

**This account is excerpted from  
*A Sketch Of The Battle Of Franklin, Tennessee;  
With Reminiscences Of Camp Douglas***

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As soon as the lines of battle were formed, a number of our field officers rode out a little in front of the lines,—they were Walthall, Loring, Cheatham, Quarles, Cleburne, Granberry, and perhaps others; these officers appeared to hold a brief consultation, during which we could see them cast doubting glances in the direction of the formidable foe in our front; and judging from the appearance of their grave and serious looks, we all knew that our commanders in some degree realized the depth of that yawning gulf of destruction which awaited them and us, and which only too soon would engulf us all. These officers separated, each taking his respective place with his command. A profound silence pervaded the entire army; it was simply awful, reminding one of those sickening lulls which precede a tremendous thunderstorm. This was but momentary. Orders now rang down our line, shrill and clear, to forward march!

The guns from the redoubts northeast of the town opened on us at long range, but they were scarcely noticed by us. The artillerymen who were manning these guns had a fine opportunity of testing their skill at long range. Our progress at first was rather slow, on account of the obstructions just in our front, which consisted of the beech grove with the tops of the trees fronting us; but we surmounted this brush and fallen timber, and began to move a little faster. A light skirmish line from our lines of battle was thrown forward, which was soon met by a similar line from the Federals behind their advance line of intrenchments. These two lines quickly engaged in a lively skirmish fight, but as our lines of battle advanced, their line retired behind the line of works which they had recently left. Our line halted, lay down, and fired upon them in this position, until our lines of battle moved up close enough for them to join us, and become part of the front line.

We were now ordered to fix bayonets, fire, and charge the first line of works. They received us with a volley of musketry, but all opposition was inadequate to check our columns in the slightest degree, and with one prolonged and loud cheer we carried the first line of works at the very points of the Federal bayonets. They stood their ground until we mounted the top of their works, but as we went over, part of their line of battle broke and fled, while the remainder lay down flat on their faces in the ditch to save themselves, and were either killed or captured; but few of those who fled succeeded in reaching their main line. Our

lines of infantry swept over their works, annihilating nearly everything before us. This partial victory was quickly won. It appeared as if our troops had received an electric shock, which aroused their enthusiasm to its highest pitch, and the air resounded with loud shouts from our whole army, which almost made the earth over which we were going quake and tremble.

After taking this line of works, we made a momentary halt in order to reform our front line, but this was only for an instant; we now pressed closely at the heels of their retiring line, to storm the second. Their batteries immediately opened upon us with a perfect hailstorm of grape and canister, and when within a short distance of their main line, we encountered the abatis, or *bois d'arc* hedge, and also the line of *cheval-de-frise*; here the battery of thirty-six guns a little to our right, and that of twelve guns on our left, all double charged with grape and canister, pointing down our lines from both directions, thus enfilading them both ways from end to end, sent a tremendous deluge of shot and shell through our ranks, and these seconded by a murderous sheet of fire and lead from the infantry behind the works, and also another battery of six guns directly in our front, made the scene of carnage and destruction fearful to behold.

This hurricane of combustibles now burst forth in its height of fury, leaving ruin and desolation in its pathway, and nothing could be heard above the din of musketry and the roar of cannon, which was incessant. They fired on friend and foe, for we so closely pressed the retreating line in our front that had they waited for their own men to enter the works we would have gone over with them, and carried all before us. Whenever the dense smoke, in some degree, was cleared away by the flash and blaze from the guns, great masses of our infantry could be seen struggling to get over those ingeniously wrought obstructions, who were being slain by hundreds and piled in almost countless numbers. In the confusion which here ensued, numbers of our forces were thrown farther to the left and near the pike, forming a confused body of soldiers who were totally oblivious to all sense of order, thus giving the battery of thirty-six cannon on our right, the one of six pieces in our front, and that of twelve to our left, full play upon them. The firing of these guns was so rapid that it was impossible to discover any interval between their discharges.

The slaughtering of human life could be seen down the line as far as the Columbia and Franklin pike, and where the works crossed the pike the destruction was indescribable. Along that portion of the works in front of the batteries on the right, our troops were killed by whole platoons; our front line of battle seemed to have been cut down by the first discharge, for in many places they were lying on their faces in almost as good order as if they had lain down on purpose; but no such order prevailed amongst the dead who fell in making the attempt to surmount the *cheval-de-frise*, for hanging on the long spikes of this

obstruction could be seen the mangled and torn remains of many of our soldiers who had been pierced by hundreds of minie balls and grape shot, showing that they, beyond a possible doubt, had been killed simultaneously with the panic and consternation which happened upon their reaching this obstruction. The remnant of our lines succeeded in reaching the ditch on the outside of the works, and now became engaged in a hand to hand conflict across the top of the head-logs at the point of the bayonet. The smoke of battle belched forth from the hideous open mouth of this typical volcanic eruption cast a deep shade of gloom over that bright and lovely November eve, darkening the ether from earth to heaven, until a gentle breeze would lift and fan it away. The force and wind of the grape and canister, when fired from the fifty-four pieces of cannon on the Federal works, aided by that of the minie balls from their infantry behind the works, would lift us clear off the ground at every discharge. As the great clouds of smoke had to some extent vanished and I could look around me, I saw to my surprise I was left alone in the ditch, within a few feet and to the left of the battery of six guns on the Federal works, which was still pouring forth its messengers of death, and not a living man could be seen standing on my right; neither could one be seen for some distance on my left. They had all been swept away by that mighty tempest of grape and canister and rolling waves of fire and lead. A Federal, who was running in my front just before we entered the ditch, and a little beyond the reach of my bayonet, was shot dead from the works in front, and fell forward into the ditch; in his belt were two large army pistols, which were loaded and capped. I quickly removed them from his belt, and with one in each hand emptied them under the head-logs at the mass of men across the works in my front. The more our numbers became reduced the fiercer the conflict for life, simply too dreadful for pen to describe, and few who entered that portion of the ditch escaped death. When the pistols were emptied, having nothing with which to reload them, I reloaded my gun, and turned towards the embrasure of the cannon, which was a few feet on my right, and tried my best to shoot the artillerymen who were so skillfully and effectively manning that destructive battery, and whose gun swabs would whirl in the air after every discharge, but each time I obtained a glimpse of any of them, and before I could shoot, a cannon would run out and fire, forcing me to take refuge away from it. After getting my face blistered and eyebrows burned off, I abandoned that dangerous place by getting back away from the blaze of these guns.

Streams of blood ran here and there over the entire battle ground, in little branches, and one could have walked upon dead and wounded men from one end of the column to the other; the ditch was full of dead men and we had to stand and sit upon them,—the bottom of it, from side to side, was covered with blood to the depth of the shoe soles.

At the ditch we had to encounter an enfilading fire of musketry from both directions, as well as that in our front across the works under the head-logs. The enemy directly in our front attempted to shoot us by turning their backs to the breast works, taking their guns by the breach and raising them above their heads over the head-logs, so as to point the muzzles downward, firing them at us this way, and having nothing exposed except their arms and hands. We had to watch this and knock their guns aside with our bayonets, which was done several times; many of their men had both hands shot off while making these attempts to kill us. While this fearful battle was raging, a Federal officer on his horse, at the head of a line of infantry, came dashing up to the works in our front, and one of our soldiers in the ditch about ten feet on my left, raised his gun and fired, shooting him off his horse. Among the first whom I saw in the ditch, upon their feet and unhurt, were General Geo. W. Gordon, Lieutenant Colonel Atkins, commander of our regiment, and Captain Williams, of an Alabama regiment; they were only a few feet on my left. These men appeared to be undaunted, and a look of stoic determination had settled upon their weather-beaten faces.

South of the Columbia and Franklin pike our troops were in some degree successful in capturing part of the line of works; the Federals who survived this onslaught took refuge behind the works on the north side of the pike, in our front. Our numbers were too weak on that portion of the line to charge the position in our front with any hope of success; however, they succeeded in reaching the brick houses I have described. At the residence and in the yard of Mr. Carter his son was killed dead. He had not been at home for two or three years, and as he passed through the yard and stopped at the door his sister ran and caught him by the hand and attempted to throw her arms around his neck, when a Federal soldier, who had taken refuge in the house, ran up and shot him through the body, killing him dead in the arms of his sister.

General Quarles and Adjutant General Cowley, of our brigade, fell near the main line of the Federal works, the former wounded and the latter killed. General Pat Cleburne and his horse were killed while attempting to cross the works, the horse falling on top of the breast works and General Cleburne on the outside of the ditch; both rider and horse seemed to have received a missile of death at one and the same instant.

The color-bearer and color-guard of our regiment were all killed near the edge of the ditch; the last man of the color-guard was shot while waving the regimental colors at the breast-works, and fell forward, the flag reaching over within the Federal works, the staff resting across the head-logs. Some brave soldier of our little remnant quickly seized the staff, recovered the flag and carried it off the field. I regret never having learned his name. This deadly strife was destined to be of short duration; as our attacking columns were destroyed

and repulsed, the firing became less frequent, except from our batteries in the rear, which were kept active by the fearless and solitary few who survived this bloody encounter.

The carnage and destruction was so dreadful that the sun, as if loath to longer gaze on this terrific scene, slowly sunk behind the western horizon and hid from view his smiling face; but the stars, more pitying, came forth to keep vigil o'er the silent and sleeping dead.

As the firing from the enemy in our front began somewhat to abate, sixteen of our soldiers, who were in the ditch some twenty or thirty feet on my left, sprang up and ran out of the ditch, attempting to escape; a whole volley of musketry was fired at them, killing the last one to a man. When they started I raised in a stooping posture, thinking I would run also; but they being killed so quickly caused me to abandon the idea of escape. The few of us who were alive at the ditch were in considerable danger from our own batteries and stray minie balls. We tried to lie down in the ditch; it afforded scant protection, being almost full of dead men.

We now fully realized our critical situation, and saw that we had but one choice, if any, left, and that to surrender. Lieutenant Colonel Atkins was requested to surrender the little crowd, but declined, stating that he would rather die in the ditch than to surrender us. Some few of our soldiers, a little further on our left, raised their caps on ramrods, but they were fired upon and riddled with bullets, the Federals refusing to recognize this. Captain Williams then requested some one to hand him a white handkerchief, but not one could be found. One of our soldiers who was fortunate enough to have on a white shirt, tore off a large piece and handed it to him. The captain tied this on the end of a ramrod, and hoisted it over our heads so it could be seen by the Federals. A Federal officer ordered the troops in our front to cease firing, which they did. He came up to the works, looked over and said: "Throw down your arms, boys, and come over." I threw my gun and the two pistols as far back toward our lines as I could send them, and as I passed over the works glanced around at my fallen comrades who lay on the ground wrapped in the winding sheet of death, and drew a sigh of regret as I gave them a last sad look, knowing they never again would be aroused by the sound of the reveille from their deep untroubled sleep, but would remain in death's cold embrace until the last great trump shall sound and call forth the dead from the armies of both friend and foe.

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