measures to prevent it. If it was Cox's expectation that Wagner would withdraw the two brigades at the last moment, he must have known better when he saw Conrad's brigade squat down behind their half-built breastwork preparatory to giving battle. There was even then time, if prompt action had been taken, for a staff officer to gallop to the front, before the firing began, with a peremptory order for Conrad and Lane to get out of the way; but Cox, fresh from a personal conference with Schofield, to whom he had reported the situation and whose orders he had received with reference to holding the position, looked quietly on and thereby approved of Wagner's action.

It was a pleasant, hazy, Indian summer day, and so warm that I was carrying my overcoat on my arm. When the line squatted down I folded the coat into a compact bundle and placed it on the edge of the bank in rear of my company and sat on it, with my feet in the shallow ditch. By craning my neck, I could look over our low parapet. The battle was opened by a rebel cannon, which, unnoticed by us, had taken position on a wooded knoll off our left front over towards the river. The first shot from this cannon flew a little high, directly over the angle where I was sitting. The second shot dropped short, and I was thinking with a good deal of discomfort that the third shot would get the exact range and would probably lift some of us out of that angle; but before it came our line had opened fire on the approaching rebel

line and I became so much interested in that fire that I never knew whether there was a third shot from the cannon.

Our fire checked them in front, for they halted and began to return it, but for a minute only, for, urged on by their officers they again came forward. Their advance was so rapid that my company had fired only five or six rounds to the man when the break came. The salient of our line was near the pike and there the opposing lines met in a hand-to-hand encounter in which clubbed muskets were used, but our line quickly gave way. I had been glancing uneasily along our line, watching for a break as a pretext for getting out of there, and was looking towards the pike when the break first started. It ran along the line so rapidly that it reminded me of a train of powder burning. I instantly sprang to my feet and looked to the front. They were coming on the run, emitting the shrill rebel charging yell, and so close that my first impulse was to throw myself flat on the ground and let them charge over us. But the rear was open and a sense of duty, as well as a thought of the horrors endured in rebel prisons, constrained me to take what I believed to be the very dangerous risk of trying to escape. I shouted to my company, "Fall back! Fall back!" and gave an example of how to do it by turning and running for the breastworks.

As the men were rising to go, the rebels fired, but so hastily and with such poor aim that their fire did not prove nearly so destructive as I had feared. Probably most of their guns were empty, although I

did not think so just then. The range was so close that it seemed bullets had never before hissed with such a diabolical venom, and every one that passed made a noise seemingly loud enough to tear one in two. I had forgotten my overcoat, but had run only a rod or two when I thought of it and stopped and looked back with the intention of returning to get it; but the rebels then appeared to be as close to the coat as I was and very reluctantly, for it was a new one, I let them have it. After running a few rods farther I again looked back. They were standing on the low embankment we had left, loading and firing at will, but just as I looked some of their officers waved their swords and sprang forward. The fire slackened as they started in hot pursuit to get to the breastworks with us.

Our men were all running with their guns in their hands, which was good evidence that there was no panic among them. While knapsacks or blanket rolls were frequently thrown away, I did not see a single man drop his gun unless hit. The cry of some of our wounded who went down in that wild race, knowing they would have to lie there exposed to all the fire of our own line, had a pathetic note of despair in it, I had never heard before. A rebel account has stated that the next morning they found some of the dead with their thumbs chewed to a pulp. They had fallen with disabling wounds and the agony of their helpless exposure to the murderous fire from our breastworks, which swept the bare ground, where they were lying, had been so great that they had stuck their thumbs in their mouths and bit on them

to keep from bleating like calves. Many of the bodies thus exposed were hit so frequently that they were literally riddled with bullet holes.

Our men were nearly all directed towards the pike as if with the intention of entering the breastworks through the gap there. I reasoned, however, that the hottest fire would be directed where the crowd was densest, and I veered off in an effort to get away from there. While running rapidly with body bent over and head down, after the involuntary manner of men retreating under fire, I came into collision with a man running in a similar attitude, but headed towards the gap. The shock was so great that it knocked him down and pretty well knocked the wind out of me. Just as we met, a rebel shell exploded close over our heads and as his body was rolling over on the ground, I caught a glimpse of his upturned face and, in its horrified look, read his belief that it was the shell that had hit him. The idea was so comical that I laughed, but my laugh was of very brief duration when I found myself so much disabled that I was rapidly falling behind. With panting lungs and trembling legs I toiled along, straining every nerve to reach the breastwork, but when it was yet only a few steps away, even with life itself at stake, I could go no farther, and thought my time had come. My brave mother, the daughter of a soldier of 1812 and the granddaughter of a Revolutionary soldier had said, when I had appealed to the pride in her military ancestry so successfully that she had consented to my enlistment, "Well, if you must go, don't get shot in the back." I thought of her and of that

saying and faced about to take it in front. While I was slowly turning, my eyes swept the plain in the direction of the pike. There were comparatively few of our men in my immediate vicinity, but over towards the pike the ground was thickly covered with them, extending from the breastworks nearly a hundred yards along the pike, and in some places so densely massed as to interfere with each other's movements. The fleetest footed had already crossed the breastwork and all those outside were so thoroughly winded that none of them could go any faster than a slow, labored trot. The rear was brought up by a ragged fringe of tired stragglers who were walking doggedly along, apparently with as much unconcern as if no rebels were in sight. The rebel ranks were almost as badly demoralized by pursuit as ours by retreat. Their foremost men had already overtaken our rearmost stragglers and were grabbing hold of them to detain them.

Suddenly my attention was riveted so intently on the nearest rebel to myself that in watching him I became oblivious to all other surroundings, for I thought I was looking at the man who would shoot me. He was coming directly towards me, on a dog trot, less than fifty yards away, and was in the act of withdrawing the ramrod from the barrel of his gun. When this action was completed, while holding the gun and ramrod together in one hand, he stopped to prime and then, much to my relief, aimed and fired at a little squad of our men close on my right. I heard the bullet strike and an exclamation from the man who was hit. The rebel then started to trot

forward again, at the same time reaching back with one hand to draw a fresh cartridge. By this time having rested a little, I looked back over my shoulder towards the breastwork. I noticed that there was a ditch on the outside and the sight of this ditch brought renewed hope. With the fervent prayer, into which was poured all the intense longing for more life, natural to my vigorous young manhood, "O, God, give me strength to reach that ditch," I turned and staggered forward. I fell headlong into the ditch just as our line there opened fire. The roar of their guns was sweeter than music and I chuckled with satisfaction as I thought, "Now, Rebs, your turn has come and you must take your medicine." I lay as I fell, panting for breath, until I had caught a little fresh wind and then began to crawl around to take a peep and see how the rebels were getting along.

When my body was lengthwise of the ditch I happened to raise my head and was astounded by the sight of the rebels coming into the ditch between me and the pike, the nearest of them only a few yards away. They were so tired that they seemed scarcely able to put one foot before the other and many of them stopped at the ditch utterly unable to go a step farther until they had rested. It was only the strongest among them who were still capable of the exertion of climbing over the breastwork. If the men behind that work had stood fast, not one of those tired rebels would ever have crossed that parapet alive. Transfixed with amazement, I watched them until the thought flashed into my mind that in an in-



stant some of their comrades would come in on top of me and I would be pinned down with a bayonet. The thought of a bayonet thrust was so terrifying, that it spurred me into a last effort, and with the mental ejaculation, "I never will die in that way," I sprang on top of the breastwork. Crouching there an instant with both hands resting on the headlog, I gave one startled look over my shoulder. The impression received was that if I fell backward they would catch me on their bayonets. Then followed a brief period of oblivion for which I can not account.

With returning consciousness I found myself lying in the ditch on the inside of the breastwork, trampled under the feet of the men, and with no knowledge whatever of how I got there. It is possible that I was taken for a rebel when I sprang up so suddenly on top of the breastwork and that I was knocked there by a blow from one of our own men. I was lying across the body of a wounded man who had been hit by a bullet which, entering at his cheek, had passed out the back of his head. He was unconscious, but still breathing. The breast of my coat was smeared with the blood from his wound. The press was so great that I could not get on my feet, but in a desperate effort to avoid being trampled to death managed in some way to crawl out between the legs of the men to the bank of the ditch, where I lay utterly helpless with burning lungs still panting for breath. My first thought was of the rebels I had seen crossing the breastwork, and I looked toward the pike. I had crossed our line close to a cotton-gin that stood just inside our works and the building ob-

structed my view except directly along the ditch and for a short distance in rear of it.

Our men were all gone from the ditch to within a few feet of where I was lying. A little beyond the other end of the building stood two cannon pointing towards me with a group of rebels at the breech of each one of them trying to discharge it. They were two of our own guns that had been captured before they had been fired by our gunners and were still loaded with the double charges of canister intended for the rebels. Fortunately the gunners had withdrawn the primers from the vents and had taken them along when they ran away and the rebels were having difficulty in firing the guns. As I looked they were priming them with powder from their musket cartridges, and no doubt intended to fire a musket into this priming. Just then I was too feeble to make any effort to roll my body over behind the cover of the building, but shut my eyes and set my jaws to await the outcome where I was lying. After waiting for some time and not hearing the cannon, I opened my eyes to see what was the matter. The rebels were all gone and the ditch was filled with our men as far as I could see. If the rebels had succeeded in firing those two cannon they would have widened the breach in our line so much farther to our left that it might have proved fatal, since the two brigades holding our line, from the vicinity of the cotton-gin to the river, had each but a single regiment of reserves. The men in the ditch at my side, when I first saw the cannon, were so busily engaged in keeping out the rebels who filled the ditch on the other side of the parapet, that I

do not believe they ever saw the two cannon posted to rake the ditch. Their conduct was most gallant.

For a brief period the rebels held possession of the inside of our breastworks along the entire front of Strickland's brigade on the west side, and of Reilly's brigade down to the cotton-gin on the east side of the pike; and the ground in their possession was the key to Cox's entire position. This break in our line was identical in extent with the front covered by the great body of Wagner's men in falling back, and it was occasioned by the panic and confusion created by Wagner's men in crossing the breastworks. Cox's men, along this part of our line, seem to have lost their nerve at the sight of the rebel army coming and on account of their own helpless condition. They could not fire a single shot while Wagner's men were between themselves and the rebels. The first rebels crossed the breastworks side by side with the last of Wagner's men.

At some point a break started and then it spread rapidly until it reached the men who were too busily occupied in firing on the rebels to become affected by the panic. Opdycke's brigade was directly in the rear of where this break occurred. At the sound of the firing in front, Opdycke had deployed his brigade astride the pike, ready for instant action, and as soon as he saw that a stampede was coming from the breastworks, without waiting for any order, he instantly led his brigade forward. His brigade restored the break in our line, charging straight through the rout, after a desperate hand-to-hand encounter in which Opdycke himself, first firing all

the shots in his revolver and then breaking it over the head of a rebel, snatched up a musket and fought with that for a club. It is true that hundreds of brave men from the four broken brigades of Conrad, Lane, Reilly, and Strickland, who were falling back, when they met Opdycke's advancing line, saw that the position would not be given up without a desperate struggle and faced about and fought as gallantly as any of Opdycke's men in recovering and afterwards in holding our line; but if Opdycke's brigade had not been where it was, the day undoubtedly would have closed with the utter rout and ruin of our four divisions of infantry south of the river. When General Cox met Opdycke on the field immediately after the break was restored, he took him by the hand and fervently exclaimed, "Opdycke, that charge saved the day."

The front line of Strickland's brigade extended along the foot of the garden of Mr. Carter, the owner of the plantation on which the battle was fought. The reserve line was posted behind the fence at the other end of the garden, close to the Carter residence, where the ground was a little higher, and sixty-five yards in rear of the main line. This reserve line, with the fence for a basis, had constructed a rude barricade as a protection against bullets which might come over the front line. When Opdycke's demi-brigade, charging on the west side of the pike, came to this barricade, it halted there, probably mistaking it for our main line. The rebels in the garden fell back behind the cover of Strickland's breastwork and during the remainder of the battle, on this part of the

field, the opposing lines maintained these relative positions. Every attempt, made by either side to cross the garden, met with a bloody repulse. The body of one dead rebel was lying between the barricade and the Carter house and this body no doubt indicated the high water mark reached by Hood's assault. It is only fair to the gallant rebels, who penetrated our line, to state that Opdycke's charge was made too promptly to give them any time to recover their wind, and that therefore in the hand-to-hand struggle, they were laboring under the great disadvantage of the physical fatigue already described.

Returning to my personal experiences: when I had rested enough to be able to sit up, I found at my feet a can of coffee standing on the smouldering embers of a small camp fire, and beside it a tin plate filled with hard tack and fried bacon. Some soldier was evidently ready to eat his supper, when he was hastily called into line by the opening of the battle in front. I first took a delicious drink out of the coffee can and then helped myself to a liberal portion of the hard tack and bacon, and while sitting there eating and drinking, incidentally watched the progress of the fighting. By the time I had finished I was so fully rested and refreshed that thereafter I was able to shout encouragement to the men fighting in my vicinity as loud as any other company commander.

Along that part of the line only the breastwork separated the combatants. On our side we had five or six ranks deep, composed of the original line, the reserves, and Conrad's men, all mixed up together without any regard to their separate organizations.

The front rank did nothing but fire. The empty guns were passed back to those in rear who reloaded them. The rear rank was kneeling with guns at a ready. If a rebel raised his head above the breastwork, down it would instantly go with one or more bullets through it, fired by these rear rank men.

In this close fighting the advantage was all on our side, for our front rank men, standing up close against the perpendicular face of the breastwork on our side, could poke the muzzle of a gun over the headlog and by elevating the breech could send a plunging shot among the rebels who filled the outside ditch and expose for an instant only the hand and a part of the arm that discharged the gun. But on account of the convex face of the work on their side the rebels could not reach us with their fire without exposing themselves above the breastwork. They kept up the vain struggle until long after dark, but finally elevated their hats on the ends of their muskets above the breastwork, as a signal to us, and called over that if we would stop shooting they would surrender. When our firing ceased, many of them came over and surrendered, but many more took advantage of the darkness and of the confusion created by their comrades in getting over the breastwork to slip back to their own lines. Soon after the firing had ceased the Sixty-fourth Ohio reformed its broken ranks a few steps in rear of the breastwork and just east of the cotton-gin. I did not learn all the facts that night, but when they came out later, it transpired that every man in my company, save one, who had escaped the casualties of the battle, fell into line. A thousand-

dollar substitute had fled to the town where he hid in a cellar. He went to sleep there and awoke the next morning inside the rebel lines. He was sent south to a prison and when returning north after the close of the war lost his life in the explosion of the Steamer Sultana.

I had lost my overcoat, but had never let go the grip on my sword. Some of my men had dropped their knapsacks or blanket rolls, but every one of them had his gun and cartridge box. They were all in high spirits over their own escape and over the part they had played in the final repulse of the rebels, and were talking and laughing over their various adventures in the greatest good humor. The condition of my company was typical of the condition of all the other companies in the regiment as I saw, while passing along the line inquiring into the fate of brother officers and other friends. I also learned in a conversation the next day with Major Coulter, who had been my old captain, and who was acting that night as assistant adjutant-general of the brigade, that every other regiment of the brigade had reformed in rear of the breastwork in the same way as the Sixty-fourth Ohio, and that the brigade as an organization, had marched from the vicinity of the cotton-gin when the order to retreat was executed that night.

I never heard from any source any intimation contrary to the truth as I have stated it until I read in 1882, with the most indignant surprise, in Cox's book on this campaign, then recently published, his statement that the brigades of Lane and Conrad rallied at the river but were not again carried into action.

When Cox made that statement he was more concerned in patching up that fatal gap in the battle line of his own command without any outside assistance, than he was in ascertaining the truth, and he took that way to dispose of two entire brigades. In his first official report, for he made two reports, Cox went to the other extreme for he then stated that on the approach of the enemy the two brigades in front had retired in a leisurely manner inside his line. "Leisurely" is so good in that connection that it always brings a smile whenever I recall the "leisurely" manner in which Conrad's brigade made its way back to Cox's line. Moreover in a letter to General Wagner, written two days after the battle, and inclosing a copy of a letter to General Thomas, urging the promotion of Colonel Opdycke, Cox took occasion to express the opinion he then held, based on his personal observation, of the conduct of Wagner's entire division:

I desire also to express my admiration of the gallantry of your whole command. Indeed an excess of bravery kept the two brigades a little too long in front, so that the troops at the main line could not get to firing upon the advancing enemy till they were uncomfortably near.

Soon after the regiment had reformed one of the drafted men of my company was brought in from the ditch outside mortally wounded. No doubt he had reached the ditch in too exhausted a condition to climb over the breastwork and had lain out among the rebels where he had been repeatedly hit by our own fire. The pain of his wounds had made him crazy, for he would not talk, but kept crawling about on all



fours moaning in agony. There were a few men missing from the company of whom their comrades could give no account. Moved by the fate of the drafted man, I crossed the breastwork to search outside, if perchance I might find one or more of the missing ones lying there wounded and bring them aid. I went to a gun of the Sixth Ohio battery, posted a short distance east of the cotton-gin, to get over; and as I stepped up into the embrasure, the sight that met my eyes was most horrible even in the dim starlight. The mangled bodies of the dead rebels were piled up as high as the mouth of the embrasure, and the gunners said that repeatedly when the lanyard was pulled the embrasure was filled with men, crowding forward to get in, who were literally blown from the mouth of the cannon. Only one rebel got past the muzzle of that gun and one of the gunners snatched up a pick leaning against the breastwork and killed him with that. Captain Baldwin of this battery has stated that as he stood by one of his guns, watching the effect of its fire, he could hear the smashing of the bones when the missiles tore their way through the dense ranks of the approaching rebels.

While I was cautiously making my way around one side of that heap of mangled humanity, a wounded man lying at the bottom, with head and shoulders protruding, begged me for the love of Christ to pull the dead bodies off him. The ditch was piled promiscuously with the dead and badly wounded and heads, arms, and legs were sticking out in almost every conceivable manner. The ground near the

ditch was so thickly covered with bodies that I had to pick my steps carefully to avoid treading on some of them. The air was filled with the moans of the wounded; and the pleadings for water and for help of some of those who saw me were heartrending. While walking along towards the pike to get in the pathway in which my company had come back, I passed two rebel flags lying on the ground close together. It did not occur to me that I would be entitled to any credit for picking up the flags under such circumstances, but I thought that if I did not find what I was looking for I would return that way and take the flags in with me. I had passed on a few steps when I heard a man behind me exclaim, "Look out, there!" Thinking he meant me, I turned hastily and saw him pitch the two flags over the breastwork. I presume that the men inside the work who got possession of the flags were afterwards sent to Washington with them and possibly may have received medals for their capture. I felt so uneasy while outside, lest the rebels should make some movement that would start our line to firing again that I kept close to the breastwork, and as it was soon manifest that the chance in the darkness of finding a friend, where the bodies were so many, was too remote to justify the risk I was taking, I returned within our line.

From what I saw while outside I have always believed that General Hood never stated his losses fully. Those losses were in some respects without precedent in either army on any other battle-field of the war. He had five generals killed, six wounded and one captured on our breastworks, and the slaughter

of field and company officers, as well as of the rank and file, was correspondingly frightful. It was officially reported of Quarles's brigade that the ranking officer in the entire brigade at the close of the battle was a captain. Of the nine divisions of infantry composing Hood's army, seven divisions got up in time to take part in the assault and at least six of these seven divisions were as badly wrecked as was Pickett's division in its famous charge at Gettysburg.

Our loss was officially stated as two thousand, three hundred, twenty-six men and almost the whole of it was due to the presence of the two brigades in front of the main line. Casement's brigade, to the left of Reilly's, sustained a very determined assault which was repulsed with a loss of only three killed and sixteen wounded. But the action of Casement's men was not hampered by the presence of any of Wagner's men in their front and they could open fire as soon as the rebels came within range. If the brigades of Reilly and Strickland could have opened fire under the same conditions they would have done just as well as Casement's brigade. A critical investigation of our losses will conclusively demonstrate that at Franklin the violation of the military axiom never to post a small body of troops in a way to hamper the action of the main body was directly responsible for the unnecessary loss of more than two thousand of our soldiers. That was the frightful butchers' bill our army had to pay for a bit of incompetent generalship.

How was it possible for veteran generals of the Atlanta campaign to make such a gross blunder?

In his official report Cox states that at two o'clock the enemy came into full view and he reported that fact and the position of the two brigades in front of his breastworks to Schofield and received his orders with reference to holding the position; but he does not state what those orders were. Cox made that report and received those orders in a personal conference with Schofield when they must have fully discussed the situation, and Cox's peculiar statement in this connection seems to carry a covert threat, as if he had said to Schofield, "If you attempt to hold me responsible for the blunder I will tell what those orders of yours were."

In a written account furnished me by Captain Whitesides, Wagner's assistant adjutant-general, he states that about half past two o'clock Wagner ordered him to see Colonel Lane and find out what was going on in his front. From his position on the pike at the gap in the breastworks Wagner could see for himself Stewart's corps forming in Conrad's front, as already described, but his view of Lane's front was obstructed by the large number of trees and by the inequalities of the ground on the west side of the pike. Colonel Lane told Whitesides that Hood was forming his army in battle order and that without any doubt it was his intention to attack in force; that the position occupied by the two brigades was faulty, being without any support on either flank, and unless they were withdrawn they would be run over by the enemy or compelled to fall back to the breastworks under fire. On reporting Lane's statement to Wagner, Whitesides was directed to find General Stanley,

the corps commander, and tell him what Lane had said. He found Stanley with Schofield at the house of Doctor Cliffe in the central part of the town, where they could see nothing of what was going on in front, and reported to them as stated above. He then returned to Wagner who, so far as he knew, received no further orders.

The report of Cox and the statement of Whitesides indicate that both Cox and Wagner believed that Hood intended to attack but that neither of them would take the responsibility, with Schofield in easy communication, of withdrawing the two brigades without his sanction from the position to which they had been assigned by his order. They reported to him the situation and then waited, and waited in vain, for him to take action.

In a personal interview Doctor Cliffe told me that Schofield came to his house about nine o'clock for breakfast and afterwards kept his headquarters there until the battle began; that after breakfast he retired to a bedroom where he slept until noon or shortly after; that a short time before the battle began Cox was there in conference with Schofield and staff officers kept coming and going until the fighting began; that Stanley was there with Schofield and they were waiting for their dinner; that they told him there would be no battle that day because Hood would not attack breastworks but that after dinner they would ride on to Nashville together and the army would follow after dark.

Stanley and Cliffe had been schoolboys together in Wayne County, Ohio, and as Cliffe was a well known

Union man, it was supposed to be unsafe for him to remain in Franklin and he was invited to accompany Schofield and Stanley on their ride to Nashville. General Schofield has claimed that he scored a great success in his campaign against Hood and that this success was largely due to his intimate knowledge of Hood's character, gained while they were classmates at West Point, which enabled him to foresee what Hood would do and then make the proper dispositions to defeat him. At Franklin he relied so confidently on his ability to foretell what Hood's action would be that he not only wholly neglected to give any personal attention to the preparations for assault which Hood was making in plain sight of our front but he would not give any heed to the reports brought him by those who had seen these preparations. It was his belief, based on his intimate knowledge of Hood's character, that Hood was making an ostentatious feint to mask his real intention of executing a flank movement, for in a telegram to General Thomas, dated at three o'clock, Schofield informed Thomas that Hood was in his front with about two corps and seemed prepared to cross the river above and below.

He has tried to escape all personal responsibility for the blunder by the weak statement that he was across the river when the battle began. Even if that statement were true, and it is directly contradicted by the disinterested statement of Doctor Cliffe as well as by an abundance of other reliable evidence, both direct and circumstantial, there is no possible escape for Schofield from the inexorable logic of the situa-

tion. For two hours Hood was engaged in preparations for assault in plain sight of thousands of our soldiers. What was Schofield doing those two hours? If he saw anything of Hood's preparations he showed incompetence by his failure to promptly withdraw the two brigades from the blundering position to which he had assigned them. If he saw nothing of Hood's preparations, it was only because of a criminal neglect of his duty at a time when the perilous position of his army, with a greatly superior rebel army in its front and a river at its back, demanded his utmost vigilance.

It was said that General Stanley was sick but he spent the day with Schofield and he also, having had West Point experience of Hood's character, concurred fully in Schofield's belief that Hood would not assault. So great was their delusion in this respect that it could not be shaken by the reports made by their subordinates, and nothing short of the loud roar of the opening battle was able to arouse them into giving any personal attention to the situation. Then at last, when it was too late to do anything to remedy a blunder which already had gone so far that it must go on to its full culmination, Schofield and Stanley left the house of Doctor Cliffe. Stanley hurried to the front which he reached just as Opdycke's brigade was starting forward. Spurring his horse to the front of this brigade, he personally led it in its famous charge. A little later his horse was shot under him and he got a bullet through the back of his neck as he was rising to his feet. It was a flesh wound that bled freely, but Stanley declined to leave

the front until after the fighting was all over. He then went to the rear to have his wound dressed and after his departure Cox was the senior general on the battle-field.

When Stanley started for the front Schofield started for the rear, and the most charitable construction that can be placed upon his action is that he interpreted the sound of the firing to mean that the expected flank movement had begun and that his duty called him across the river to provide against that flank movement. His disturbed mental condition at that time is disclosed by the fact that he abandoned in the room of Cliffe's house, where he had slept, his overcoat, gloves, and a package containing the official dispatches he had received from General Thomas. These articles were not reclaimed until our army returned to Franklin after the victory at Nashville and in the meantime Mrs. Cliffe saved the coat from being taken by some needy rebel by wearing it herself and she also safely kept the gloves and dispatches.

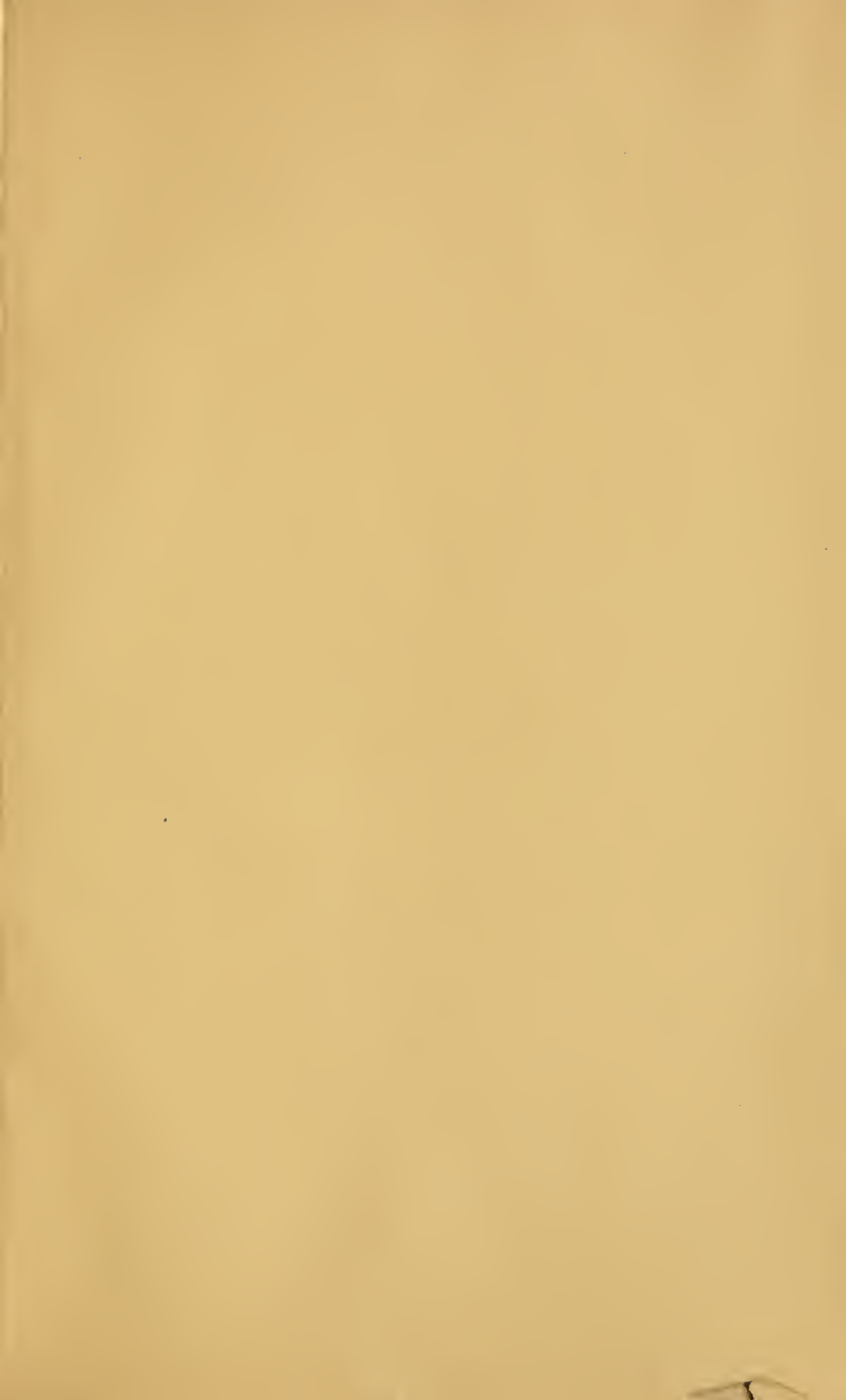
After crossing the river Schofield rode to the fort that had been built the year before on the high bluff which formed the north bank. From this elevated position he had a good view of a large part of the battle-field and the heavy guns in the fort were engaged in firing on the nearest flank of the enemy; but he was not only well beyond the range of every rebel bullet that was fired, but he was also so far away by the road which a staff officer must take to communicate with the firing line, that he was wholly out of touch with the troops that were fighting the battle. His presence in the fort had no more to do with the



repulse of Hood's assault than if he had been the man-in-the-moon looking down upon the battle-field. The only order that he sent from the fort was the order to retreat after the army had won a great victory. When this order reached Cox he made a manly protest against it. He explained the wrecked condition of the rebel army to the staff officer, who brought the order, and giving his opinion that retreat was wholly unnecessary, he urged the officer to return to Schofield and persuade him to countermand the order. He also sent his brother, Captain Cox, of his own staff, to remonstrate with Schofield, and to say that General Cox would be responsible with his head for holding the position. When Captain Cox reached the fort he found that Schofield already had started for Nashville. The Captain hurried in pursuit and, overtaking Schofield on the pike and delivering his message, was told that the order to retreat would not be recalled and must be executed. In Wagner's division we had been marching, or fortifying, or fighting for more than forty hours continuously, and believed that we had reached the limit of human endurance, but we still had to plod the eighteen weary miles to Nashville before getting any rest.

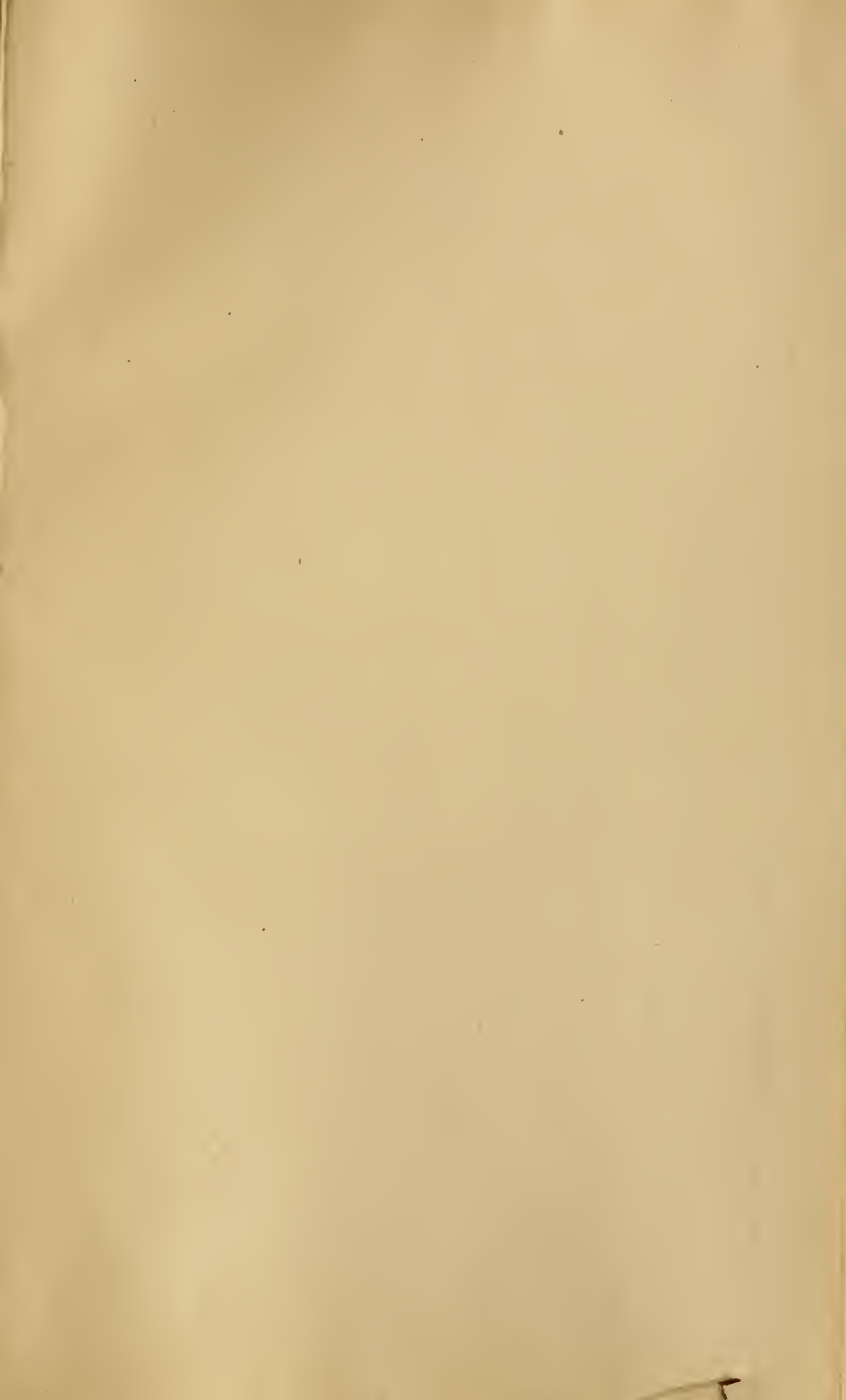
In January, 1865, Schofield, with the corps that he was then commanding, was transferred from Tennessee to North Carolina. When he passed through Washington en route he had the opportunity of giving to President Lincoln a personal account of his campaign in Tennessee. The president must have known in a general way, that at Franklin the rebel army had made a very desperate assault which had

been most disastrously repulsed, but he certainly was ignorant of the details of the battle, and in the absence of any information to the contrary, his natural inference would be that Schofield, as our commanding general, was entitled to great credit for that repulse. At that time the truth concerning Schofield's connection with the battle was known to a few men only and those who would have exposed his pretensions, if they had had any knowledge of what he was claiming, were all far away in Tennessee. The claim for distinguished services which Schofield succeeded in impressing upon "Honest Old Abe" may be fairly inferred from the very extraordinary promotion given him over the heads of many able and deserving officers—namely, from captain to brigadier-general in the regular army, to date November 30, 1864, with a brevet as major-general "for gallant and meritorious services in the battle of Franklin, Tennessee."



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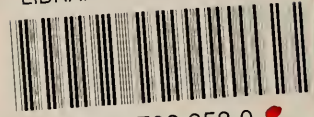








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