

## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

tent. The first day the weather was cold and raw and this took much from our pleasure. We here in the West were waiting to see what General Grant was going to do. We believed he was proposing to try his hand at Richmond. Such glimpses are suggestive of the thoughts, the plans, the operations, and the situation of the Northern and Southern men, thousands of them then facing each other with arms in their hands and ready for other bloody experiences soon to come.

Not very long after this Sherman set us in motion against Johnston, and Grant in the East began his more dreadful campaign against the Army of Lee.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### ATLANTA CAMPAIGN; BATTLE OF DALTON; RESACA BEGUN

OF the respective commanders of the armies which were to operate in advance of Chattanooga, namely, of the Cumberland, the Tennessee, and the Ohio, Sherman was fortunate in his lieutenants. He writes:

"In Generals Thomas, McPherson, and Schofield I had three generals of education and experience, admirably qualified for the work before us."

Each has made a history of his own and I need not here dwell on their respective merits as men, or as commanders of armies, except that each possessed special qualities of mind and of character which fitted him in the highest degree for the work then in contemplation.

Certain subordinate changes affected me personally. On April 5, 1864, with two or three officers, I rode from my camp in Lookout Valley to Chattanooga, some eight or ten miles, and visited General Thomas. He explained that the order was already prepared for consolidating the Eleventh and Twelfth Corps into one body to form the new Twentieth, of which Hooker was to have command. Slocum was in Vicksburg, Miss., to control operations in that quarter, and I was to go to the Fourth Corps to enable Gordon Granger to take advantage of a leave of absence.



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

I was to gain under these new orders a fine corps, 20,000 strong, composed mainly of Western men. It had three divisions. Two commanders, Stanley and T. J. Wood, then present for duty, were men of large experience. A little later General John Newton, who will be recalled for his work at Gettysburg, and in other engagements, both in the East and West, an officer well known to every soldier, came to me at Cleveland, East Tennessee, and was assigned to the remaining division which General Wagner had been temporarily commanding.

I set out promptly for the new command, taking with me my personal staff. The Fourth Corps was much scattered, as I found on my arrival at headquarters in Loudon, April 10th. The first division (Stanley's) Thomas had kept near him. All through the winter it was on outpost duty along his direct eastern front, east of Chattanooga—two brigades being at Blue Springs and one at Ottowah; the third division (Wood's) had remained, after the Knoxville campaign, in the department of the Ohio, near to Knoxville.

Loudon was not far from the mouth of the Little Tennessee. Troops were held there to keep up communication between the two departments of Thomas and Schofield.

After the briefest visit to Loudon and assumption of command, I speedily moved the headquarters of this Fourth Corps to Cleveland, East Tennessee, fifty miles below. My first duty immediately undertaken was to concentrate the corps in that vicinity, inspect the different brigades, and ascertain their needs as to transportation, clothing, and other supplies. Part of the command, under General Wood, had been during the winter marching and camping, skirmishing and

## The Atlanta Campaign

fighting in the country part of East Tennessee, so that, as one may well imagine, the regiments coming from that quarter were short of everything essential to a campaign. Supplies were wanting and their animals were weak and thin.

May 3, 1864, Schofield having come down from Knoxville to complete what became Sherman's grand army, had, with his Army of the Ohio, already arrived at Cleveland. With us the preceding month had been a busy one. For both officers and men the discouragements of the past were over. Now, new life was infused through the whole body. Something was doing. Large forces were seen rapidly coming together, and it was evident to every soldier that important work was to be undertaken. On Sundays the churches were filled with soldiers. Members of the Christian Commission had been permitted to visit our camp and were still with us. Among them was D. L. Moody, the Evangelist, a noble soul, so well known to the country for his sympathy and friendship for men. His words of hope and encouragement then spoken to multitudes of soldiers were never forgotten.

I wrote from East Tennessee a few words: "I have a very pleasant place for headquarters, just in the outskirts of Cleveland. The house belonged to the company which owned the copper mill." Again: "We are drawing near another trial of arms, perhaps more terrific than ever. But, on the eve of an active campaign and battles, I am not in any degree depressed. . . . When it can be done, there is a quiet happiness in being able to say, think, and feel, 'Not what I will, but what Thou wilt!' . . . We are hoping that this campaign will end the war!"

With our left well covered by Ed. McCook's



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

cavalry, our Fourth Corps, at last together, emerging from Cleveland, commenced to move in two columns; the left passed through Red Clay and the other farther west by Salem Church. The morning of May 4th found us at Catoosa Springs. These springs were on the left of General Thomas's army lines. His whole front looked eastward toward Tunnel Hill. Tunnel Hill, Ga., was between the Northern and Southern armies, the dividing ridge; it was the outpost of Johnston's advanced troops, which faced toward Chattanooga. The bulk of his force was behind, at the village of Dalton, covered by artificial works northward and eastward, and by the mountain range of Rocky Face Ridge toward the west. The famous defile through this abrupt mountain was called Buzzard's Roost Gap. From Rocky Face to Tunnel Hill, which is a parallel range of heights, the Chattanooga Railroad crosses a narrow valley, passes beneath the hill by a tunnel and stretches on toward Chattanooga.

The Confederate official returns for April 30, 1864, gave Johnston's total force as 52,992, and when Polk's corps had joined a little later at Resaca his total was raised to 71,235.

Sherman, in his Memoirs, aggregates the Army of the Cumberland 60,773; the Army of the Tennessee, in the field, 24,465; the Army of the Ohio, 13,559; making a grand total of 98,797 officers and men, with 54 cannon.

As Johnston's artillerymen were about the same in number as Sherman's, probably Johnston's artillery, in its guns, numbered not less than Sherman's.

The Army of the Cumberland delayed in the vicinity of Catoosa Springs till May 7th, to enable McPherson, with the Army of the Tennessee, to get around

## The Atlanta Campaign

from Northern Alabama into position in Sugar Valley to the south of us and to bring down Schofield from East Tennessee to the east of us. He was located near Red Clay; that is, near Johnston's direct northern front. It will be seen that the Chattanooga (Western and Atlantic) Railroad, which passes through Tunnel Hill, Buzzard's Roost, and then on to Dalton, where it meets another branch coming from the north, through Red Clay, constituted our line of supply and communication. Thomas had early advised Sherman that, in his judgment, McPherson and Schofield should make a strong demonstration directly against the enemy's position at Dalton, while he himself with the Army of the Cumberland should pass through the Snake Creek Gap and fall upon Johnston's communications.

Thomas felt confident, if his plan were adopted, that a speedy and decisive victory would result. I believe that he, as events have proved, was right; but Sherman then thought and declared that the risk to his own communications was too great to admit of his throwing his main body so quickly upon the enemy's rear, and he then feared to attempt this by a detour of twenty miles.

Later in the campaign Sherman's practical judgment induced him to risk even more than that when he sent whole armies upon the enemy's lines of communication and supply; but at this time Sherman chose McPherson's small but stalwart force for that twenty miles forward and flanking operation.

The morning of May 7th my corps left camp at Catoosa Springs to perform its part in these operations. It led off, due east, along the Alabama road till it came into the neighborhood of a Mr. Lee's house.

Here, under my observation, a partial unfolding of



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Stanley and Wood, on Newton's right, stretched out their own lines to some extent, and gave Newton all the support they could in that difficult ground near the west palisades of the ridge. During the night his men dragged up the steeps two pieces of artillery, and by their help gained another 100 yards of the hotly disputed crest.

On May 9th another experiment was tried. Under instructions I sent Stanley's division for a reconnoissance into that horrid gap of Buzzard's Roost, until it had drawn from the enemy a strong artillery fire, which redoubled the echoes and roarings of the valleys and caused to be opened the well-known incessant rattle of long lines of musketry.

It was while making preparations for this fearful reconnoissance that a group of officers were standing around me, among them General Stanley and Colonel (then Captain) G. C. Kniffin, of his staff. The enemy's riflemen were, we thought, beyond range; but one of them, noticing our party, fired into the group. His eccentric bullet made three holes through the back of my coat, but without wounding me, and then passed through Kniffin's hat, and finally struck a tree close at hand. The group of observers speedily changed their position.

McPherson, now near Resaca, was not so successful as Sherman had hoped. Though there were but two Confederate brigades at that town, the nature of the ground was, for McPherson, unpropitious in the extreme. The abrupt ravines, the tangled and thick wood, and the complete artificial works, recently renewed, which covered the approaches to Resaca, made McPherson unusually cautious, so that the first day, after an unsuccessful effort to strike the railroad,

## The Atlanta Campaign

Johnston's main artery, he fell back to a defensive line near the mouth of the gap and there intrenched his front.

Just as soon as Sherman had received this news, he altered his plan and sent his main army, except Stoneman's cavalry division and my corps, by the same route. General Stoneman, with his force, had just arrived from Kentucky.

With this comparatively small force I kept up on the old ground a lively and aggressive work during Thomas's and Schofield's southward march with perhaps even more persistency than before; yet probably the withdrawal of Schofield from Red Clay by Sherman, and the replacement of his skirmishers by cavalry, together with the report that McPherson was so near to his communications, made the always wary and watchful Confederate general suspicious that something in the enemy's camp—that is, in my part of it—was going wrong for him.

Therefore, on the 12th he pushed a sizable force out northward toward Stoneman, and made a strong reconnoissance, which, like a handsome parade, I beheld from Newton's Ridge and which in the ravines and thickets and uncertain light was magnified to large proportions in the lively vision of our soldiers beholding it.

At first some of our officers feared that Johnston, letting his communications go, would attempt a battle, so as to crush my Fourth Corps. But soon the tide turned, and the tentative force retired within the Confederate intrenchments.

Under cover of the night ensuing, Joe Johnston, as he did many times thereafter, made one of his handsome retreats; no man could make retreats from the



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

front of an active, watchful enemy with better success than he. At daylight of the 13th I pressed my moving forces with all speed after the foe as boldly as possible, but was delayed all day by the enemy's active rear guard, the roughness of the country affording that guard successive shelters. It took time to dislodge the fearless hinderers, yet I did finally before dark of the same night succeed in forming substantial junction with Sherman, who, in person, having hastened on the day before, was at that time near McPherson on ground to the west of Resaca. Meanwhile, Johnston, with his main body, was obstructing, by his peculiar asperities, the roads to that town and getting ready for the next day's battle.

To show the costliness of such operations, in my corps alone there were already in the little combats about 300 wounded. My march following Johnston had been rapid and full of excitement. My mind had been bent upon the situation, watching against any sudden change; sending scouts to the right and left; getting reports from the cavalry in front, or beating up the woods and thickets that might conceal an ambuscade. After my arrival in the evening came the arrangement of the men upon the new ground; then the essential reports and orders for the next day; then followed the welcome dinner that our enterprising mess purveyor and skillful cook had promptly prepared. Here around the mess chest used for a table my staff sat with me and spent a pleasant hour chatting, and leisurely eating the meal, discussing events of the past day and the hopes of the morrow.

Of the movement at Resaca Joseph E. Johnston says: "The two armies" (Sherman and his own) "were formed in front of Resaca nearly at the same

## The Atlanta Campaign

time, so that the federal army could give battle on equal terms, except as to numbers, by attacking promptly, the difference being about 10 to 4."

There is evidently a great mistake in this statement. In all Confederate writings this claim of disparity of numbers is noticeable and difficult to be accounted for. General Polk had arrived and the Confederate army at this place was admitted by Hood to have been about 75,000. Sherman's force was at first, as we have seen, 98,797; then, diminished by a thousand casualties at Rocky Face and vicinity and increased by Stoneman's cavalry, which did not exceed 4,000, we had a new aggregate of about 101,797. It is difficult to understand how Johnston can make it anywhere near 10 to 4, or even 2 to 1, against him! It is well, however, to remember what we have before frequently noticed, that our opponents used the word "effectives," counting the actual number of men carrying rifles and carbines, plus the enlisted artillerymen actually with their guns; whereas our officers counted in all present for duty, officers and men, no matter how multitudinous and varied the details might be. It is plain, however we come to estimates, that the disparity between the actual armies was not very great at the battle of Resaca. We could not possibly put into line of battle, counting actual fighting elements, more than four men to Johnston's three.

On May 14, 1864, Polk, with the new corps, had already come up.

As always in this campaign, this Confederate army was promptly marched into position, and without delay intrenched. On the other hand, our forces approaching Resaca through the gap on the one side and from Dalton on the other, had to work slowly and care-



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

fully to feel for the enemy's pickets and for each other in that blind, rough, broken, wild, tangled, unknown region.

It was near twelve o'clock of May 14th before we had formed solid junction with each other, and, after that, the lines had to be changed while we worried forward. Sometimes long gaps between brigades troubled the division commanders, and sometimes an astonishing overlapping of forces displaced regiments as they advanced.

The 14th, then, was mainly spent by Sherman in placing McPherson on our right, near the Oostanaula, Schofield next, and Thomas on the left. My corps reached the railroad and formed Sherman's left, and was faced against the strong position of Hood. As the Conasauga beyond Hood bent off far to the east, it was quite impossible for my left regiments to reach that river, so that, after examining the ground, I was again forced to have the left of my line "in the air." But Stanley's excellent division stationed there, by refusing (drawing back) its left brigade and nicely posting its artillery, formed as good an artificial obstacle against Hood as was possible.

Sherman had instructed McPherson after his arrival from Snake Creek Gap, and just before the remainder of the army joined him, to work toward his right and forward, and make an effort to seize Johnston's railroad line near Resaca. To this end, during May 14th, several lively demonstrations were made by McPherson to carry out Sherman's wishes.

The importance of McPherson's capture of some heights, situated between Camp Creek and the Oostanaula, cannot be doubted, for that high ground manned with our guns spoiled all Confederate transit

## The Atlanta Campaign

by the railway and the wagon road bridges, and caused the Confederates to lay a new bridge of boats farther up the river.

General Schofield with his "Army of the Ohio," consisting of but one corps, the Twenty-third, fought near the center of our line.

It was worse and worse for Schofield (Judah's division) as he pressed forward. By the help of my troops, Cox's division was enabled to hold its ground. His soldiers acted as did McPherson's later at Atlanta: aligned themselves on the outside of their enemy's trenches and sheltered their front by making small trenches till help came. I remember well that swinging movement, for I was on a good knoll for observation. It was the first time that my attention had been especially called to that handsome, gallant young officer and able man, Jacob D. Cox. He was following his troops, and appeared full of spirit and energy as he rode past the group of officers who were with me. I was watching the movement so as to find where his lines would finally rest in order to support his left. This part of our work was exciting, for the air was already full of bursting shells and other hissing missiles of death. It was much like the first Bull Run, where my brigade was detained for several hours within hearing of the battlefield. I experienced the same feeling again here at Resaca while beholding from my high ground Cox's and Wood's divisions going so rapidly forward into battle. The noise was deafening; the missiles carried the idea of extreme danger to all within range, and the air appeared for the time as if doubly heated.

The effect was like that of a startling panorama of which one forms a part. There was a sense of danger,



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

deep and strong, relieved by a magnificent spectacle and the excitement of the contest. Such moments afford unusual glimpses of an extraordinary mental world, which leave impressions of interest and memory not easily explained.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### BATTLE OF RESACA AND THE OOSTANAULA

THE partial discomfiture of Judah's enterprising men early on May 14, 1864, brought to them one of my divisions (Newton's).

Newton steadily breasted the Confederates, driving them back and causing them heavy losses, and his men, counting out a few stragglers, kept their lines perfectly and behaved like old soldiers. Newton showed here his wonted tenacity. He secured all the ground he could gain by a steady advance, and, stopping from time to time, returned fire for fire, until the fierce artillery and rifle fusillade on both sides diminished to a fitful skirmish. Palmer's corps was doing similar work to my right.

Farther toward the left, over the rough ground east of Camp Creek, and amid the underbrush and scattered chestnut trees, I beheld my third division in line. Thomas J. Wood commanded it; covered by a complete skirmish front, every man and officer was in his place. He waited, or he advanced cautiously, so as to support Newton.

I came forward and was with him as his men advanced into place. The movement was like a dress parade. I observed Wood's men with interest. How remarkably different the conduct of his veteran soldiers compared with new troops! They were not, per-



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

haps, braver, but they were less given to excitements, and knew always what was coming and what to do.

I remember, when suddenly the enemy's skirmish fire began, Wood's main lines immediately halted and lay prone upon the ground. They returned the fire, but never too rapidly.

When Wood was completely ready, he caused a quick advance, drove back the enemy's skirmishers, and seized the detached rifle pits, capturing a few prisoners. Every Confederate not killed, wounded, or captured ran at once to his breastworks proper, and for a short time the fire of artillery and infantry from his main line was brisk and destructive enough. At last, Wood, by planting and covering his own batteries with epaulements, and by intrenching and barricading his men, was able to give back blow for blow.

Stanley's division of my corps came up by my instructions on Sherman's extreme left. His men and batteries were well located, as well as could be done with the whole left flank in air. Stanley endeavored, by his reserve brigade, and by his artillery carefully posted behind his lines, through its chief, Captain Simonson, to so reënforce his left as to make up for want of any natural obstacle. Though he protected the railway and the main Dalton wagon road, yet there was a long stretch of rough ground between Stanley's left and the Oostanaula; the bend of the river was so great that an entire corps, thrust in, could hardly have filled the opening.

Stanley had the same lively advance as the others, and was well up and in position before 3 P.M. of this day, May 14th. My secretary, Joseph A. Sladen (then a private of the Thirty-third Massachusetts Infantry,

## Battle of Resaca and the Oostanaula

afterwards my aid-de-camp and by my side in campaign and battle for twenty-three years) voluntarily did such distinguished service that day that he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. The coolness and courage of his example and, as he told me, equally energetic work of my brother, Lieutenant Colonel C. H. Howard, inspired panic-stricken troops to turn and repel fierce assaults. Johnson was quick to detect anything so tempting as a "flank in air," and so he directed Hood to send heavy columns against and beyond my left flank.

The front attack was handsomely met and the batteries well used, but Stanley, finding the turning force too great for him, sent word to me, then near Wood, that the enemy was rapidly turning his left.

Knowing the situation exactly, I took with me Colonel Morgan of the Fourteenth Infantry (colored troops), who was temporarily on my staff, and galloped to Thomas, fortunately at the time but a few hundred yards off. I explained to him the alarming condition of things on my left, and begged for immediate reënforcement.

Thomas (Sherman being present) directed Hooker at once to send me a division, and with no delay Hooker detached from his Twentieth Corps the veteran division of A. S. Williams. Colonel Morgan, acting for me, guided them as fast as foot troops could speed straight to Stanley's flank. The division came when most needed.

Deployed at double time at right angles to Stanley's line, instantly with the batteries Williams opened a terrific, resistless fire. The hostile advance was checked, the tide turned, and the Confederates were swept back and driven within their intrenchments.



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Our losses were great. In my corps that day 400 men were put *hors de combat*.

Next morning very early I reported for joint work to Hooker, my senior in rank. At his headquarters I learned what points of Johnston's line he intended to assail and I had him carefully describe to me the manner in which he would form his troops, and agreed with him how best to give him my prompt support.

At last, after some more irksome delays, everything was in readiness. Hooker's corps was drawn up in column of brigades—that is, each brigade in line, and one following another with no great intervals between them. My support was placed, at call, on his right and left. I was so to breast the enemy along my whole front that they could not detach brigades or regiments against Hooker; and, further, as Hooker gained ground, I had so arranged as to follow up his movement and aid him to seize and hold whatever he should capture. Besides all this, I had a clear reserve, which was kept ready for him in case of disaster or other extraordinary need. The ground in our front was very rough, appearing to our observation like detached stony knolls more or less covered with trees.

The noise of musketry and cannon and shouting and the attending excitement increased as the forces neared each other. Hooker appeared to gain ground for some time. His men went on by rushes rather than by steady movement. Two or three sets of skirmish trenches were captured before Butterfield's leading brigade had run upon a strong Confederate lunette.

After desperate fighting, the enemy, behind cover, would break Hooker's men back, only to try again. Finally, the latter seeing a covered position close by, a rush was made for it. Butterfield, aided by Geary,

## Battle of Resaca and the Oostanaula

secured it. So near to the guns and beneath a crest were the men that they by their fire almost paralyzed their use against our advance lines. These guns, however, at intervals did bloody work, using canister and shells against brigades farther off.

During this advance of Hooker, which, we confess, was not very successful and attended with loss, the Twenty-third Corps, or a good part of it, was brought over to aid Hooker and me at any instant when Hooker should make a break through the enemy's main line.

It is said one regiment, the Seventieth Indiana, sprang from a thicket upon the lunette and, as they came on, the Confederate artillerists blazed away without checking our men. They entered the embrasures; they shot the gunners.

In this effort Ward was badly wounded. Colonel Benjamin Harrison immediately took his place and gallantly continued the work.

The fire from intrenchments behind the lunette became severe, being delivered in volley after volley; too severe to render it proper to remain there; so that Harrison, getting ready to make another vigorous advance, drew back his line a few yards under cover of the lunette hill.

Here a color bearer by the name of Hess, One Hundred and Twenty-ninth Illinois, chagrined to hear the shrill, triumphant cry of the Confederates, at once unfurled his flag, swinging it toward them in defiance. He instantly fell, but other hands grasped the flag, and it came back only to return and wave from the very spot where its former bearer fell.

In the most determined way those four guns were now defended by the blue and gray, costing many lives; but there they stayed hereafter in the middle



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

space, unused by either party, till dark. The Confederates then made a bold charge to retake them, but our men promptly and successfully repelled the charge. Finally, the picks and spades were brought up by our soldiers, and our defenders dug their way to the guns. At last these costly trophies were permanently brought into our possession. The Confederate commander names this as an advanced battery of Hood's, put out beyond his front, on the morning of May 15, 80 or 100 yards.

We now know that Hood, in front of Hooker, had been constantly reënforced by Hardee and Polk, and that just as Hooker started his column Hood had pushed out his attacking lines, so that the first shock beyond the Confederate trenches was severe, each side having taken the offensive.

Finally, Hovey led a movement at double-quick, and encountered a dreadful fire, but succeeded in routing the Confederates' obstinate attacking column and driving it to its own cover; I was watching and my corps bore its part. Artillery and musketry had been kept active all along my front and strong demonstrations with double-skirmish lines were made for my center and right. We succeeded at least in keeping the Confederates from seizing any point on my ground. Brigadier General Willich was severely wounded in this engagement; Harker and Opdycke of Newton's division were also wounded, but able to remain on the field.

Sherman's aggregate loss in the whole battle of Resaca was between 4,000 and 5,000. Nearly 2,000 were so slightly injured that they were on duty again within a month. By referring again to the comments of the Confederate commander in his reports, we see that

## Battle of Resaca and the Oostanaula

the cause of his retreat is not ascribed to the persistent fighting which I have described. He says:

"It was because two (new) bridges and a large body of Federal troops were discovered the afternoon of the 14th at Lay's Ferry, some miles below, strongly threatening our communications, indicating another flanking operation, covered by the river as the first had been by the ridge."

By instructions from Sherman, McPherson had early sent a division of the Sixteenth Corps, commanded by the one-armed General Sweeny, to Lay's Ferry. He was to make a lodgment on the other bank of the Oostanaula and protect the engineering officer, Captain Reese, while the latter laid his pontoon bridge.

Sweeny found some force there which he dislodged; but, getting a report, which then seemed to him very probable, that the Confederates were crossing above him and would cut him off from our army, he withdrew and retired at least a mile and a half from the river; but the next day, the 15th of May, he made another attempt to bridge the Oostanaula, which was more successful. This time Sweeny had, after crossing, a serious engagement with a division which the Confederate commander had detached against him. In this Sweeny lost 250 men killed and wounded. Nevertheless, Sweeny, using his intrenching tools, established his bridgehead on the left bank of the Oostanaula, drove off the opposing Confederate force and opened the way for our cavalry to operate upon Johnston's communications.

We were up bright and early on the morning of the 16th. The sunlight gave a strange appearance to the smoke and fog among the tree tops. During our deep sleep between midnight and dawn a change had been



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

wrought. Not a cannon, not a rifle, not a carbine was over beyond our front there to give defiant shots. The tireless Newton was on the *qui vive* and, the first to move, his skirmishers soon bounded over the parapets of Hood to find them empty.

When my report at Resaca, that Newton occupied the abandoned trenches at dawn of May 16th, reached Sherman, he instantly ordered pursuit. One division of our cavalry, under Garrard, was scouting off toward Rome, Ga., so now the infantry division of General Jeff. C. Davis was hurried down the Oostanaula Valley, keeping on the right bank of the river, to support the cavalry, and, if possible, seize Rome and hold it.

Two bridges were already in good order at Lay's Ferry. Sweeny's division, as we have previously seen, was across the river, so that at once McPherson began his movement and pushed on southward, endeavoring to overtake the retreating foe. A few miles out, not far from Calhoun, McPherson's skirmishers encountered the Confederates, and a sharp skirmish speedily followed.

Johnston did not long delay in his front and yet he was there a sufficient length of time to cause McPherson to develop his lines, go into position, and get ready for action. The expected affair did not come off, for Johnston had other points demanding his attention.

The next morning, finding the enemy gone, McPherson continued his movement down the river road to a point—McGuire's Crossroads—which is about due west of Adairsville, and eleven miles distant.

Meanwhile, Thomas, with my corps and the Fourteenth, took up a direct pursuit. The railroad bridge over the Oostanaula had been partly burned, but a

## Battle of Resaca and the Oostanaula

rough floating bridge was quickly made from the timbers at hand.

My corps led in this pursuit; we also, just after McPherson's skirmish, began to exchange shots with Johnston's rear guard; we made during the 16th but slow progress.

General Stewart's Confederate division constituted Johnston's rear guard, which we were closely following. The severe skirmish of the evening was a brief one between Stanley's division and Johnston's line at Calhoun.

Early the next day (the 17th) our column, passing the enemy's empty works at Calhoun, continued the march; Newton's division, starting at half-past five, was followed by Stanley's. Newton took the Adairsville wagon road, while Wood, a little farther to the right, came up abreast along the railroad. I was near Newton. Our progress was continually interrupted.

As we neared Adairsville the resistance increased. Wood, sent by me across the railway, kept extending his skirmish line and strengthening it till it abutted against the enemy's main line west of Adairsville. Newton, under my immediate direction, east of Wood, did the same, deploying farther and farther to the left and doubling his advance line.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when Newton's men, rushing into a grove of trees, brought on from the Confederates a heavy fire. It was a little later than this when Sherman came riding up with his staff and escort and, joining me, led off to the highest ground. There he was observing with his field glass till he drew the fire of a battery.

The skirmishing on both sides had grown into brisk and rapid firing just as I was approaching Sherman,



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Newton and his staff with me. Our group, so large, attracted attention. A hostile battery of several guns was quickly turned upon us. The shells began to burst over our heads at our right and left. One of them disabled the horse of Colonel Morgan, my senior aid, another that of Colonel Fullerton, my adjutant general; Newton's aid, Captain Jackson, was wounded; two orderlies' horses were disabled, and still another horse belonging to the headquarters' cavalry was crippled. One piece of a shell in the air slightly wounded Captain Bliss, also of Newton's staff, carrying away the insignia of rank from his shoulder.

It was evident, as there was fighting along the front of two divisions—which had been increased and reinforced—that the Confederates were making a strong stand here at Adairsville; so we prepared for battle and I made haste to bring up my reserves for a decided assault. However equipped and supplied, it always required time to get an attacking column in readiness for action. Quite promptly the columns were in motion; but as soon as the vigorous movement was inaugurated, Thomas, then by my side, said to me that it was too near night for me to take the offensive. He advised me further to simply do what was needed to hold my position, and postpone, if possible, any general engagement till daylight the next morning.

One battery of artillery, however, drew another into action. Our batteries one after another were quickly brought up, and fired with their usual spirit and vigor. The sun went down upon this noisy, unusual, and bloody conflict, where probably both parties, could they have had their way, were really disposed to wait till the morning.

It was nine o'clock at night, and very dark, before

## Battle of Resaca and the Oostanaula

we could entirely disengage. Then the rattling musketry with an occasional boom of cannon continued further into the night, then gradually diminished to a fitful and irregular fire.

The losses in my corps resulting from this combat at Adairsville were at least 200 killed and wounded.

During the night the Fourteenth Corps came within close support, and McPherson moved from McGuire's so much toward Adairsville as to connect with Thomas's right flank. But there was no general action; the next morning at dawn (May 18th), I found that Johnston had made another clean retreat. The reason for it we will find by taking the map and following the movement of Sherman's left column. This column was Schofield's, reinforced by Hooker's corps. Sherman had sent Hooker to follow Schofield over the ferries that ran across the branches of the Oostanaula above me, because our new bridge at Resaca had not sufficient capacity for all, and probably, furthermore, to give greater strength to his flanking force.

The left column, setting out at the same hour with me, was obliged to make a wide detour eastward and to cross two rivers instead of one, to wit, the Conasauga and the Coosawattee. Schofield laid his bridges at Fite's and Field's crossings. The cavalry forded the rivers, these made two columns coming up beyond my left. Johnston heard during the night, by reports from his active cavalry scouts, that Hooker and Schofield were beyond his right and aiming for Cassville, thus threatening the Allatoona Bridge, which was to be his main crossing of the Etowah. He knew, too, that McPherson, as we noticed, had already turned his position on the other flank, and was resting between McGuire's Crossroads and Adairsville, and he



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

also had tidings that a division of cavalry, supported by infantry, was much farther west in the immediate vicinity of Rome, and that this column was likely to carry the weak forts there by assault, and so swoop up his foundries and important mills. Surely things were not favorable for a long delay at Adairsville. Unless the Confederate commander was prepared to take the immediate offensive against Thomas in the morning, his army would be before many hours hemmed in on every side. No wonder he drew off before such a day had dawned.

Judging by Confederate accounts, I am inclined to think that there was no complete report of losses on the part of the enemy. Johnston intimates that, as they fought mainly behind breastworks at Resaca, the loss of the Confederates, compared with ours, was not large. One who was present remarks: "A regiment was captured by Howard, and a few vagabond pickets were picked up in various places." Another declares that, besides the wounded, "prisoners (Confederate) at the hour I write, 9 A.M., May 16th, are being brought in by hundreds." On the 18th we were busy destroying the Georgia State Arsenal at Adairsville; we visited the wounded that the Confederates had the night before left behind, and picked up a few weary stragglers in gray coats.

All this show of success gave us increased courage and hope. It should be noticed that our Colonel Wright, repairing the railways, was putting down new bridges with incredible rapidity. When we were back at Dalton his trains with bread, provender, and ammunition were already in that little town. By May 16th, early in the morning, while skirmishing was still going on with the rear guard of Johnston, across

## Battle of Resaca and the Oostanaula

the Oostanaula, the scream of our locomotive's whistle was heard behind us at Resaca. The telegraph, too, was never much delayed. Major Van Dusen repaired the old broken line, and kept us constantly in communication with our depots and with Washington, and at Adairsville we received word from our commissaries at Resaca that there was at that subdepot, at our call, abundance of coffee, hard bread, and bacon.

Here, we notice, from Tunnel Hill to Adairsville, Sherman, in less than ten days, had experienced pretty hard fighting, but he had also overcome extraordinary natural obstacles which, according to writers in the Southern press, had been relied upon as impregnable against any enemy's approach, supported and defended as they were by the brave army of Joe Johnston behind them—obstacles such as Tunnel Hill, Taylor's Ridge, Snake Creek Gap, and the Oostanaula with its tributaries. True, the Confederate army was not yet much reduced in numbers, yet the spirit of the men, though not broken, was unfavorably affected by Johnston's constant retreats.

General Johnston was becoming every day more and more conservative and cautious. He continued to stand on the defensive; while under Sherman our more numerous men were pressing against his front, and moving to the right and left of his army with Napoleonic boldness.

Thus far we had experienced hardly a check, as, like heavy waves, these forces were rolling on toward the sea.

That morning, near Adairsville, in a little nook to the right of the road, while we were marching toward Kingston, we caught sight of a group of young ladies



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

standing on the green; they appeared somewhat nervous and excited on our approach.

In a courteous manner I accosted the one who had most self-possession, and who had stepped out in front of her companions:

"Young lady, can you tell me whose residence this is?"

She answered curtly: "It belongs to Captain Howard."

"Ah, Captain Howard! That is my name. My name is Howard. Perhaps we are connections."

She replied sharply: "We have no relations whatever North, sir!"

I then asked: "Is Captain Howard at home?"

She replied: "No."

"Where is he?"

"Captain Howard is with the Confederate army, where he ought to be."

"Ah, indeed, I am sorry! Where is that army?"

"I don't know anything about the Confederate movements. I told you, sir, that I had no relations North."

"Well, then, the blood of all the Howards does not flow in your veins."

At this time, turning to a staff officer, and within hearing of the group of young ladies, I remarked, as the sound of skirmishing reached our ears: "That house will make an excellent field hospital."

The speaker and her companions were frightened at this unexpected reply and ran to the house and appeared shortly after on the upper porch. Before we had left the premises, a middle-aged lady came hastily toward me, and besought me not to take her house for a hospital. I replied that I had been treated rather

## Battle of Resaca and the Oostanaula

cavalierly by the young people, and that my courtesy met only with rebuff.

"Oh, sir," she said, "you must not mind those girls. They talk flippantly!"

Fortunately for the family, there was nothing but a slight skirmish in their neighborhood, and the lovely house and other buildings near at hand, so prettily ensconced beyond the green in the grove of trees, were not used for the dreaded army purpose.

I have since found that this Georgia family remembered my visit, and had spoken highly of me, probably more highly than I deserved.

I have lately pleasantly met them at Atlanta. Prejudice has given way to time and change.

After leaving this place we proceeded to Kingston, where General Sherman had already established his headquarters, and where they were to remain during the few days' rest after Johnston's Confederate forces had crossed the Etowah.



## CHAPTER XXX

### BATTLE OF CASSVILLE

IN the forward movement from Adairsville, May 18, 1864, our three armies were a little mixed.

One division under the enterprising Jeff. C. Davis, with Garrard's cavalry, became detached from Thomas and went directly to Rome, and on the 18th drove out the small garrison of Confederates there; they captured some ten heavy guns, other war material, supplies of all kinds including a trainload of salt, and a few prisoners of war.

Johnston had fully determined to give Sherman battle at Cassville. To this end he had selected certain well-defined positions, which were most favorable, and covered them with the usual temporary intrenchments.

Places for artillery were carefully chosen by good engineers and artillerists, and epaulements set up for proper cover. Strengthened by a small reënforcement, he located Hardee's corps so as to meet all the Army of the Cumberland and of the Tennessee, which were likely to approach Cassville from the west or from the Kingston route; Polk's command in the center would meet Hooker's corps with sufficient force to hold him in check, and have strong enough reserve to strengthen Hood, who, on Johnston's extreme right, was directed to meet and withstand Schofield's army.

### Battle of Cassville

With regard to position at this time, Johnston had greatly the advantage of his adversary, because his troops were concentrated. He could move on inner lines. Sherman was coming in upon Cassville, after having his four columns greatly separated the one from the other. The nature of the country was such that it was next to impossible, before actual conjunction, for Thomas to send help to Hooker, and worse still for McPherson or Thomas to reënforce Schofield in a reasonable time.

But Sherman was so anxious for battle on the more favorable ground north of the Etowah, rather than upon the ragged country south of it, that he declared to his commanders as in his dispatch to Schofield: "If we can bring Johnston to battle this side of the Etowah, we must do it, even at the hazard of beginning battle with but part of our forces."

It is very evident that Johnston hoped to be able to dispose of Hooker and Schofield by striking with a superior force and crushing them before help could come. Johnston's intention to make an "offensive defensive" battle appears plain from his own language and the instructions that he gave. He says in effect after consultation with his engineer officer, who was questioned over the map in the presence of Polk and Hood, who were informed of his object, that he found the country on the direct road open and favorable for an attack; that the distance between the two Federal columns would be greatest when those following the railroad reached Kingston. Johnston's chief of artillery warned him that our artillery, planted on a hill a mile off, could enfilade his right. Johnston ordered traverses to be constructed, though he declared that such artillery firing, more than a half-mile away, could



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

do little harm, seeing that there were many protecting ravines.

My corps, as we already know, followed the wagon road nearest the railway, turning to the left of Kingston about 8 A.M., May 18, 1864. We had hardly passed through this much-scattered hamlet, when skirmishing opened southeast of the place. Pressing back the skirmishers, we delayed any positive action till about 11 A.M., waiting for other troops to come into position, when my command again took up the march.

Then, shelling the low ground, mostly covered with broad patches of thick underbrush and straggling trees, we moved slowly forward, forcing back the outer lines of the enemy. These obstinate divisions retired perforce, skirmishing all the time, to within two miles of Cassville; we now, with thick timber all around, appeared to be in front of the Cassville Confederate works.

Hooker's troops had done the same thing as mine, but on the direct Adairsville and Cassville road.

Palmer's corps, off to my right, had at least one division (Baird's) deployed.

About this time a deserter came into our lines and reported that Johnston had received reinforcements of 6,000 men. Just at this juncture we reckoned his forces to be fully 70,000 strong.

With reference to the Fourth Corps, which I commanded, the journal of Lieutenant Colonel Fullerton, my adjutant general, has given an animated account of the series of combats which took place between Kingston and Cassville:

"3.50 P.M., advance commenced. . . . The enemy was driven by us. We again took up the march in column, and again met the enemy one mile beyond

## Battle of Cassville

his first position at 5.30 P.M.; 5.40 P.M., General Sherman ordered General Howard to put thirty or forty pieces of artillery in position; to form two or three brigades in line of battle; then to shell the woods in our front vigorously, afterwards, to feel the enemy."

This was done. The journal continues:

"6.30 P.M., firing ordered to cease and skirmishers ordered forward, followed by main lines."

Here we connected with Palmer's corps on the right and Hooker's on the left.

"Now the line advanced, trying to move to Cassville; skirmishing very heavy, and progress slow."

At 7 o'clock, apparently within about one mile of Cassville, I halted my command in place, and all slept in line of battle that night. The day had been warm and clear, but the roads were very dusty.

In these exchanges of artillery shots ten of our men had been killed and thirty-five wounded.

The whole of Johnston's force was before us in Cassville. Johnston meant to strike Hooker before we got up. The enemy had strong rifle pits and works, and Johnston had published an order to his troops, saying that he would make his fight there; this was issued the night we arrived.

That General Johnston did intend and expected to make a stand here will be seen from the tenor of this order, which was as follows:

"SOLDIERS OF THE ARMY OF THE TENNESSEE: You have displayed the highest quality of the soldier—firmness in combat, patience under toil. By your courage and skill you have repulsed every assault of the enemy. By marches by day and by marches by night you have defeated every attempt upon your communications. Your communications are secured.



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

You will now turn and march to meet his advancing columns. Fully confiding in the conduct of the officers, the courage of the soldiers, I lead you to battle. We may confidently trust that the Almighty Father will still reward the patriots' toils and bless the patriots' banners. Cheered by the success of our brothers in Virginia and beyond the Mississippi, our efforts will equal theirs. Strengthened by His support, those efforts will be crowned with the like glories."

McPherson, under Sherman's orders, had also turned to the left toward us, and was close in support of Thomas's right.

It was, however, Schofield's cavalry, under Stoneman, some horse artillery being with it, that appeared off to the right and eastward of Hood's command during May 18th. It was decidedly to our advantage that the valiant and indomitable Hood was thus deceived by a force which dismounted and acted as infantry. Stoneman deserved special recognition from Schofield and Sherman for this good work.

Captain David B. Conyngham, who was present at Cassville as soon as we occupied that village, says three men of the Twenty-third Corps entered a house and were betrayed to a detachment of Confederate cavalry by some of the inmates. They barricaded themselves in the house and resisted several attacks. Just as the Confederates were setting fire to the house "a squad of Stoneman's cavalry heard the firing and hastened to the spot. The Union cavalry attacked the besieging party in the rear, soon putting them to flight, and so released their friends." Of course, one bird does not make a summer, but these three infantrymen may indicate the presence of more of the same sort near the cavalry of Stoneman.

## Battle of Cassville

With reference to the enfilading, Johnston spoke of the bare possibility of our enfilading him with artillery. The report of one of my officers, Lieutenant White, Bridge's Illinois Battery, says: "At 6 P.M. General Howard brought this battery, with others, into position, from which we were able to fire with raking effect upon the flank of the Confederate lines occupying Cassville, while their front was facing the attack of Hooker."

This operation took place, as we have before seen, the evening of May 19th, and will account for some of the serious impressions of Polk, if not of Hood, as they were subsequently evinced at their council.

This council doubtless indirectly caused Johnston's dismissal at Atlanta, and resulted in Hood's accession and his series of disasters and his ultimate complete discomfiture by Thomas at Nashville. It rendered possible the great "March to the Sea," and the more troublesome ordeals of the Carolinas, which ended in Bentonville and bore no small weight upon the operations in Virginia—those operations which closed the war. The details of that council show that Hood, believing his right flank hopelessly turned, had shown Johnston that his position at Cassville was absolutely untenable. Here is Johnston's account:

"On reaching my tent, soon after dark, I found in it an invitation to meet the lieutenant generals at General Polk's quarters. General Hood was with him, but not General Hardee. The two officers, General Hood taking the lead, expressed the opinion very positively that neither of their corps would be able to hold its position next day, because, they said, a part of each was enfiladed by Federal artillery. The part of Gen-



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

eral Polk's corps referred to was that of which I had conversed with Brigadier General Shoup. On that account they urged me to abandon the ground immediately and cross the Etowah.

"A discussion of more than an hour followed, in which they very earnestly and decidedly expressed the opinion, or conviction rather, that when the Federal artillery opened upon them next day, it would render their positions untenable in an hour or two."

Hardee's note is of interest. He wrote:

"At Cassville, May 19th, about ten o'clock in the evening, in answer to a summons from General Johnston, I found him at General Polk's headquarters, in company with Generals Polk and Hood. He informed me that it was determined to retire across the Etowah. In reply to my exclamation of surprise, General Hood, anticipating him, answered: 'General Polk, if attacked, cannot hold his position three-quarters of an hour, and I cannot hold mine two hours.'"

The results of this remarkable council appear in Johnston's concise statement which follows: "Although the position was the best we had occupied, I yielded at last, in the belief that the confidence of the commanders of two or three corps of the army of their inability to resist the enemy would inevitably be communicated to their troops, and produce that inability.

"Lieutenant General Hardee, who arrived after this decision, remonstrated against it strongly, and was confident that his corps could hold its ground, although less favorably posted. The error was adhered to, however, and the position abandoned before day-break."

In the fearful skirmishes which took place on

## Battle of Cassville

May 19th in the rough woodland between Kingston and Cassville, Kingston served as a field hospital.

Small tents were erected for the wounded, and for the many others who fell sick.

It is gratifying to think these comrades had double care from the faithful hospital attendants and from the Christian Commission. The delegate of the Commission would sit by the bedside of a young man and act as amanuensis; so that a last message, too sacred for publication, often found its way to a sorrowing household beyond the scenes of war.

The second day after Johnston's departure from Cassville and Cartersville, Georgia (May 22, 1864), was Sunday. Sherman had his headquarters, for railway convenience and to be accessible to all his commanders, at the village of Kingston. General Corse was at the time his chief of staff. Sherman and he occupied a small cottage on the south side of the main street.

While Sherman sat at the window, apparently in a deep study, occasionally transferring his thoughts to paper, he was interrupted by the sudden and then the continued ringing of the church bell. Thinking that some fun-loving soldiers or some of the already enterprising "bummers" were practicing with the bell, perhaps with a view to his annoyance, he told Corse to send over a patrol and arrest the bell ringers. My friend, Rev. E. P. Smith, representing the Christian Commission, had gone to the church and prepared it for service. Not being able just then to get anyone to help him, he was obliged to climb up to ring the bell, the rope having disappeared. As he dropped down he caught the bottom of his trousers and slit them to his waist. Just then a corporal with a file of



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

men opened the church door and said to him: "Fall in."

My friend said: "What for?"

The corporal answered: "To take you over there to General Sherman's headquarters."

Smith pleaded: "Can't go in this plight; take me where I can fix up."

Corporal answered: "Them's not the orders—fall in."

Corse, standing by the back door, received him and said:

"You were ringing that bell?"

"Yes, it is Sunday and I was ringing it for service."

Corse dismissed the guard and, as he stood in the doorway, he reported the case to Sherman, who stopped his work for an instant, looked up at Corse's face, and glanced over toward Mr. Smith as Corse said:

"It is Sunday and he was ringing the bell for service."

Sherman answered: "Sunday, Sunday! Didn't know it was Sunday; let him go."

That morning we had a church well filled with soldiers. I was present and enjoyed immensely the religious service conducted by my friend.

It was at my camp near Cassville that Sherman came to my aid in an unexpected way. It will be remembered how I had taken a radical stand with regard to strong drink, believing and insisting then, as I do now, that the poison of alcohol used as a drink is not only injurious to the mental and moral life of a soldier, but that, though it may be a spur in an emergency for an attack, it is always attended with so speedy

## Battle of Cassville

a reaction as to be detrimental to steady and persistent garrison or field work. Of course, I abstained from alcoholic drinks. This conduct naturally subjected me to constant remark by those who thought me extreme; and many were the criticisms promulgated at my expense.

A number of officers were having a chat in groups about my bivouac at Cassville on the morning of May 21st, when, it being about refreshment time, some officer proposed that the whole party go over to his tent, and have a drink all around.

General Thomas John Wood, one of my division commanders, eminent in war, undertook to rally me on my oddities and exclusiveness. He wound up by saying: "What's the use, Howard, of your being so singular? Come along and have a good time with the rest of us. Why not?"

Sherman interposed with some severity, saying: "Wood, let Howard alone! I want one officer who don't drink!"

There is a letter which I wrote from that Cassville camp, which, coming back to me, has in it some new items:

NEAR CASSVILLE, May 22d, 1864.

. . . I haven't written you for several days, and am not sure about this letter getting back, but will try and send it.

Charles (then Lieutenant, Colonel Charles H. Howard), Gilbreth (Lieutenant Gilbreth, aid-de-camp), Stinson (Mr. Blaine's nephew, captain and aid-de-camp), Frank (my secretary, Frank G. Gilman, of Boston), and myself are all well.

Instead of three days we have had some twelve or thirteen days' fighting. It is not always engaging our main lines, but heavy skirmishing. The Confederates have a rear guard of cavalry supported by infantry. They arrange barricades



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

of rails and logs along the line. When driven from one, another force has another barricade ready some half or three-quarters of a mile on. In this way they manage to check and hinder our march.

We have driven them across the Etowah, and are now resting and collecting supplies for further progress. You will possibly see accounts of our operations in the newspapers. We have had to charge or turn well-constructed breastworks, and at times the fighting has been severe. General Willich and Colonel (now General) Harker in our corps were wounded. We had quite a battle at Dalton, at Resaca, then at Adairsville, and lastly here, near Cassville.

A kind Providence has protected me and my staff in the midst of constant dangers. We have been fired upon by sharpshooters, small arms and artillery. Two or three have had their horses shot, and I had one bullet through my coat, but none of us have received any harm.

We are preparing for a march, and if you don't get a letter you must not think it strange, for communication may be much interrupted. I long to get this work done that I may return to you all, if God is willing. I do feel as though my work was not yet done, but we ought always be ready. . . .

The country this side of Resaca is very beautiful. Large, luxuriant farms, magnificent trees. It is no wonder our enemies are not starving in such a country as this. This is a pleasing change of scenery from the mountains near Chattanooga, and really of great practical benefit to the horses and mules; plenty of grass to eat. The people have nearly all gone away. . . .

God bless and keep you. . . .

How much we owed to our transportation! That well-organized railway performed wonders.

Before our three days' rest at Cassville was over, the railway that our enemy had destroyed had been constructed as far as Sherman's headquarters at

## Battle of Cassville

Kingston, and not only supplies of all kinds were giving the men refreshment, but letters from home were flooding our camps; for the mail service was keeping abreast of that of the road builders.

Home news and home cheer gave our hearts new courage and energy for additional trial and enterprise.

The forward march cut us off from communication, which, as I mentioned in my letter, was to begin May 24th. It required twenty days' supplies. We were to veer to the southwest and endeavor to turn Johnston's left flank. We must impede ourselves as little as possible with wagons, so as to move with celerity and strike quick blows. In the three days of rest, there was not much real resting. It was a busy command throughout. We hadn't much luggage before the halt, but, as Wood said, "We razéed still more." We distributed the food and rations, reorganized some commands, selected garrisons for Cartersville and Rome, and, in brief, stripped ourselves of all surplusage, and reëquipped every department for crossing the Etowah—that small stream just ahead of Schofield's head of column near the Allatoona Bridge, and within sight of other portions of the army from Allatoona to Rome, thirty miles west. The Confederate commander had not been idle. As always, "Joe" Johnston had instinctively apprehended just what our Sherman was planning as Sherman sat by the window at Kingston, "drumming with his pencil upon the window sill and thinking."

The decision, impatiently made by Johnston after the council with Hood and Polk on the night of May 19th, to retire behind the Etowah River, though conceived in vexation, was followed by prompt action. His army, led from the Cassville line straight to the



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Etowah, crossed that river in some haste near the railroad bridge.

After the crossing, and during the afternoon, the bridges, including the railroad structure, were disabled by fire.

On the night of the 20th Johnston had established his headquarters in citizen Moore's house, at which point Hardee also had his. This house was near the point where the railroad intersected the Allatoona wagon road, and about a mile and a half from Allatoona. The Confederate commanders remained there during May 21st and 22d.

Johnston, having passed the Etowah, disposed his army somewhat as follows: Facing northward, and occupying a rocky ridge south of that river, appeared his front line. On his right he placed the famous Wheeler, with his swift-footed cavalry in observation; on his left, General Jackson with his cavalry. The bulk of the Confederate army was to the rear, in and about Allatoona, concentrated, and ready for a sudden move.

On the 21st Johnston's extra supply trains were farther off, south of the Chattahoochee, while other wagon trains were collected nearer at hand, south of Allatoona, in the open country.

In addition to guarding the Etowah in his immediate front and his flanks, as we have hinted, Johnston placed an extended picket line along a tributary of the Etowah—Pumpkin Vine Creek. This positively indicates that as early as May 21st or 22d he at least suspected just the movement westward which Sherman was considering. Johnston was, indeed, as was usual with him, holding his entire army in observation, while Sherman was preparing to move to the

## Battle of Cassville

westward, so as to at least turn Allatoona. The Etowah, in Johnston's front, it is true, concealed to some extent Sherman's movements, so that it was difficult for the Confederate commander to keep the national forces under the close observation which the situation from his standpoint required; therefore, Johnston was continually probing and feeling for the movements of his adversary. For example, on May 22d he ordered Wheeler to cross back with his cavalry five or six miles to his (Wheeler's) right, and to push on toward Cassville, with a view to gathering reliable information. There were so many contradictory stories! Wheeler managed somehow to get over the river, marched rapidly to Cassville, and here, on May 24th, seized a wagon train carelessly left behind, the last of Sherman's supply.

The important fact was that Wheeler brought back the information he was after. He reported that Sherman's army was in rapid march, and he showed to Johnston the direction it had taken. Wheeler's report that the Union forces were moving westward, as if to cross the Etowah at Kingston, had been anticipated by Confederate Jackson's cavalry; while Wheeler was marching toward Cassville, Jackson, with his cavalry, on the Confederate left, had discovered Sherman's march toward the bridges laid near Stilesboro, and had seen Union forces already crossing the river there. This news came promptly by signals the morning of the 23d. Surely Allatoona was to be turned, and not attacked in front as Johnston had greatly hoped.

On the receipt of these tidings, he grasped the entire situation. Swiftly and energetically he made his dispositions to meet Sherman's new moves. In fact,



on the 23d, before Wheeler's return, he had ordered Hardee to march at once by New Hope Church to the road leading from Stilesboro through Dallas to Atlanta. Polk was directed to go to the same road by a route farther to the left, and Hood was to follow Hardee's march the day following.

By the 25th, Sherman's army, still in motion, was pushed southward toward New Hope and Dallas. McPherson's army, increased by Davis's division, coming from Rome, was well to the right, near Van Wert. From here Davis took an eastern country road and joined Thomas, who kept the main road as far as Burnt Hickory, passing through a strange land, a country desolate and uninhabited. It seemed like forests burned over, with here and there an opening. There were innumerable knolls of light soil, dotted with half-burned trees, almost without limbs, every shape and size.

The march from the Etowah was a sad and gloomy one, possibly ominous. At Burnt Hickory, Thomas sent Palmer with his and me with my corps off toward the right to catch somewhere the Van Wert and New Hope road, while Hooker went on straight toward the same destination by the main highway, using wood and farm roads as far as he could to help forward his divisions. Ed. McCook's cavalry was a little in advance of Hooker, well spread out.

Schofield, farther to the left, with his cavalry under Stoneman cared for the left flank, and moved southward more slowly.

Garrard, on the right, with his troops of cavalry, had pressed back the Confederate horse toward Dallas, and discovered the left of Johnston's new line; Garrard kept within easy reach of McPherson.

It was a terrible country, as hard to penetrate as the Adirondacks, where Johnston chose his position. Hardee was put at Dallas, Hood at New Hope, and Polk between them, nearer to Hood than Hardee, causing some thin lines.

Yes, there was here great natural strength like that of Culp's Hill at Gettysburg and worse than any of the Antietam banks; and every hour made and increased the log barricades and earth embankments covered and concealed by abatis and slashings. Johnston's commanders were never better prepared for a defensive battle than on our steady approach in strong columns.

Personally, I would have been glad then to have known that rough, blind country and our enemy's position as well as we all do now.

The character of the country traversed, and the rapidity with which our army moved, gave strong indication of its excellent *morale* and of its physical strength. Abundant was its confidence in itself—a confidence born of its prowess in the bloody encounters of the campaign thus far.

The Confederates were also confident as they prepared for another stand, here in a dense forest, and there in broken ground, while they were deployed along the new front.

Johnston's army had had the same advantage of rest that we had, and from the fearless and obstinate stand made so soon after the depressing effects of the retrograde movement and our successes, it would seem as if its spirit was equal to any emergency.

Part of Hood's front was, by the time the Yankees came, even better prepared than the rest. We knew from past experience that now it did not take the



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Yankee or Confederate very long to thoroughly cover himself by some sort of barricade or intrenchment. Notwithstanding all this, a few commands had little protection when the battle began, those especially who came out to meet us as far as the famous Pumpkin Vine Creek.

On the morning of the 25th Ed. McCook's cavalry, in front of Burnt Hickory, had ventured beyond that creek and captured a dispatch from Johnston to Jackson. This informed Sherman that some Confederate troops were still in motion toward Dallas. This news led Sherman to hold back his left for a short time, till the army of the Tennessee could come well forward on the right.

All the columns were thus making a partial wheel, so as to arrive substantially parallel with Pumpkin Vine Creek. Hooker kept advancing his three columns along or not far from the direct Dallas road. The two corps, Palmer's and mine, had made a considerable detour that morning, hoping to reach the Van Wert-Dallas road about three or four miles from Dallas. The skirmishing had begun. When Geary's division (Hooker's center) had come forward and was near Owen's Mills, he found the enemy's cavalry engaged in burning the bridge which crossed Pumpkin Vine Creek. Geary, with Hooker's escorting cavalry and infantry, drove the hostile cavalry off, extinguished the fire, and crossed his command. Hooker now began to believe that the enemy held his strongest force near New Hope Church, and so he ordered Geary to take the fork of the road leading that way.

Pressing on, on the top of a rising ground, Hooker first encountered the infantry of Hood. Here our men met a stubborn resistance. Geary had to

## Battle of Cassville

strengthen and greatly extend his line, and, as Geary was apt to think, he believed that he was dealing with a much larger force than that actually before him. The combat that suddenly came on was sharp and lasted half an hour. There were brave charges by Geary's men, and fierce countercharges by the Confederates, which were repulsed by Candy's Union brigade, that had been deployed. Our men finally made a steady advance till they stood upon another ridge opposite that on which Hood had aligned his forces. Geary had at last driven the advance back. Geary, as was customary with us all, made hastily such shelter as he could for his troops, using logs for temporary cover, behind which he might with comparative safety await the Confederates' further development.

As soon as Sherman heard the firing he hastened to the front. He ordered Hooker to bring his two remaining divisions, Williams's and Butterfield's, promptly into position. He declared that an attack by Hooker should be made at once. By this Sherman undoubtedly wished to develop the force in his immediate front before darkness set in. The time of the approach of the new forces is somewhat in question. Thomas reported their arrival as 3 P.M., but Geary about 5 P.M. Thomas probably referred to heads of column and Geary to the complete arrival.

At any rate, the whole corps was assembled by the latter hour. Hooker used it as at Resaca, by deploying it into heavy columns of brigades, and then moved almost *en masse* with a narrow front to the attack. It was a shock; a quick attack made through a wood, greatly obstructed by a dense undergrowth. This bothersome timber generally covered the slopes on either side of the valley.



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Hardly had Hooker's advance struck the obstructions when not only the iron hail but a *rainstorm* with terrific thunder broke upon the contending forces. The loud, crashing noise of the thunder did not, however, drown the rattle of musketry and roar of cannon. Through all the dreadful tempest the loud and ominous sounds of battle penetrated to the columns marching from the rear. They resounded even as far back as Burnt Hickory, and told of the phenomenal conflict raging in front. Soon after the thunder a most abundant deluge of rain followed, which continued falling all through that long night. From 5 P.M. until 6 the attempts to force Hood's line were several times made by Hooker's corps alone. By the latter hour one division of my Fourth corps, moving *au canon*, was brought up to Hooker's support. The entire corps through rain and mud was coming forward as fast as it could to Hooker's left, and getting into position as soon as possible; the leading division (Newton's) arrived first, and the rest of the command, somewhat delayed by the mass of Hooker's wagons stretched along the roads, fetched in at last. All that evening and far into the night we assaulted Hood's works again and again; we tried amid the storm to dislodge his troops, but in vain. In the face of sixteen Confederate pieces of artillery using canister and grape, and the musketry of several thousand infantry at close range and delivered, much of it, from behind breastworks, it became simply impossible even to gain a foothold anywhere upon the enemy's barricades.

I was near the head of my column, and so came up to Hooker before six o'clock. At his request, before I saw General Thomas, I deployed one division, ac-

## Battle of Cassville

cording to Hooker's desire, near his left, and abreast of his troops. The firing from the enemy's cannon along the line and the constant discharges of the Confederate rifles wounded or killed some of Hooker's men and mine at every discharge. In spite of the danger, however, camp fires soon began to appear here and there as the darkness came on. These still more drew the enemy's artillery fire, and for some time increased the danger. Still, the chill of the night and the wet clothing called for fires. At last there was a lull in the battle, though not an entire cessation from cannon and rifle firing. Then you could see the torches borne by ambulance parties as they went hither and thither, picking up the wounded and bearing them to the rear. As soon as I could get my several commands in hand and arrange for the reliefs of working parties along our exposed front, I went back a short distance to the little church, which was used for a hospital. The scene in the grove there and in the church can never be forgotten. There were temporary operating tables with men stretched upon them; there were diligent medical officers, with their attendants and medical helpers, with coats off and sleeves rolled up, and hands and arms, clothes and faces sprinkled with blood. The lights outside and in were fitful and uncertain; smoky lights, for the most part, from torches of pine knots. It was a weird, horrid picture, and the very heavens seemed to be in sympathy with the apparent confusion. It was hard to distinguish between the crashing of the thunder, the sound of the cannon, and the bursting of shells. The rain never ceased to pour during the night. At one time, as I went out, I met General Schofield, who, in spite of a severe injury to his leg, caused by the



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

stumbling of his horse against a tree, had come to offer Hooker and me his assistance. As I now look back upon the whole affair at New Hope Church, I wonder that we did not approach those well-chosen Confederate lines with more caution. But we did not know. We thought that the Confederates were not yet thoroughly prepared, and we hoped that by a tremendous onslaught we might gain a great advantage, shorten the battle, and so shorten the war.

I am glad that military knowledge now insists on thinner lines. Brigade line following brigade line produced awful results. There a single bullet would often kill or wound six men, on account of the depth of such a column of brigades; and who can tell the destruction of a single cannon shot or shell in bursting, whose fragments, fan shaped, went sweeping through every rank from front to rear!

To us military folk it is interesting to note the advantage of thin lines, when soldiers are well trained and well handled.

As must have been noticed in all these accounts of combats during the series of marches and battles, the skirmishers were more and more used as the campaign progressed. It was always, when taking the offensive, a wise thing to do, to increase the skirmish line enough to give the men confidence, and then push forward till a waiting enemy—one in defensive position—was sufficiently revealed to enable the commander to determine his next order. On the defensive, a skirmish line well out, and admirably located, would bother an approaching foe as much as a battle line, and at the same time lose but few lives. The breech-loading arms and magazine guns now make thin exposed lines an imperative necessity. Our double

## Battle of Cassville

skirmish order has indeed become a veritable line of battle.

By vigorous skirmishing, putting batteries in place and into action and constant threats of advance, the Confederates were kept all the night, like ourselves, on the watch.

By morning not a few but many logs were piled up in barricades, and as much dirt as possible thrown beyond them. Neither of us had a "stomach" for attack or for battle at that time. Hood and Hooker were willing to wait.



## CHAPTER XXXI

### BATTLE OF PICKETT'S MILL

THAT was a stubborn fight at New Hope Church on May 25, 1864. Hooker's corps, as we have seen, supported by the greater part of my corps, endeavored to break Johnston's line near its center. Sherman had hoped to seize the railroad south of Allatoona Pass, toward Marietta, and hold it; but he found the works in his front too strong. His enemies had ample time during their resting days and in the night after Hooker's bold charges to make these lines next to impregnable. It therefore became necessary to adopt some other means of gaining the end in view. Johnston's forces extended nearly parallel to ours between four and five miles, from near Dallas on his left to the vicinity of Pickett's Mill on his right.

Sherman, after this last bloody battle, returned again to his tactics of moving by the flank; the next movement contemplated was to gain ground toward our left.

Thomas and Schofield, with the majority of their troops, were engaged in completing their deployments extending from McPherson, near Dallas, toward Johnston's right, and this unfolding brought us steadily nearer to the railroad at Ackworth. The marching of all moving columns had to be in rear of our front line, which was at all times in close contact with the enemy

### Battle of Pickett's Mill

—so close, in fact, that there was a continual skirmish fire kept up.

Johnston seemed to discern the nature of this new plan of ours as soon as it was undertaken. He firmly believed that Sherman was feeling for his right. He therefore withdrew Polk, who was located at his center, and marched him parallel to those of us who took up the movement, always keeping time and pace with our march to the left. Then began and continued for a considerable time a race of breastworks and intrenchments.

The race of trenches was well on by May 27th. In accordance with the plan of our leader, one division of my corps, Wood's, and one of the Fourteenth, R. W. Johnson's, were drawn back from the fighting line, and early on the morning of the 27th started on their leftward march. These two divisions constituted a detachment, and I was sent in command.

All day we plodded along pretty far back, but within sound of the skirmish firing of the front line. The march was over rough and poor roads, when we had any roads at all. The way at times was almost impassable, for the "mud forests" closed us in on either side, and the underbrush shut off all distant objects. On we marched till 4.30 in the afternoon, when we reached the vicinity of Pickett's Mill.

Our march, necessarily somewhat circuitous, had during the day been often delayed for the purpose of reconnoitering. Wood would send his advance to skirmish up quietly toward the supposed Confederate lines, and when near enough, officers with their field glasses would make as close observations as the nature of the thickets or more open fields would permit.

At this time, nearly an hour before the final halt



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

and the direct preparation for a charge, I was standing in the edge of a wood, and with my glass following along the lines of Johnston, to see where the batteries were located and to ascertain if we had reached his limits. My aid, Captain Harry M. Stinson, stepped boldly into the opening. He had a new field glass, and here was an excellent opportunity to try it. I had warned him and the other officers of my staff against the danger of exposure, for we were not more than 700 yards from the hostile intrenchments.

Stinson had hardly raised his glass to his forehead when a bullet struck him. He fell to the ground upon his face, and as I turned toward him I saw that there was a bullet hole through the back of his coat. The missile had penetrated his lungs and made its way entirely through his body. I thought at first that my brave young friend was dead, and intense grief seized my heart, for Harry was much beloved.

After a few minutes, however, by means of some stimulant, he revived and recovered consciousness. He was taken back to camp, and soon sent to Cleveland, Tenn., where good air and good nursing brought him so near to recovery that he joined me again during this campaign at Jonesboro. "I think Harry Stinson was the most unselfish man I ever saw," was the remark of another of my aids, Captain J. A. Sladen.

Wood's division was at last drawn out of the marching column and formed in lines of brigades facing the enemy's works, one behind the other; while R. W. Johnson's division passed beyond Wood's and came up near his left for support. This was far beyond Schofield's left. Wood touched a large clearing, turned to the southeast, and moved forward,

## Battle of Pickett's Mill

keeping in the edge of the clearing, toward what would be the natural extension of Johnston's lines.

Pushing quickly through the undergrowth, Wood rectified his formation. Coming to me about 5.30 P.M., he said:

"Are the orders still to attack?"

Fully believing, from a careful study of the whole position, that we had at last reached the end of Johnston's troops, I answered:

"Attack!"

The order was promptly obeyed. The men sprang forward and made charges and a vigorous assault.

I found Johnston's front covered by strong intrenchments. A drawing back of the trenches like a traverse had deceived us. Johnston had forestalled us, and was on hand fully prepared. In the first desperate charge, Hazen's brigade was in front. R. W. Johnson's division was in echelon with Wood's, somewhat to its left. Scribner's brigade was in that front. The plan had been, though not carried out, that McLean's brigade of Schofield's command, which was the intended support on our right, should show itself clearly on open ground, attract the attention of the enemy to that part of the line, while Wood and Johnson moved upon what was supposed to be the extreme right of the Confederates' position.

In this conflict Wood, the division commander, during this gloomy day met with a loss similar to mine. An officer, Major J. B. Hampson, One Hundred and Sixty-fourth Ohio, aid to General Wood, to whom he was personally greatly attached, was struck in his left shoulder by a musket ball, which broke the spine and ended his life in a few hours. He was a general



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

favorite, and his death produced unfeigned sadness among his comrades.

Wood had always seemed to me masterful of himself and others who came in contact with him; he had a large experience in such battles as Stone River and Chickamauga. I was therefore unprepared to see him on this occasion exhibit stronger feeling than any of us. For a few minutes, sitting beside his dying friend, he was completely overcome. It has appeared to me at times that the horrors of the battlefield had hardened men; but these cases of exceptional affection served to confirm the expression: "The bravest are the tenderest!"

When the advance was made, our men pushed rapidly forward, driving the opposing skirmishers before them. As Hazen pressed on, the left of his brigade still seemed to overlap his enemy's right, and everything appeared to indicate that our tedious march was to conduct us to a great success. But, while Hazen and the remainder of Wood's division were gaining ground, Johnson's division, which was at Hazen's left, was going on toward Pickett's Mill. This was situated on a branch of the Pumpkin Vine Creek. Here the leading brigade received quite a severe fire against its left flank, and was compelled to face in the new direction, and so stopped the whole division from moving up abreast of Hazen. This halting and change left Wood's division completely uncovered, and, worse still, Wood was now brought between a front and flank fire. It did not take long to discover that what we had supposed was the end of the Confederate intrenched line was simply a sharp angle of it. The breastworks where Hazen's devoted men first struck them were only trending to the Con-

## Battle of Pickett's Mill

federate rear. Wood's men were badly repulsed; he had in a few minutes over 800 killed.

While this attack was going on, Newton's and Stanley's divisions of my corps near New Hope Church were attempting to divert attention by a strong demonstration, but the Confederates there behind their barricades did not heed such distant demonstrations. The whole engagement, an hour long, was terrible. Our men in this assault showed phenomenal courage, and while we were not successful in our attempt to turn the enemy's left, which, as a matter of fact, we had not yet found, nevertheless considerable new space was gained, and what we held was of great importance. As soon as Wood's division had started, the enemy shelled our position. A shell after striking the ground to my left threw the fragments in different directions. One of these struck my left foot as I was walking forward. It cut through the sole of my boot and through the up-leather and badly bruised me. My foot was evidently lifted in walking—but the boot sole was very thick and somewhat protruded and so saved me from a severer wound. For the instant I believed I had lost my leg, and was glad, indeed, to find myself mistaken. There, wounded, I sat among the maimed till after midnight; meanwhile I was reorganizing broken lines and building forts and lines of obstruction.

During the war a few sad scenes impressed me more than any others. One was the field after the battle of Gettysburg. A second scene was the battlefield of Antietam. But these things, not happy to relate, were matched at Pickett's Mill. That opening in the forest, faint fires here and there revealing men wounded, armless, legless, or eyeless; some with



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

heads bound up with cotton strips, some standing and walking nervously around, some sitting with bended forms, and some prone upon the earth—who can picture it? A few men, in despair, had resorted to drink for relief. The sad sounds from those in pain were mingled with the oaths of the drunken and the more heartless.

I could not leave the place, for Colonel C. H. Howard and Captain Gilbreth, aids, and other officers were coming and going to carry out necessary measures to rectify our lines and to be ready for a counter attack of the Confederates, almost sure to be made at dawn.

So, for once, painfully hurt myself, I remained there from 8 P.M. to participate in that distress till about one o'clock the next morning. That night will always be a sort of nightmare to me. I think no perdition here or hereafter can be worse.

Is it not an argument in favor of every possible arbitration? After our tedious night's work, my fortifying in the enemy's front had rendered an attack at daylight by Johnston useless.

The character of the country gave us more openings in the forests on all approaches to Dallas than at New Hope or Pickett's Mill. Still, the greater part of the Confederate front was strung along threading a rugged forest country, with excellent positions for artillery, and rough ridges which were easily fortified and hard to take.

Hardee, at Dallas, had in his vicinity a "grand military position," which it would do a West Pointer good to survey—well chosen, well manned by the best of troops thoroughly seasoned in war.

McPherson, opposite Hardee, had just now not more

## Battle of Pickett's Mill

than 20,000 men, for Blair's troops, marching at the time from the Far West, had not yet joined him. But Davis's division of the Fourteenth Corps (about 5,000 men) was sent back by Sherman to strengthen McPherson's command, because McPherson was so widely separated from the rest of us.

From Van Wert, McPherson had hastened on, with Dodge's corps in the lead. Dodge never said much in advance of what he proposed to do, but he was a most vigorous commander and inspired the men who served under him with his own energy. Well protected by skirmishers, he now approached the Pumpkin Vine Creek, and encountered the enemy's skirmishers and advance guards and drove them steadily back.

During May 25th, while Thomas was assailing Hood at New Hope Church, Jeff. C. Davis, prompt, systematic, and active, extended and thoroughly protected Dodge's left at Dallas. Meanwhile, John A. Logan, commanding the Fifteenth Corps, had taken on the inspiration of fighting—like a horse just ready for battle—and was veering off to the right of Dodge.

On Logan's right, clearing the way, and, like the cavalry opposite, securing all approaches and occupying as much attention as possible, was Garrard's cavalry command.

Logan was intensely active on the approach of battle. His habitual conservatism in council was changed into brightness, accompanied with energetic and persistent activity.

Dodge, as he left him, was moving along in a column, and the cavalry, assisted by Logan's artillery, were noisily driving in the enemy's light troops far off to the right beyond the crossroads at Dallas.

Logan's and Dodge's advance, substantially two



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

heavy skirmish lines acting conjointly, with some artillery protected by cavalry, drove everything before them for about two miles.

While the battle of Pickett's Mill was fiercely going on, both Logan and Bate kept up between them artillery firing and skirmishing. In the afternoon of that day a stronger demonstration was made by the Confederate General Bate. This demonstration was promptly checked by Dodge crossing Pumpkin Vine Creek, and pushing forward until he had cleared his entire front up to Hardee's works. From that time on there was no peace between those opposing lines, for skirmishers and artillery were busy and noisy all the time on both sides.

In his general movement to the left, Sherman had ordered McPherson to relieve Davis and send him back to Thomas, and McPherson was preparing to do so and to close his army in to the left, when he sent the following dispatch to Sherman:

"We have forced the enemy back to his breast-works throughout nearly the whole extent of his lines, and find him occupying a strong position, extending apparently from the North Marietta or New Hope Church road to across the Villa Rica road; our lines are up within close musket range in many places, and the enemy appears to be massing on our right."

It will thus be seen that McPherson was loyally preparing to carry out his instructions, and was, indeed, ready to do so with his usual skill and promptness, when Hardee's dispositions warned him of his danger in uncovering his flank and of making the movement in the face of an active and energetic enemy. Hardee was pressing his lines constantly, probably in anticipation of just such a movement.

## Battle of Pickett's Mill

The battle began at 3.30 P.M. The attacking column of the Confederates had been able to form out of sight in the woods for the most part; those in front of Oosterhaus's division (of Logan) gathered under shelter of a deep ravine, and then rushed *en masse* to within fifty yards of his line, where they were mowed down by the hundred.

The Sixteenth Corps (Dodge's) had also a considerable part in this battle. Walker's Confederate division had found its way at first, with the design of a demonstration only, quite up to the well-prepared barricades of Dodge.

This assault, though most desperate and determined, was promptly and gallantly met and repulsed.

The other Confederate division (Cheatham's) opposite Davis simply strengthened its skirmish line and pushed it forward briskly and persistently in front of Davis's gallant men, resulting, of course, in some losses on both sides. These vigorous efforts of Walker and Cheatham had the effect, as Hardee intended, namely, to keep Dodge and Davis in place and prevent them from reënforcing Logan.

Within an hour and a half the attack upon the whole right had proven a costly failure to the enemy, and his lines had been hurriedly withdrawn to the earthworks from whence they had sallied forth. Hardee in this combat left many of his wounded and slain to us to care for.

It will be noticed that my battle of May 27th at Pickett's Mill was a determined assault of one division supported by another against Johnston's right flank, and that the battle of Dallas, whether by General Johnston's orders or not, was a correspondingly heavy assault of Bate's and part of Walker's divisions, sup-



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

ported by the rest of Walker's and the whole of Cheatham's, against Sherman's right flank. There was a decided repulse in each case. The scales were thus evenly balanced.

After the failure of Hardee on the afternoon of May 28th, he withdrew within his own intrenchments, and, besides the skirmish firing which was almost incessant during those days, no other regular attack for some time was made.

On the 30th, shortly before midnight, Hardee made a moderate demonstration against our lines, possibly in the belief that we were evacuating, but finding the men in their places and on the alert, he desisted.

Thus matters remained until June 1st, when Sherman's characteristic movement from right to left began again in good earnest, and McPherson left the Dallas line and marched over beyond us all to relieve and support the troops which were lying between New Hope Church and Pickett's Mill. The last three battles—New Hope, Pickett's Mill, and Dallas—were at best but a wearisome waste of life and strength, blows given and taken in the dark without visible result.

Steadily the movement of the Union army toward the left, for the purpose of reaching the railroad, had been continued, and, at last, on June 1, 1864, the diligent McPherson fully relieved Hooker's corps and my own remaining divisions, and spread his men so as to guard all that part of the line lately occupied by Hooker, Schofield, and myself. In this he was still assisted by Jeff. C. Davis's division. Thomas and Schofield were then free for the leftward operation.

Schofield with his three divisions of the Twenty-third Corps promptly marched away eastward; Hooker

## Battle of Pickett's Mill

followed and supported him as far as the "Burnt Hickory Church," at the point where the Allatoona wagon road crosses that from Burnt Hickory to Marietta.

Schofield now promptly deployed his line and pushed southward toward Marietta, his left *en route* touching the Marietta wagon road. Every foot of his way was contested by skirmishing Confederates, but now, slowly and steadily, without general battle, the enemy was forced back to a partially new intrenched position, south of Allatoona Creek, back as far as the forks of the Dallas-Ackworth road. Here, charging across the creek in a terrific thunderstorm, Schofield's men forced their way close up to the Confederate works. They were as near to them as 250 yards, tenaciously holding the ground gained and actively intrenching. Meanwhile, Stoneman, beyond Schofield, with his cavalry had already seized the village of Allatoona, near the pass, getting there June 1st, where, taking a strong position, the work of repairing the railroad northward and southward began, and progressed with little or no opposition.

At the time Schofield and Hooker were steadily advancing, Thomas was also moving the rest of us to the left from the vicinity of Pickett's Mill, Thomas being on the lead himself with Baird's division. Thomas's army in this effort gained ground eastward about three miles.

Sherman's forces were then in position by June 3d to catch in flank the Confederate line of intrenchments, which still were manned, and extended from Pickett's Mill first due east and then almost north.

When on that date Johnston learned of the extension of Schofield's and Hooker's commands, he saw that his old position, that of New Hope, was no longer



tenable. Now, leaving New Hope, he began to move back with remarkable quickness to the new line partially prepared by his engineers. This line, about ten miles long, ran, in general, from southwest to northeast, and was doubtless intended only for a temporary resort.

At last, McPherson, still going toward the east, reached and followed the Ackworth Railroad, and then moved out and went beyond us all near to Bush Mountain.

Thomas, after another leftward effort, was next in place to McPherson, near to and advancing upon Pine Top, while Schofield remained nearer the angle at Gilgal Church. Our line, like that of the Confederates', was about ten miles long, and conformed to all the irregularities of Johnston's intrenchments. The Georgia mud was deep, the water stood in pools, and it was hard to get fires to cook our food and dry spots sufficiently large upon which to spread a tent fly or soldier's blanket.

A young man from Boston who joined me, Mr. Frank Gilman, and who became my private secretary, though well and strong when he arrived, and full of patriotic fervor, with an earnest desire to remain, could not bear the wear and tear of our mud bivouac here near Big Shanty. He lost his appetite and little by little his flesh; then, being attacked by chills and fever, was obliged to seek the hospital, and, finally, to save his life, he returned to his home. But the most of the soldiers were now veterans, and so inured to hardships that the mud and water seemed hardly to affect them at all; they thought the soft places around the camp fires preferable for beds to the rough rocks which they had had a few days before.

On June 14th, Sherman, after reconnoitering the lines of the enemy as well as he could in rough ground and forest, with a view to finding a weak place through which to force a column, came to my temporary station near Pine Top. He noticed that several of us had been for some time watching in plain sight some Confederate intrenchments and a group of Confederate gentlemen about 600 yards from our position, and some evidently observing us with their good-sized field glasses. Sherman said to me: "How saucy they are!" He told me to make them keep behind cover, and one of my batteries was immediately ordered to fire three volleys on the group. This would have been done by me, except that Thomas had instructed me to use artillery ammunition only when absolutely necessary.

It would appear from the Confederate accounts that Johnston had ridden from Marietta with Hardee and Polk till he reached Pine Mountain (Pine Top). Quite a number of persons had gathered around them as they were surveying us and our lines. Johnston first noticed the men of my batteries preparing to fire, and cautioned his companions and the soldiers near him to scatter. They for the most part did so, and he himself hurried under cover. But Polk, who was quite stout and very dignified, walked slowly, probably because he did not wish the men to see him showing too much anxiety on account of the peril. While leisurely walking, he was struck in the breast by a fragment of an exploded shell, and was instantly killed.

We were apprised of Polk's death by our vigilant and skillful signal officers, who, having gained the key to the Confederate signals, could just read their messages to each other: "Why don't you send me an am-



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

balance for General Polk's body?" was the one from Pine Top. In this way the story that Sherman himself had fired the gun that killed Polk, which was circulated for a time with much persistency, was explained.

Nobody on the Union side knew who constituted the group. The distance was too great to distinguish whether the irregular company, at which the volleys were fired, was composed of officers or soldiers.

What Sherman and I noticed and remarked upon more than any gathering of men, were the little tents which were pitched in plain sight on our side of the hill-crest. It seemed to us unusually defiant. After our cannon firing the hostile tents disappeared.

On June 15th, Thomas, of whose command my corps and Hooker's formed a part, was near Pine Top. Hooker's men had carried some Confederate works after a struggle, accompanied by rifle firing and cannonading. These works, some of them detached, connected Johnston's principal line from Lost Mountain with Pine Top.

Schofield, about the same time, drove a line of skirmishers away from a small bare hill near Allatoona Creek, placed his artillery upon it, and thence worked a cross fire into the enemy's intrenchments, driving Johnston's men, thus newly exposed in flank, back to near Gilgal Church. We were all along so close to our enemy that the constant skirmish fire of the New Hope line was here repeated. In the meantime, Johnston, continuing his inimitable defensive and delaying tactics, had prepared another new line along Mud Creek. This line followed the east bank of this creek, and was extended so much as to cross the direct wagon road between New Hope and

## Battle of Pickett's Mill

Marietta. It was the same line that ran from Lost Mountain.

Here Hardee, who had now retired to the new works, on the night of the 16th posted his batteries. The position covered the open ground toward us on the other side of the creek for a mile, and through this open ground the road coursed along, running between some steep hills that shaped the valley. There stood near by one bare hill, almost as high as the bluff where the Confederate batteries were posted, apparently unoccupied or weakly held. This was the position of Hardee on the morning of June 17th. It was formed by a dropping back of Hardee's men after being relieved from their place held the previous day. They had fallen back some three miles to cross "Muddy Run." Our observation of what was going on was so close that no time was lost in following up Hardee's backward movement. Thomas and Schofield, now in the right wing of our army, early in the morning of the 17th went straight forward, skirmishing with Jackson's cavalry and driving it before them, until they reached the Marietta Crossroads. Cox (of Schofield's), with his division, was feeling forward for the new right flank of Hardee.

Soon the valley of Mud Creek was reached, and the Confederate batteries on the bluff were exposed to full view. Schofield's men made a rapid rush across the open ground to the shelter of the "bare hill" above referred to; there they lay for a time under its protection. They were well formed in two lines—while Cockerell's battery and another from Hooker's for over an hour were storming the batteries of the enemy and gradually advancing their guns.

Here it was that Cockerell took advantage of the



bare hilltop as a natural breastwork. Unlimbering out of sight, he opened his fire, with only the muzzles of the guns exposed. His keen perception of this advantage saved his men, while the other battery, exposing itself fully on the crest, lost heavily.

The guns opposite Cockerell were silenced; then the deployment of our infantry was continued. My own corps (the Fourth) as well as the Twentieth (Hooker's) were occupied during this forward swing. Having left their Pine Top lines early in the morning of the 17th, they marched at first substantially abreast. Hooker, having the right, sped over the abandoned intrenchments of the enemy, and turning gradually toward the southeast, so as to face Hardee's refused lines, was coming upon the Confederates, who were already in place, as we have seen, behind Mud Creek, and strongly posted. I did the same on Hooker's left flank.

Palmer's corps (the Fourteenth) came up also on my left as soon as there was room. Thus Thomas with the Third Corps worked forward with his left touching the Ackworth Railroad, and soon made all proper connections with McPherson, who was advancing on the other side of the same railway.

Part of my corps (General C. G. Harker's brigade), at this time under the cover of a heavy artillery fire instituted by the division commander, charged a portion of Hardee's salient angle with great vigor, effected a lodgment in part of it, where the roads gave him some protection, and then carried and held several rods of these works, capturing the defenders.

This was one of the few cases in which intrenchments, strongly constructed and well manned were during the war, carried by direct front assaults.

I first remarked the neatness of Harker's brigade, even during our rough field duty. At inspections and musters his men had on white gloves, and excelled the lauded Eastern troops in the completeness and good order of their equipments. The unusual pains taken by him and his brigade to appear clean and properly attired and well equipped did not, as we observed, detract from its energy and success in action.

In the afternoon Ed. McCook's cavalry followed up this success by getting around the left flank of Hardee, and pursued his cavalry down along the Dallas-Marietta wagon road and across Mud Creek. McCook in his venturesome sallies succeeded in getting within five or six miles of Marietta. He captured two hospitals with five commissioned officers and thirty-five men, also several attendants and nurses.

While securing these partial successes I saw, near my right, the most remarkable feat performed by any troops during the campaign. Baird's division (Palmer's corps), in a comparatively open field, put forth a heavy skirmish line, which continued such a rapid fire of rifles as to keep down a corresponding well-defended Confederate line of men, while the picks and shovels behind Baird's skirmishers fairly flew, till a good set of works was made but 300 or 400 yards distant from the enemy's and parallel to it.

After the action at Mud Creek, above described, with the forcing back of Hardee's flank, the situation was dangerous for Johnston. He, however, had fortified, with his usual foresight, another new defensive position nearer to Marietta, and work was going on in that quarter while the battle of the 17th was raging. Colonel Prestman, Johnston's military chief of engineers, had traced the proposed intrenchments, which



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

were destined for the last stand of the Confederates before the abandonment of Marietta; it was their last strong defense north of the Chattahoochee.

Meanwhile, early on June 18th our batteries were put under cover on the hills in front of Hardee's salient angle. This angle was in front of Palmer's and my corps, so that our guns, which we had located the preceding day, could play with an enfilading fire upon the Confederate works. After some cannonading, seeing the evident intention of a further movement to the rear, I thrust Newton's and Wood's divisions into action early in the day; charging with great vigor, they captured the works in their front, taking about 100 prisoners.

Confederate efforts by countercharges and battery firing were made to delay our advance, but all attempts were frustrated and the enemy each time repulsed. The brigade of the enterprising Harker already held the intrenchments which he had captured, and seeing the great advantage of securing them, I hurried in the whole of Newton's division.

The situation then was such that Johnston could no longer delay his retrograde movement.

Just before Johnston left Muddy Creek, Sherman declared: "His" (Johnston's) "left was his weak point so long as he acted on the 'defensive'; whereas, had he designed to contract the extent of his line for the purpose of getting in a reserve force with which to strike 'offensively' from his right, he would have done a wise act, and I" (Sherman) "was compelled to presume that such was his object."

On the afternoon of the 20th, Kirby's brigade of Stanley's division was holding "Bald Knob," a prominent knoll in our front. The Confederates, using ar-

## Battle of Pickett's Mill

tillery and plenty of riflemen, suddenly, just about sundown, made a spring for that knoll. Kirby's men were taken by surprise and were driven back with loss. The enemy quickly fortified the position and thus had a break in Sherman's line, where the enemy the next morning could follow up this advantage and begin an offensive movement for which we were not prepared. I was much annoyed, and as soon as Thomas and Sherman heard of the break they were also worried. I telegraphed Thomas that I would recover that "Bald Knob" on the morrow without fail. I ordered General Wood on the right of the Knob to have his left brigade (Nodine's) ready under arms before sunrise, and Stanley to have Kirby's brigade there in front and to the left of the Knob also under arms and prepared to make an assault. One of Wood's artillery officers spent the night in putting in place four cannon and covering them by a strong field work, just in the edge of heavy timber near his left and well to the front, whence he could shell the enemy now intrenched on the Knob. Very early, with a couple of staff officers, my faithful orderly, McDonald, and private secretary, J. A. Sladen, Thirty-third Massachusetts (afterwards my aid-de-camp), I rode to the four-gun battery; leaving my comrades I took a stand on the improvised fort where I could see and direct every move. A Confederate battery shelled us fearfully and we replied with vigor. My situation was so perilous that my officers entreated me to leave it and get a safer place. But in this particular action I would not, for I wanted to be with my men in the action when it came on. When Kirby's skirmishers were well out, and Nodine's also, and our battery very active filling the air over the Knob with burst-



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

ing shells, I saw an officer standing behind Nodine's line not far from me. I mistook him for Colonel Nodine; I called him to me, and as soon as he was near enough to hear my voice amid the roar and rattle of the conflict, I said: "Colonel, can't you now rush your men forward and seize that Bald Knob?"

He answered: "Yes, sir, I can."

I then said: "Go ahead!"

He sounded the advance and all the men of the Fifteenth Ohio Infantry sprang forward, and, at a run, within fifteen minutes had crowned the knoll. It was Colonel Frank Askew, and he had done with 200 men what I had intended Nodine to do with his entire brigade. Leaving orders for Nodine and Kirby to hurry up their brigades, I mounted and, followed by McDonald and Sladen, galloped to the front and stayed there with the gallant Fifteenth Ohio men till the reënforcements with shovels and picks had joined them. The suddenness of our charge and the quickness of our riflemen cleared the "Bald Knob" and restored the continuity of Sherman's front.

The concentration of Johnston's forces compelled us at this time to be on the lookout for just such offensive movements.

Before, however, bringing our troops forward into immediate contact with the Kenesaw barricades and abatis, it is necessary to give an account of an affair which cost many lives; only a drawn battle was fought, but it was fraught with consequences which seriously affected the remainder of the campaign. The affair is usually denominated "Kolb's" or "Culp's Farm," and took place June 22, 1864.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### BATTLE OF KOLB'S FARM AND KENESAW

THE weather continued stormy, and it was not until June 22, 1864, that any positive advance could be made. On that date, as he often did, Sherman rode from end to end of our line, in order that he might thoroughly understand the position of his army.

He ordered Thomas to advance his right corps, which was Hooker's; and he instructed Schofield by letter to keep his whole army as a strong right flank in close support of Hooker's deployed line. It will be remembered that Schofield's Twenty-third Corps at this time constituted Sherman's extreme right.

Hooker came next leftward, and then my corps. Hooker, in accordance with his orders, pressed forward his troops in an easterly direction, touching on my right.

There was heavy skirmish firing along the whole front. As Hooker went forward he first drove in the enemy's cavalry. The movement was necessarily slow and bothersome; and at 2.30 P.M. the contest became very hot. The enemy took a new stand near Manning's Mill about 5 P.M. The Confederate advance was made boldly in force.

During the progress of this engagement, which became an assault upon Hooker's right flank, he called upon me for some help, asking me to relieve his left



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

division (Butterfield's), so that it might be sent off for a reënforcement to his right. This request I complied with at once, using every regiment of mine not then in line. These replacing troops were five regiments of Colonel Grose's brigade.

In this manner Hooker was given the whole of Butterfield's division for a reserve, or for resting any troops that had been long engaged; so his left flank was thoroughly secured.

Just as soon as the Union troops all along these lines had recovered from the first shock of the battle and re-formed wherever broken, so as to restore the unity of their defense, all hands became confident. In those places where the small breaks had occurred, several attempts were made by Hood to reanimate his men and push on, but all in vain. This was called the battle of Kolb's Farm. In this battle, at one time the firing, on a part of my corps front, was rapid. I rode to a high plateau where I could see considerable of the ground where the contest was sharpest. I had sent my staff away with important messages, and had with me only my orderly, McDonald, and my secretary, Sladen. We three were on our horses, anxiously watching the results of the Confederate attacks, my horse being a few yards ahead of the others. Suddenly McDonald rode up to my side and said: "General, I am wounded."

"Where, McDonald?"

"In my left foot, sir, right through the instep."

He was very pale and evidently suffering intensely. He looked me in the face, and in a low voice said: "General Howard, I shall die from this wound!"

"Oh, no, McDonald, you will not die! A wound like that through the foot is very painful, but not

## Battle of Kolb's Farm and Kenesaw

fatal. You go back to the field hospital, and when this battle is over I will visit you there."

After he began to ride back from me, he turned his horse about, and, with tears bedimmed his eyes, he looked in my face again and said: "Oh, general, I am so glad I was wounded and not you!"

When, near sunset, I went to the field hospital, I learned that McDonald had been sent back with other wounded to the general hospital on the top of Look-out Mountain. And he did die from that severe wound and was buried among "the unknown."

Some very peculiar controversies, in which Sherman, Thomas, Schofield, and Hooker were involved, grew out of this battle.

During the battle, Hooker was asked by Sherman from a signal station: "How are you getting along? Near what house are you?"

He replied as follows: "*Kolb's House*, 5.20 P.M. We have repulsed two heavy attacks and feel confident, our only apprehension being from our extreme right. Three entire corps are in front of us."

This latter dispatch was not received by Sherman until after the battle, about 9.20 P.M. He then wrote to Thomas, who was Hooker's army commander. After citing to Thomas two dispatches, he telegraphed as follows:

I was at the Wallace House at 5.30 and the Kolb House was within two miles, and though I heard some cannonading I had no idea of his being attacked; and General Hooker must be mistaken about three entire corps being in his front. Johnston's army has only three corps, and I know there was a very respectable force along McPherson's front, so much so that his generals thought the enemy was massing against them. I know there was some force in front of Palmer and Howard, for



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

I was there. Still, it is very natural the enemy should meet Hooker at that point in force, and I gave Schofield orders this morning to conduct his column from Nose's Creek, on the Powder Springs road, toward Marietta and support Hooker's right flank, sending his cavalry down the Powder Springs road toward Sweet Water and leaving some infantry from his rear to guard the forks. . . .

It was natural for Hooker to make reply, for Sherman had asked questions of him. And, naturally, at such a time there was some excitement at Hooker's headquarters. As soon as Sherman received this disturbing message directly from Hooker, he first answered thus:

Dispatch received. Schofield was ordered this morning to be on the Powder Springs and Marietta road, in close support of your right. Is not this the case? There cannot be three corps in your front; Johnston has but three corps, and I know from full inspection that a full proportion is now, and has been all day, on his right and center.

Sherman also sent for his adjutant general, Captain Dayton, and made inquiry as to whether or not those most important orders had been sent to Schofield and received by him. Dayton immediately brought him the envelope which had on it the receipt of Sherman's instructions, signed by Schofield himself.

After that assurance, Sherman was more confident than ever that the Army of the Ohio had been all the time in place, and close up to Hooker's right flank.

When Sherman had passed from his left to his right, he had found evidence to satisfy him that Confederate Loring held all the long breastworks of the Confederate right opposite McPherson; Hardee held the center and much of the left opposite Thomas's

## Battle of Kolb's Farm and Kenesaw

three corps, which were in line from left to right, viz., Palmer's, Howard's, and Hooker's. Hood had simply passed partially beyond Hardee's left and come up to make his reconnoissance and attack, so that Hooker's men encountered only a part of Hood's and a part of Hardee's commands.

Schofield breasted the remainder of Hood's divisions and the cavalry of Wheeler, which supported Hood's moving left flank. In view of these plain facts Sherman was incensed that Hooker should have made such a fulsome report, and some words of Thomas increased his vexation—words that we find in a letter written by Thomas to Sherman himself, about ten o'clock the same night, for example:

I sent you a dispatch after my return to my headquarters this morning that Hooker reported he had the whole rebel army in his front. I thought at the time he was stampeded, but in view of the probability that the enemy might believe that we intended to make the real attack on our right, and would oppose us with as much of his force as he could spare, I ordered one division of Howard's to be relieved by Palmer and placed in reserve behind Hooker.

Hooker's position is a very strong one, and before I left him he certainly had his troops as well together as Howard has had for the last three days, and Howard has repulsed every attack the enemy has made on him in very handsome style. . . . The enemy cannot possibly send an overwhelming force against Hooker without exposing his weakness to McPherson.

Taking these things into account, Sherman took occasion the next day after the battle (June 23d) to ride down to Kolb's Farm, fully determined in his own sharp way to call Hooker to an account for his exaggerations. Sherman's determination to do so was increased when he found Hooker had used during



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

the combat but two of his own divisions, for Butterfield's, kept back in reserve, had not been engaged at all during the day. Again, he saw, as before reported, one of Schofield's divisions properly placed abreast of Hooker's right, constituting what Sherman denominated a strong right flank.

Just after this personal reconnoissance, with its results in his mind, Sherman met both Schofield and Hooker near there on the field of battle. At once Sherman showed Hooker's dispatch to Schofield. Sherman said: "Schofield was very angry, and pretty sharp words passed between them," i. e., Schofield and Hooker. Schofield insisted that he had not only formed a strong right flank, as ordered, but that in the primary engagement the head of his column, part of Haskell's division, had been in advance of Hooker's corps, and were entitled to that credit. He affirmed, also, that dead men from his army were yet lying up there on the ground to show where his lines had been.

Hooker, thus called to account, made answer, apologetically, that he did not know this when he sent the dispatch. But Sherman, considering that the original statement of Hooker had reflected to his hurt upon an army commander without cause, and that Hooker's exaggeration had led Thomas to weaken other portions of his line—something that might have led to disaster—and that the dispatch came near causing him to do the same as Thomas, administered in his own blunt manner a caustic reprimand.

Sherman, as I think, was unaware of his own severity. He justified himself in this phrase: "I reprimanded him more gently than the occasion warranted." The result of this reproof was that from that date to

## Battle of Kolb's Farm and Kenesaw

July 27th following, Hooker felt aggrieved. On that day he was relieved, at his own request, by General A. S. Williams.

This battle of Kolb's Farm was wholly on the Kenesaw line extended southward. Sherman, on account of guerrilla and cavalry attacks far in his rear, upon his own line of railroad, was greatly distressed concerning his communications. They were not secure enough, he declared, to permit him to break away from his base of supplies.

The Kenesaw Mountain—sometimes called the Kenesaws, probably on account of an apparent cross break in the range giving apparently two mountains—is the highest elevation in Georgia, west of the Chattahoochee. It is the natural watershed, and was in 1864, upon its sides, mostly covered with trees. From its crest Johnston and his officers could see our movements, which were believed to be hidden; they have recorded accounts of them in wonderful detail. The handsome village of Marietta, known to Sherman in his youth, lying eastward between the mountain and the river, could be plainly seen. Johnston could not have found a stronger defensive position for his great army.

Prior to the battle of Kolb's Farm the entire Confederate army had taken substantially its new line; the Confederate right, which abutted against Brush Mountain on the north, took in the Kenesaw; the line passing down the southern slope of that mountain, continued on to the neighborhood of Olley's Creek. It was virtually a north and south bending alignment, convex toward us. Its right was protected by rough Brush Mountain and Noonday Creek. Its center had Nose's Creek in front of it, but the strength of its



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

almost impregnable part was in the natural fortress of the south slope of Kenesaw.

The intrenchments or breastworks everywhere, whatever you call those Confederate protecting contrivances, were excellent. They had along the fronting slopes abundant "slashings," that is, trees felled toward us with limbs embracing each other, trimmed or untrimmed, according to whichever condition would be worse for our approach. Batteries were so placed as to give against us both direct and cross fires.

To my eye, Kenesaw there, at the middle bend of Johnston's long line, was more difficult than any portion of Gettysburg's Cemetery Ridge, or Little Round Top, and quite as impossible to take. From extreme to extreme, that is, from the Confederate infantry right to the actual left in a straight line, must have been six miles.

The reports show that Johnston had just before the battle of Kenesaw received reënforcements from the Georgia militia under G. W. Smith. His numbers at this terrible battle are not now easily discovered, but standing so much as Johnston did on the defensive behind the prepared works, his losses were hardly ever as great as ours; so that, I think, at Kenesaw he had as many men as at Resaca. My judgment is confirmed by the surprisingly long defensive line which he occupied. Hood, at first, had the right, covering all the wagon approaches and trails from Ackworth and the north, and the wagon and railroads that ran between Brush Mountain and the Kenesaw.

Loring, the Confederate commander who now replaced Polk, for his custody and defense had all the Kenesaw front, including the southern sloping crest

## Battle of Kolb's Farm and Kenesaw

and the ground passing beyond the Marietta and Canton wagon road.

Hardee's corps began there, crossed the next highway (the Marietta and Lost Mountain road), and gradually drew back till his left was somewhere between Kolb's Farm and Zion's Church, that part of his force looking into the valley of Olley's Creek.

On our side, Blair, with his Seventeenth Corps, had now come to us from the west. He brought enough men to compensate for Sherman's previous losses; so that, like Johnston, Sherman had about the same numbers as at Resaca. The Army of the Tennessee, with Blair on the left, faced Hood. A short distance beyond, eastward, was Garrard's cavalry, trying to keep back the Confederate cavalry of Wheeler.

Thomas, with his three Union corps, touched the middle bend opposite Loring and part of Hardee. Hooker's corps made Thomas's right; then came, on the extreme right, the Twenty-third Corps and Stoneman's cavalry, under Schofield. The Union right, already by June 20th reached as far south as Olley's Creek. The whole infantry stretch of Sherman's front was at that time fully eight miles.

There are four distinct combats which ought to come into this battle of Kenesaw:

1. The combat with Wheeler's cavalry near Brush Mountain.
2. The cavalry combat against Jackson.
3. The battle of Kolb's Farm on June 22d.
4. Our determined attacks and repulses at different points all along the Kenesaw line during June 27th.

General Sherman's field orders notified us that he and his staff would be "near Kenesaw Mountain" on



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

June 27th. I recall, in general, the character of the country near to Kenesaw, mostly wild, hilly, and rugged, and thickly covered with virgin trees, oak and chestnut, with here and there a clearing made for a small farm, or a bald opening that seemed to have come of itself, though I but dimly remember Sherman's temporary headquarters, which were fixed on Signal Hill for a few days only.

Mr. J. C. Van Duzer (a superintendent of telegraph lines) telegraphed to the Assistant Secretary of War at 9.30 P.M. on June 24th: "Sherman moved to a point in field three miles west of Marietta, and Thomas to a new headquarters camp half a mile farther to our right, about the same distance from Marietta."

Van Duzer thus, by the wires keeping up his connection with Washington, united our commands. He used for us what was called the "field line" of telegraph wire, and connected his railroad line with Sherman, and Sherman with Thomas half a mile distant, and with Schofield, at least two miles in the same direction; also northward from Sherman two miles with McPherson.

Here, then, like the arrangements of Von Moltke in the Franco-Prussian War, we have our commander in a central position on high ground, about one mile in our rear, connecting his spreading rays in fan-shaped order with his army commanders; and they by signal stations and swift messengers with their corps commanders, the latter with division leaders, and so on to include brigades and regiments.

Johnston did well to go up to the Kenesaw crest. Here he had in the battle similar but better advantages over Sherman than Meade had over Lee from the famous Cemetery Hill.

## Battle of Kolb's Farm and Kenesaw

Sherman's plan was, as ordered, for Thomas to make a heavy assault at the center with his army while McPherson made a feint on the left and Schofield a threatened attack on the right. Orders:

I. The corps of Major General Howard will assault the enemy's intrenchments at some point near the left of Stanley's and Davis's divisions, which will be selected by General Howard after a careful reconnoissance. He will support his attack by such disposition of his artillery as, in his judgment, is best calculated to insure success.

II. Major General Palmer will, with his column on the right of General Howard's, coöperate with the latter by carrying the enemy's works immediately in his front. The batteries of General Baird's and Davis's divisions will remain as at present posted until the contemplated movement is made. General King's division will occupy its present position, but hold itself in readiness to follow up any advantage gained by the other troops.

III. Major General Hooker will support General Palmer on the latter's right with as much of his force as he can draw from his lines, selecting positions for his artillery best calculated to enfilade the enemy's works to his left and on General Palmer's front. In supporting General Palmer's movement, General Hooker will watch carefully his own right flank, and be prepared to meet any demonstration of the enemy upon it.

IV. The troops must get into position as early as possible and commence the movement at 8 A.M. to-morrow, precisely. All the troops will be ready to follow up with promptness any success which may be gained.

I will risk wearying the reader by quoting here my own brief orders for the same battle:

In pursuance of instructions from headquarters, Army of the Cumberland, an attack will be made upon the enemy to-morrow at 8 A.M. by this corps (the Fourth) in conjunction with the Fourteenth Corps. The points of attack are selected near the present position of Colonel Grose's brigade.



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

II. General Newton will lead the assault, being prepared to cover his own left.

III. Major General Stanley will retain one of his brigades in position extending from General Palmer's left to the ravine, and will be prepared, with his other two brigades well in hand, to follow closely General Newton's movements.

IV. General Wood will occupy his present front and extend to the ravine on his right with one brigade, while he will hold his other two brigades in readiness to follow up the movement of the attacking column.

V. The points for massing the troops of General Stanley's and Wood's divisions will be pointed out in the morning.

General Newton will commence his movement for the attack at sunrise, keeping his troops as well concealed from the enemy's view as possible.

Thomas and his two corps commanders most concerned, Palmer and I, were for hours closeted together. I went with my division commander, Newton, and we examined the ground which our juniors had selected that seemed least objectionable. Newton used the column of regimental divisions, doubled on the center. That formation seemed best for the situation; first, to keep the men concealed as well as possible beforehand and during the first third of the distance, the ground being favorable for this; second, to make as narrow a front as he could, so as to make a sudden rush with numbers over their works. But for the slashings, abatis, and other entanglements, all proving to be greater obstacles than they appeared to our glasses, the little column would have lost but a few men before arriving at the barricades. Had they done so, and broken through the Confederate works, as our men did in the night fight in Lookout Valley, and as Harker's men did at Muddy Creek, deployed

## Battle of Kolb's Farm and Kenesaw

lines were ready to follow up the forlorn hope and gain a success.

At a preconcerted signal the columns pushed rapidly forward, driving in the enemy's skirmishers, and were not checked until they reached the entanglements in front of the enemy's works. At this place the artillery and infantry fire became so galling that the advance was stopped. Harker made a second advance, when he received the wound which caused his death. Some of his men succeeded in reaching the enemy's works, but failed to secure a lodgment. As soon as it became evident that the enemy's intrenchments could not be carried by assault, the command was directed to resume its former position. Our losses were very heavy, particularly in valuable officers.

"General Harker's brigade," says Newton, "advanced through the dense undergrowth, through the slashing and abatis made by the enemy, in the face of their fire, to the foot of the works, but" (the men) "were unable to get in, and fell back a short distance. General Wagner's brigade passed through similar obstacles, and" (his men) "were compelled to stop their advance a short distance from the enemy's works. . . . Apart from the strength of the enemy's lines, and the numerous obstacles which they had accumulated in front of their works, our want of success is in a great degree to be attributed to the thickets and undergrowth, which effectually broke up the formation of our columns and deprived that formation of the momentum which was expected of it. Besides the enemy's musketry, our troops were exposed to a heavy fire of case shot. . . . The loss of the division in the assault was 654 killed and wounded."



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Colonel Opdycke, with the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Ohio, led Harker's charge. Harker went into the action mounted, and so was a conspicuous mark. At the bugle call the column was started. The mass paid no attention to the enemy's scattered out-watchers, but rushed at once for the hostile skirmish line, protected by deep detached rifle pits. The skirmish fire made but little impression. But here came the "tug of battle"—musketry before them, hot in their faces, direct and cross firing! On they went up the slope, but not many yards, when a Confederate battery, well located for the purpose, poured grape and shells into their flank, cutting in halves their column and confusing the regiments in rear. Still many men kept on, pulled the abatis apart, sprang over or kept under the felled trees, and tried to mount the high parapet. Some were killed, some were seized and pulled over to become prisoners. This terrible trial lasted a little more than an hour, when Harker's brigade gave up the assault and fell back for better shelter, bringing their dead chief, General Harker, with them.

Wagner's assault was equally brave—six regiments in column, Colonel Blake, with the Fortieth Indiana in the lead.

The Confederates, at one time eagerly pursuing, sprang over their works and undertook to charge Wagner's repulsed brigade, but gained nothing.

Palmer, commanding the Fourteenth Corps, selected Jeff. C. Davis's division. Davis chose what seemed to be the most vulnerable point in the enemy's breastworks. He designated McCook's and Mitchell's brigades, placing McCook on his right and Mitchell on his left, in the rear of my right division (Stanley's).

## Battle of Kolb's Farm and Kenesaw

Morgan's brigade he held in reserve. His front line was about 600 yards from the point of attack. There the ground was uneven and rocky, covered with the usual trees and undergrowth.

"The signal," writes Davis, "was given a little before nine o'clock, and the troops, following the example of their admired leaders, bounded over our own works in the face of the enemy's fire, and rushed gallantly for the enemy, meeting and disregarding with great coolness the heavy fire, both of artillery and infantry, to which they were exposed, until the enemy's works were reached. Here, owing to exhaustion produced by too rapid execution of the movement, the exceedingly rough ground, and the excessive heat, the troops failed to leap over and carry the works to which their noble, daring, and impetuous valor had carried them."

A renewal of the assault in the present exhausted condition of the troops was exceedingly hazardous. Under the circumstances, after a thorough examination of the ground and the enemy's works, I reported to Major General Thomas, and recommended that the position be held and the troops intrenched where they were. This he ordered to be done. . . . Colonel Daniel McCook, long the admired and gallant commander of his brigade, fell with a severe wound, of which he subsequently died at his home in Ohio. Colonel Harmon of the One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Illinois succeeded him in command, but fell immediately after. He was a brave and skillful officer. The death of these two noble leaders was at the time a great misfortune to the troops, and will ever be to the army and country a great loss. General Davis's losses were 770.

Sherman still hoped against hope that Schofield, followed by Hooker, might make a lodgment upon



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Johnston's weakened flank. Schofield's dispatch at 10 A.M. was encouraging: "Colonel Reilly has carried a position on the Sandtown road and driven the enemy back. Cox will push forward as much as possible. Hascall is using his artillery freely and pressing strongly, but finds the enemy too strong to give hope of getting his works."

But at last Cox's dispatch, received at 4.30 P.M., showed that nothing more could be done. Cox and Stoneman, routing a Confederate detachment and driving it back, seizing and holding an important Confederate outwork, had done good service for future operations, but that, important as it was, just then afforded poor consolation to our defeated commander.

On the Confederate side, when General Johnston left the Kenesaw heights and retired to his headquarters he was greatly rejoiced with the triumphs of that day. In his modest account of his victory were these words in praise of our gallant attack against him: "The Federal troops were in greater force and deeper order, and pressed forward with the resolution always displayed by the American soldier when properly led."

The entire Confederate loss was 522 against 2,500 for Sherman. It is a wonder our loss was not greater.

Among our greatest losses was that of General Harker, who was in characteristics much like McPherson. Would that he could have lived to have realized some of his bright hopes, and the country to have reaped still more benefit from his grand and heroic qualities! I wrote at the time of him:

HEADQUARTERS FOURTH CORPS, July 15, 1864.

MY DEAR COLONEL: . . . I knew General Harker as a cadet while I was on duty as instructor at West Point. He was then

## Battle of Kolb's Farm and Kenesaw

remarkable for independence of character and uprightness of conduct. I was particularly happy to renew my acquaintance with him after I came West. I was surprised and pleased to find that so young a man had won the complete confidence of the commanding general of the department. On taking command of this corps Harker was still a colonel, and as I was a comparative stranger in the corps, I was anxious to get him to serve as my chief of staff. He assured me he would do everything in his power to aid me in my duties, but if I would excuse him he greatly preferred command in the field. His choice I soon learned to appreciate. Strict and exact in the performance of his own duty, he obtained the most willing and hearty coöperation from all his officers without apparent effort. The only complaint I ever heard was that if Harker got started against the enemy he could not be kept back. Yet I never found him other than cool and self-possessed. Whenever anything difficult was to be done—anything that required pluck and energy—we called on Harker.

At Rocky Face, where his division wrested one-half of that wonderful wall of strength; at Resaca, where he tenaciously held a line of works close under fire; at Dallas, where he held on for several days with thin lines in connection with his brother officers and hammered their works at a distance of less than 100 yards; at Muddy Creek, where he reënforced the skirmishers and directed their movements with so much skill and vigor as to take and hold a strong line of the enemy's earthworks; in fact, at every place where the corps had been engaged, this noble young man earnestly and heartily performed his part.

On June 27th (upon his horse) he led in that terrible assault on the enemy's breastworks. We did not carry them, but part of his command reached the works. A sergeant bearing the colors was bayoneted as he was climbing over. Our beloved and trusted young general was close by, pressing forward his column, when the fatal wound was received. I never saw him after the fight began. I do not yet realize that he is gone—one so full of rich promise, so noble, so true a friend, so patriotic a soldier. God grant that we may live like him, and, if



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

called to die, have as good an earnest of enduring peace in heaven as had our lamented General C. G. Harker.

I am, colonel, respectfully, your obedient servant,

O. O. HOWARD, *Major General.*

To COLONEL G. P. BUELL, commanding fifth-eighth Indiana.

General Daniel McCook, who fell about the same moment as Harker, was once Sherman's law partner, and brother of Major General A. McD. McCook, of the army. Sherman felt his loss as he would that of a brother.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

BATTLE OF SMYRNA CAMP GROUND; CROSSING THE CHATTAHOOCHEE; GENERAL JOHNSTON RELIEVED FROM  
COMMAND

UNTIL they reached Kenesaw, Johnston's and Sherman's men alike had been working along, by swingings and twistings, it is true, but yet mainly and gradually gaining ground toward the southeast. Between the point where the railroad from Marietta crosses the Chattahoochee and Howell's Ferry five miles below, is that singular stream, the Nickajack.

It runs north, then east, then stopping a mile from the great river, it turns south and gradually approaches the Chattahoochee.

The Nickajack thus, by the help of a traverse brook flowing directly east and passing into the Chattahoochee far above us, almost completes a square about three miles on a side. Ruff's Mills were on the Nickajack near the northwest corner of this remarkable square.

As the banks of the river and all the creeks near here are very high, that Nickajack square afforded the Confederate commander unusual advantage for an extensive bridgehead against us. Letting his left rest above the mouth of the Nickajack, Johnston had his forts and trenches made bending around behind that creek. He extended these works to the right, northward beyond the Nickajack square, across the railroad and as far as Power's Ferry, near Vining's



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Railway Station. His outer lines, considerably away from the river, were also intrenched in the Nickajack square, having that winding creek and Ruff's Mills for protection.

News brought us from scouts declared that from 1,000 to 1,200 slaves had been there employed.

On June 29th Sherman had everything clearly mapped out. He was heaping up stores to enable him to cut loose from his railroad. He now aimed to get upon that railroad somewhere below Marietta by turning around Schofield as a door around a free hinge.

In a telegram sent to Halleck, at Washington, the last day of June, Sherman showed what he was doing:

To-morrow night I propose to move McPherson from the left to the extreme right. . . . This will bring my right within three miles of the Chattahoochee and about five of the railroad [at the place where the railroad crossed the river]. By this movement I think I can force Johnston to move his army down from Kenesaw to defend his railroad crossing and the Chattahoochee. . . . Johnston may come out of his intrenchments and attack Thomas, which is what I want, for Thomas is well intrenched parallel with the enemy south of Kenesaw.

The proposed march was only to proceed "down the Sandtown straight for Atlanta."

On July 1st, from Sherman's "Signal Hill," he had issued a set of general orders, which, germinating ever since, at last came out:

"King's division of Palmer's corps was designated to go off northward to puzzle the Confederate Kenesaw watchers, and with Garrard's cavalry to take the place of all McPherson's army. The next morning by 4 A.M. McPherson drew out one division (that of Morgan L. Smith) and marched it 'trains and troops,' back

## Battle of Smyrna Camp Ground

of us all, and on down river to Schofield, whom he was to aid and support till the remainder of his corps should arrive.

"Something delayed King all that day, but the night of July 2d King was on hand, and McPherson was about to pull out the remainder of his troops from their lines, when Harrow, one of his division commanders, reported that when he tried to withdraw, the enemy advanced in column and were forming in line of battle near his picket line.

"Sherman, watching this news by the wires, ordered Harrow to stay where he was, and in fact, all of McPherson's men still there, to delay; and announced that all of us would do what we could during the night to get at the facts. But he said: 'We must not attempt any night movement with large forces, because confusion would result, but must be prepared at break of day to act according to the very best information we can gather during the night.'"

That Friday night was a feverish one on our lines, and, I doubt not, a troubled one on the Confederate side; for until after twelve midnight, I had kept on pressing skirmishers as near their wary foes as could be done, and here and there throwing a shell, but nothing definite could be found out, so many skirmishers did the Confederates keep in our front—nothing sure till about 2.45 A.M. of July 3d. The enemy then had gone, and Stanley's skirmishers were in their works! At three o'clock similar reports came from Wood and Newton.

Immediately my corps was assembled. At 5 A.M. it was light enough to move, without danger of running upon other troops. Stanley's division, full of excitement, the front covered by a good skirmish line, pushed



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

on toward Marietta. Soon after this, my column, having made three miles, was at the Academy just south of the city, and found the enterprising Hooker already there. Hooker was crossing the column at an angle and obstructing it.

This shows somewhat the confusion that arose as divisions and corps, apparently on their own motion, were each moving for Marietta, striving to get there first.

McPherson was not long delayed, for he drew out from Johnston's front that very night of July 2d, leaving Garrard's dismounted cavalry in his place; he moved on down behind Thomas, "stretching to the Nickajack." But Logan's Fifteenth Corps delayed and passed through Marietta after the retreat.

Doubtless, Johnston, who had suspected just such a movement when Cox first appeared across Olley's Creek, was sure of it when, after the failures of the 27th, Sherman kept his cavalry and infantry creeping on and on down the Sandtown road, till Stoneman, on the lead, had actually touched the Chattahoochee River; and we had already in the morning of July 2d Morgan L. Smith's division as far down as the Nickajack square in conjunction with Schofield.

Sherman's quickening orders, given under the inspiration of what he had discovered on the sides of Kenesaw, and what he hoped for, came to me through Thomas. Sherman and some members of his staff rode as rapidly as they could past the marching troops which filled the roads into Marietta. There he found my skirmishers, some of Palmer's, and certain fore-runners of Hooker's corps, coming in at once from four directions. All, for the time, seemed absorbed in taking in the sights about the little city, of which

## Battle of Smyrna Camp Ground

they had heard so much during the preceding fortnight, and of which they had here and there distant glimpses; now they were actually there! It was, in fact, coming out of the woods and desert places into the brightness of civilization. The very few people who remained were frightened. Their eyes were troubled and often their lips trembled and their cheeks grew pale as they spoke to these hearty Yankees, who, counting their capture another victory, were somewhat saucy and buoyant.

It was at this time that Sherman, with mind intent on the retreat of Johnston, who really was a night ahead, rode into the center of the city and dismounted.

I had halted my head of column till Thomas could stop Hooker's cross march and let me take the road down river.

It was precious time to lose; but it took half an hour for Thomas's staff to bring matters into some order, and another half hour was lost by me in their marching King's division back to Palmer athwart my path. At last we were ready to advance. I had the left, Hooker and McPherson the right, as we went.

At a short distance below Marietta I came upon the Confederate rear guard to the left of the railway. Leaving the right to Palmer, I began the usual method of pressing forward, now making direct attacks against the enemy's temporary barricades; now flanking their positions on their right or left, and making a run for some choice grove or knoll that, when taken, would hasten our progress.

It was 3 P.M. when we passed the Dow Station. Not far below—from Marietta some six miles, near the Smyrna camp ground—we came upon the Confederate works; first, their little detached pits, sometimes



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

a hole dug deep enough for protection and only large enough for a single man, and sometimes large enough for five or six.

Here the skirmishing became more and more obstinate. I called a halt and carefully reconnoitered. Confederate main works, stronger than usual, in a very advantageous position, were discovered.

At 3.30 of that day I caused Stanley to deploy lines well supported just behind his own skirmishers, and put the other two divisions of my corps in column ready to face to the left in case of need. We had since daylight captured many prisoners, probably a thousand, and a few negroes had come in. Johnston's army, the most of these newcomers asserted, was at that very time behind those formidable works.

Garrard, with his cavalry, had advanced as fast as he could down the Chattahoochee and turned off from my left flank eastward on a river ferry road; then pushed on, skirmishing till he came to a ridge defended strongly by Confederate infantry. He picketed what he took to be the Pace's Ferry roads, connecting his outer line with mine, all within plain sight of the Confederate outposts.

On my right, King's division, also connecting with mine, was close up to the Confederate skirmishers, and intrenched.

The previous movements of Schofield had forestalled and prevented any contact with the enemy by Hooker, or even by Blair and Dodge, till they had passed beyond him. They picked up a few stragglers.

Dodge (of McPherson's army), this Saturday, July 3d, did a good work; he marched down to a place near Ruff's Mills and went into camp near the Nickajack square, while sending forward one division to in-

## Battle of Smyrna Camp Ground

trench close by Nickajack stream, and having that division send over two regiments to fortify the cross-roads beyond the mills and hold the high ground. He arrived too late to attempt anything beyond securing his camp for the night and an opening for a clear advance on the morrow. There were thick woods all around him, but after dark, large fires starting up in his front revealed the position of the Confederate forces behind their newly occupied intrenchments.

Sherman was impatient over the general confusion and, after a short, worrisome stay in Marietta, pushed on with his escort three miles down the railroad. He established there his headquarters.

General Sherman instilled into us some of his energy in the following words to Thomas:

"The more I reflect, the more I know, Johnston's halt is to save time to cross his material and men. No general, such as he, would invite battle with the Chattahoochee behind him. I have ordered McPherson and Schofield to cross the Nickajack at any cost, and work night and day to get the enemy started in confusion toward his bridges. I know you appreciate the situation. We will never have such a chance again, and I want you to impress on Hooker, Howard, and Palmer the importance of the most intense energy of attack to-night and in the morning, and to press with vehemence, at any cost of life or material."

Sherman was sending McPherson with Stoneman's cavalry ahead down by the Nickajack to the Chattahoochee far below Johnston's forces.

Garrard had now gone back two miles above the Roswell factories to occupy the attention of the enemy's cavalry there, and clear the way for future operations in that direction. My own corps (the Fourth)



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

had already worked its way up to the intrenchments on the Smyrna camp-meeting grounds.

Early Sunday morning Sherman himself made me a Fourth of July call. His mind was impatient because he had done so little. He did not believe that any regular works were in our front, and desired to have the troops which were north of Ruff's Mills so occupy the attention of the Confederates as to prevent their accumulation of force in front of McPherson and Stoneman. He and I were walking about from point to point in a thin grove of tall trees near a farmhouse, where were Stanley's headquarters.

"Howard," Sherman remarked, "what are you waiting for? Why don't you go ahead?"

I answered: "The enemy is strongly intrenched yonder in the edge of a thick wood; we have come upon his skirmish line."

"Nonsense, Howard, he is laughing at you. You ought to move straight ahead. Johnston's main force must be across the river."

"You shall see, general," I rejoined.

I sent for Stanley, who held my leading division, and gave him instructions:

"General, double your skirmish line and press forward!"

The men sprang out, passing between the Confederate rifle pits. They took nearly all the occupants as prisoners of war. Our soldiers had hardly passed these outer defenses when they met, straight in their faces, an unceasing fire from a set of works that had been hitherto but dimly seen, running along in the edge of the thick wood.

In a few moments several batteries opened slowly from unexpected points, sending their shot and shell

## Battle of Smyrna Camp Ground

crosswise against our lines. Many of these shells appeared to be aimed at the very place where Sherman, Stanley, and myself, with officers gathered around us, had formed a showy group. In fact, the officers were obliged to cover themselves by trees as well as they could. Our men on Stanley's front did as skirmishers are always instructed to do; those who had not fallen gave themselves protection by using detached Confederate rifle pits, or, where that was not practicable, they dropped on their faces, then by rushes they took advantage of every ridge or depression of the ground. The main part of the skirmish charge had been across an extensive wheat field, with an ascending slope. Meanwhile, Sherman himself passed from tree to tree toward the rear.

It was not ten minutes after the enemy's lines had opened fire before Sherman saw plainly that for some reason Johnston had stopped on our side of the river; and he remarked as he rode away, "Howard, you were right."

Following out the instructions already given, all my divisions, after coming up and extending the line, had seized continuous rifle pits; and we soon made works of our own along the enemy's front. The other corps of Thomas's army did the same thing. These operations often gave rise to so much fighting that at times it was as brisk and noisy as a regular engagement. In this strange manner on Sunday morning did our countrymen on opposite sides of intrenched lines, by the use of loaded rifles and shotted cannon, celebrate the Fourth of July.

At daybreak this bright morning Dodge followed up his leading brigade. His whole force went over the creek, and part of it was deployed into line; he



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

covered his front by a skirmish exhibit much stronger than usual, then all moved briskly forward. Dodge stirred up quite as brisk a contest in Nickajack square as we did near Smyrna camp ground. He ran into Stevenson's division, but could not go beyond the first line of detached rifle pits. "The order was gradually executed, the outworks taken, and some fifty prisoners captured." Stoneman now held our side of the river to Sandtown.

The position of the Confederate army was in two lines running across the Atlanta Railroad at right angles near where the railroad bent off toward the river. Loring's corps was on the right and Hardee's on the left of that road. Hood's stretched off toward the extreme left, where was G. W. Smith with his Georgia troops supporting General Jackson's cavalry. Wheeler's cavalry division watched the extreme right.

Hood was made uneasy by McPherson's works. "The enemy," he wrote, "is turning my left and my forces are insufficient to defeat this design or hold him in check." Johnston instantly on this report dispatched (Cheatham's) division. That, however, was not enough.

In the evening of that same Fourth of July G. W. Smith declared that the Yankee cavalry was pressing him with such force that he would have to abandon the ground he had been holding and retire before morning to General Shoup's line of redoubts.

As soon as Johnston received this ominous dispatch, which, as he said, threatened an important route to Atlanta and one that was nearer to that city than his main body, he instantly declared "the necessity of abandoning the position and of taking a new line"; and so before the morning he drew back from

## Battle of Smyrna Camp Ground

the outer lines to the inner lines of the bridgehead, sending his cavalry and some artillery to the south bank of the Chattahoochee. From all quarters as early as 4.30 A.M. the morning of the 5th, we found the strong outer works in our immediate front empty.

A Confederate officer, who had been a pupil of mine when I was an instructor in mathematics at West Point, left a note upon a forked stick in the abandoned trenches addressed to me, saying: "Howard, why didn't you come on and take my works? I was all prepared for you. I am ashamed of you." One of the officers who picked it up brought the note to me. It was plain enough after our experience at Kenesaw why I did not charge over my pupil's lines.

But now from all parts of the front we rushed forward with the hope of overtaking some portion of the retreating army, but we were again too late. I did take, however, about 100 prisoners of war. At 10 A.M. we reached Vining's Station on the railroad, and soon after pushed off to the left into the wagon road that leads to Pace's Ferry. Now from that station we came upon Wheeler's cavalry dismounted and skirmishing from behind barricades.

Our infantry skirmishers soon cleared the way and drove this cavalry back. So closely were they followed that they did not have time to destroy their pontoon bridge across the river, but we could not save the bridge, because a few Confederates, at the risk of their lives, stayed back and cut it loose from the north side so that the current quickly caused it to swing to the other shore.

Thus we had possession of every part of the Chattahoochee below the Nickajack, and also from Pace's Ferry northward to Roswell's factories.



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Colonel Frank T. Sherman for some reason was riding leisurely across the opening, when suddenly he came upon the Confederate skirmish line and was captured. He could hardly realize where he was when he saw the rifles aimed at him, and heard a clear-cut command to surrender. As his name was Sherman the rumor ran through the Confederate army that the terrible "Tecumseh" had been captured.

Colonel Sherman, an active, intelligent, and healthy man, full of energy, had aided me greatly during this trying campaign. No officer could have been more missed or regretted at our headquarters than he. Our picket line was completed, but this did not relieve us from the chagrin caused by the loss which slight care might have prevented.

In the minds of the readers of a military campaign wonderment often arises why there are so many delays. Our people at home and the authorities at Washington, at the time of which we write, were always impatient at such delays, and could not account for the waste of so many precious days behind the Chattahoochee. "Hadn't Joe Johnston cooped himself up there at the railroad crossing? Why not now be bold and strike below him for Atlanta, already in plain sight, and for Johnston's lines of supplies?"

We who belonged to Thomas pushed up a few miles against those inner lines; the Confederate cavalry had crossed the river and taken on the other high bank fine positions for their cannon—cannon to be well supported by mounted and dismounted men. Every crossing within reach was diligently watched by our foes, and every possible effort put forth to prevent our attempted passage of the river; Colonel Jackson and his active cavalry were working below

## Battle of Smyrna Camp Ground

the Confederate army, and Wheeler above the Marietta and Atlanta railway crossing of the Chattahoochee, to and beyond the Roswell factories; besides, Forrest, the Confederate cavalry leader, was worrying the posts far behind us, guarding our single line of supply. Sherman attended to that matter in a most effectual manner by appointing a district command with its headquarters at Chattanooga, and putting (Steedman) with detailed instructions, at the head of it. He had given him additional troops and adequate authority to combine his men and give blow for blow.

Believing that this annoyance could be even better removed by imitating Forrest's raids, Sherman sent out General Rousseau from the Tennessee border far down into Alabama, to swing around, destroy railroads as far south as Talladega and Opelika; and then, if possible, to return to him near Atlanta. Rousseau started from Decatur, Ala., July 9th. This remarkable raid was successful. His cavalry made a lodgment upon the Southern Railroad west of Opelika and destroyed some twenty miles of it. He defeated every Confederate troop sent against him with a loss of but twelve killed and thirty wounded; and he brought back a large number of captured mules and horses. Rousseau astonished the inhabitants everywhere by his unexpected visit, and did not join us, after his consummate raid, until July 23d.

To make our connections complete, two railway breaks, a long one above Marietta and one shorter below, near Vining's Station, had to be repaired. During July 6th the first gap was announced as restored, and the second was in progress.

Thomas had found it impracticable to cross the river in face of the fortified points on his front or left.



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

The water, which had risen from the recent rains, was now too high for fording. Sherman saw, however, that the water was slowly falling and that in a short time all the fords would be practicable; so that, by and by, something more than cavalry with its artillery would be required by the Confederate general over there to keep us back.

On Tuesday, July 6th, in a dispatch, Sherman indicated briefly what he was then meditating:

"All the regular crossing places are covered by forts; but we shall cross in due time, and instead of attacking Atlanta direct, or any of its forts, I propose to make a circuit, destroying all its railroads." After the rain and mud beyond Kenesaw, we were now having fair weather—at times a little too hot for comfort or safety; but the region afforded us high ground and the army had no prevailing sickness. Sherman did not delay all his operations. Something important was going on all the time.

Sherman by July 8th had determined to make his first crossing near the Roswell factories; he ordered Garrard's cavalry division to go there. As soon as Garrard could charge into the place he drove out the detachment of Wheeler's cavalry and destroyed the factories. The Confederate guard had rushed over the Chattahoochee bridge, and succeeded in destroying it. McPherson was to go up there, ford the river, and clear the way for a bridgehead and repair the bridge. Who could build a trestle bridge like his general, G. M. Dodge, who was not only a superb commander of men in battle, but was already an eminent practical engineer?

Garrard crossed at 6 A.M. with little loss, and Newton, of my corps, followed him during the morn-

## Battle of Smyrna Camp Ground

ing; the ford by this time had become practicable. The men were not long in putting up a strong work for a bridgehead, and so the upper crossing was secured.

Meanwhile, something else even more important had been done. As soon as Schofield had been crowded out by Johnston contracting his lines from the "outer" to the "inner" protection of his railroad over the Chattahoochee, Sherman brought Schofield's corps back near to Thomas's left and rear, and located him at Smyrna camp ground, near where I fought on the Fourth of July. Sherman set him to reconnoitering for a convenient river crossing somewhere near Thomas.

He discovered a practicable ford just above the mouth of Soap Creek. There was but a small picket of the enemy's cavalry opposite, and a single section of artillery. The whole work of preparation and approach was done so well that the enemy suspected no movement there until Schofield's men about 3 P.M. July 8th were making their way over by ford and by detached pontoon boats.

I had sent the pontoons with Colonel Buell and his regiment, and had, in order to aid him, already made a display of force below Schofield, in front of Pace's Ferry. My demonstration began about sundown the night before with a completeness of preparation that attracted the attention of the Confederate watchmen opposite. While there was yet light enough we opened all our artillery that was near and practiced until we got the range; then we ceased till a fixed time in the night, when all sleepers were startled by an alarming cannonade that continued for half an hour. Meanwhile, our officers had detachments in secure places



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

Schofield's right; Newton, after his return from Roswell, soon went over to strengthen the line; Wood later moved down east of the river, sweeping away the Confederate cavalry detachment and pickets, till Pace's Ferry (near Vining's Station and Palmer's front) was uncovered; then Palmer's pontoon bridge was laid there in safety. We had an occasional reconnaissance by the redoubtable Wheeler, which stirred up all hands. About this time Sherman relieved all suspense in the languor of hot weather by ordering us forward and then said:

"A week's work after crossing the Chattahoochee should determine the first object aimed at; viz., the possession of the Atlanta and Augusta road east of Decatur, Ga., or of Atlanta itself."

Having the same Fourth Corps under Thomas I was already near the middle of our concave line: Palmer the rightmost, Hooker next, and I next, then Schofield, then McPherson. Stoneman was back by the night of July 16th, so that we were all in active march the morning of the 17th.

By July 19th, army, corps, and division commanders had pretty well fulfilled Sherman's preliminary orders, having made what he denominated his "general right wheel." Thomas, after much skirmishing and driving back first cavalry and then infantry, had secured three crossings of the Peach Tree Creek. One lodgment over the creek was in front of Palmer, on the right of the army, below Howell's Mills; two in front of me, one near the mouth of Clear Creek, the other over a north fork of the Peach Tree Creek where the road via Decatur to Atlanta passes. Stanley saved a part of the bridge from Confederate flames and immediately rebuilt it.

## Battle of Smyrna Camp Ground

Sherman was now with Schofield. The night of the 9th the latter with his Army of the Ohio was at the Peyton farms, and had already made good a crossing of the south fork of the Peach Tree Creek. McPherson, having to make twice the march of Thomas's center, had gone on too rapidly for Hood's calculations. He had already in long gaps broken the railroad to Augusta, and was so swiftly approaching Atlanta from the east that Hood had to stretch his lines farther around the great city to the east and south, thus thinning his lines before Thomas.

As my orders appeared a little confusing, I rode back at daylight of the 20th to General Thomas near Buckhead, where he had slept the night before. Here he instructed me to take my two divisions, Stanley's and Wood's, to the left two miles off from Newton, leaving Newton where he was, on the direct Atlanta wagon road.

This, creating a broad, uncovered space along my front, was done owing to the nature of the country—rough and woody with much thick underbrush—but particularly to fulfill Sherman's express orders to keep connection with Schofield.

"We must not mind the gap between your two divisions. We must act independently," said Thomas, with almost a smile. Fortunately for me, Thomas was to be near Newton's troops during the tough conflict at Peach Tree Creek, which was to burst upon us that day. His clear head and indomitable heart never were so cool and unconquerable as in desperate straits.



## CHAPTER XXXIV

### BATTLE OF PEACH TREE CREEK

THE morning of July 20, 1864, McPherson was swinging toward Atlanta on the left of all Sherman's troops. Schofield pressing on in the center, and my two divisions, Wood's and Stanley's, touching Schofield's right by extended picket lines, were still following the Atlanta road via Decatur.

All these troops situated or in motion nearly two miles to the left of the gap that existed between Wood and Newton, constituted this day a maneuvering army by itself. Sherman, with Schofield, near the center, here took direct cognizance, as far as he could, of all that was going on. Sherman, knowing Hood's characteristics, felt that he would attack him and believed that he would make his first offensive effort against McPherson or Schofield, because the movements of these commanders were aimed threateningly against all his communications. Already the Augusta road was cut by them in several places and miles of it destroyed.

Wheeler, with Confederate cavalry, opposite McPherson, being driven by artillery, was slowly falling back toward Atlanta. Hood, much troubled by McPherson's steady approach, directed Wheeler in his own blunt way to fight harder, and assured him that G. W. Smith with his troops was behind him, and would vigorously support his resistance.

### Battle of Peach Tree Creek

McPherson's left division, farthest south, drove Wheeler's cavalry constantly backward, though slowly, toward Atlanta. This division of McPherson's army was commanded by General Gresham (in after years Secretary of State with Harrison). Gresham's advance was fearless and well timed.

Some points were vastly more important than others. A round hill, free of trees, which Gresham approached, leading on his men, was attempted. We may say that his position was indeed the keypoint to the splendid defense made two days later by the Army of the Tennessee. It was here that Gresham while ascending the slope, was severely wounded by a sharpshooter. He was not only an able and gallant officer in action, but excellent in council. His loss from the front at this time was much felt.

Of course, an important position like this hill, in plain sight of the Atlanta forts, Hood's division commander on his right essayed again and again to regain, but Leggett's division and Gresham's stoutly held their ground and repelled every hostile assault.

Sherman and Schofield were on the Cross Keys road. It is the one that passes the "Howard House" *en route* to Atlanta. After driving back the cavalry, Schofield found the enemy's outworks crossing this road obliquely and making an acute angle with it. Of course, his skirmishers came upon the usual short pits that the enemy put out in front of every permanent line. Cox's division was stopped and constrained to deploy considerable force. As the resistance became stronger, the other division, Hascall's, was hurried up upon Cox's left, extending the line southward.

In person I accompanied the column of Stanley and Wood. About 8.30 A.M. we were at the south fork



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

of Peach Tree Creek, where the enemy met and resisted us with infantry skirmishers. This point was about a mile to the right of Schofield's main column, but the roads for Schofield and Stanley advancing were now converging toward Atlanta. We had found the bridge over the south fork burned. While our skirmishers were wading the creek and driving those of the enemy back, our bridge men were vigorously employed rebuilding.

By ten o'clock the bridge was done and Stanley moved his skirmishers beyond it. A little more than half a mile from the bridge the firing became more lively and exciting; the enemy resisted from behind piles of rails and other barricades. Soon the main Confederate works were uncovered. A battery of artillery slowly opened its annoying discharges against Stanley's advance. At this time, being with Stanley, I received a message directly from Sherman: "Move forward and develop the enemy; see whether he is in force." From some prisoners taken I ascertained that I was again engaging Stevenson's division. We put in our batteries, covering them by slight epaulements and supporting them by infantry regiments. Then we proceeded in the usual way to carry out Sherman's brief order, moving forward a strong line till we received such resistance as made us more careful. Sherman himself came over to my position about two o'clock in the afternoon. He intimated that he believed that the enemy was withdrawing or would withdraw from my front to meet McPherson, for, up to that time, from his last accounts, McPherson had encountered nothing but artillery and cavalry.

About 3.30 P.M. we succeeded by change of position in driving the Confederates from a strongly con-

## Battle of Peach Tree Creek

structed line of skirmish rifle pits. In this advance we captured some fifty prisoners. A little later, Stevenson, leaving his works, made a charge upon us along Stanley's front; but his impulsive effort was bravely met and quickly repelled. Before night set in we had succeeded in my part of the line in gradually working up Stanley's division till we occupied the position lately held by the enemy's skirmishers, so connecting us with Schofield's army upon our left. Wood's division had gone the same as Stanley a little farther to Stanley's right. This business of approaching prepared parapets, from the rough nature of this wooded country, was perplexing and dangerous.

In the general turning toward Atlanta, Dodge, who came next beyond Schofield, had been crowded out of the line, so that Logan with his deployed front running nearly north and south, came in facing toward Atlanta, not far from the Howard House; and Blair was stretching to the left and south as far as he could to "Bald Hill" which, ever since the battle of Gresham and Leggett, has been called "Leggett's Hill"; it was situated just in front of his left flank. Meanwhile, some of our cavalry, with a brigade of infantry, was busy in the work of destruction along the Augusta railroad as far back as Stone Mountain.

This July 20th had been to Sherman, with his extended command, a long and trying day, with operations very much like all our advances from the beginning of the campaign up to that time.

Thomas, who took his headquarters near Newton's right flank, just back of Peach Tree Creek, commanded the remainder of the army to the right of the open interval. The whole valley of Peach Tree Creek, with its tributaries, furnished an overplus of woodland, of-



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

ten with low ground, some swamps, and much thick underbrush. There was high land between the creeks which are tributary to the Peach Tree, entering as they do from the south side. There was, indeed, no position from which a general, like Wellington at Waterloo, could see the whole battle front.

The activity of our troops in the vicinity of Leggett's Hill caused Hood first to delay the beginning of the battle, and afterwards, at the most critical period of Hardee's attack, to take from his reserve Cleburne's division and send it off to his extreme right, so as to oppose McPherson's vigorous operations.

Of course, if Hood, commanding the entire Confederate army, had not done that, McPherson would have come up on the evening of the 20th or the morning of the 21st much nearer to Atlanta, without receiving effective opposition. The assault upon Thomas was to be made from the right of Hardee to the left of Stewart in a sort of echelon movement; that is, for Bate's division to move *first*, Walker's a *little later*, Maney's *later still* some 200 yards or more behind and leftward, and so on, including Loring's and Walthall's divisions, to the left of Hood's attacking force. French's division in reserve watched the left flank.

There was one other hindrance to Hood's advance; it was that, though he had the inner lines, enabling the speediest reënforcement, he must gain more ground with his whole force toward the right or else expose some point, altogether too weak, for Sherman to strike.

This gaining of ground to the right, equal to the front of one division, occupied considerable time. Possibly he did this wisely in order to push his moving troops into the interval which I have described on

## Battle of Peach Tree Creek

our side, between my position and that of General Newton.

Hood gave imperative orders to his right corps commander, Cheatham, to hold everything firmly for more than a mile of frontage. His soldiers were to stand behind his parapets all the way from the Georgia railroad to that Clear Creek (on some maps erroneously called Pea Vine) which entered Peach Tree Creek near Newton's position. This Cheatham was doing all day opposite my left divisions, also opposite Schofield's and part of McPherson's.

John Newton could never be surprised. He was advancing, as instructed, toward Atlanta; but feeling himself in the presence of an enterprising foe, and believing that he would deliver battle before many hours, Newton had his bridge over Peach Tree Creek well and strongly built. His officers were next assuring him that Ward's division of Hooker's corps was near and about to follow over his bridge and form on an important knoll off to his right. At one o'clock Newton crossed the bridge and moved forward to the crest of a hill nearly half a mile beyond. The enemy's skirmishers fell back as they were met and engaged. Newton found a good position, and as if he knew there must be a battle just there, he stretched out *Blake's brigade* to the left of the road, covering also a cross-road that here went eastward toward Collier's Mill, and *Kimball's brigade* toward the right. He located a battery of four guns near the junction of these two brigades and left the other brigade (Bradley's) just as it had marched from the bridge in column of fours, filling the road for at least a quarter of a mile back. Newton's men on the front threw down before them small piles of rails, and shoveled as much dirt over



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

them as they could in an hour's work with the few spades and shovels they had with them. I call this whole formation "Newton's Cross."

Newton was just sending out a fresh line of skirmishers from his position when, about 3.30 p.m., he discovered Bate's Confederate division coming on to his left front. The shrill Confederate cheer beginning over there to his left, and extending all along before his brigades, could not be mistaken. His skirmishers delivered their shots and hurried back behind the other troops. It was a moment of excitement. Every man made what readiness he could. There first appeared to Newton the front of a Confederate brigade. His own ranks looked slender; the enemy's solid and strong!

The few minutes before battle to the waiting soldiers are always the hardest. Bradley's brigade of Newton's division had long since been faced eastward, and the battery turned that way to the left for action.

The oncoming force appeared like a mass that would strike obliquely against Bradley's front. Bate's leading Confederate brigade must have rushed down the Clear Creek Valley with all its entanglements. As they came into the open and began to ascend the hill Newton ordered: "Commence firing; fire steady and low!" At first not much impression; then the Confederates also fired, and advanced firing; but as they stopped to load, the long line of Union rifles and the fearful pieces of artillery raked them obliquely. They could not face so much; many fell wounded or slain. There was wavering in their ranks; then hesitancy; then a more general falling back to get under cover. Who could blame those brave soldiers? Not enough to take the battery could have lived to reach its commanding place.

## Battle of Peach Tree Creek

Bradley had hardly begun to check their fierce assault, when the next installment ran against Blake's brigade. Blake in a few moments was hard at work, and the battery was rolled around to help him, when amid the smoke and confusion the same strong echelon movement of Confederates was carried on to Kimball and beyond. All these soldiers on our side were partially covered by rails and on a crest, so that their losses were not heavy. Walker's division of Confederates, coming straight up on both sides of the road, was without protection. They were cut down like grass before the scythe, as Newton's men had been at Kenesaw less than a month before. Walker's men on the direct front—those who had not fallen—soon retired to rally their strength, but all beyond Kimball's right passed on and made him bend back more and more to meet them, till Bradley and the convenient cannon faced about to help him. It was almost too much for Newton to be outflanked on both sides and to have two whole divisions, each larger than his own, launched against him.

General Ward, the successor in the division of General Butterfield, had three brigades: one under Coburn of Indiana; a second under Colonel James Wood, from Northern New York; a third under Benjamin Harrison, afterwards President. Ward for support had been all the time in Newton's mind, but where was he at that critical moment? Just as he began to worry about his right flank, Kimball caught glimpses of finely led brigades appearing at the crest of that height, 800 yards off. It was a refreshing sight. There were Ward's skirmishers. They did not retire at the prolonged yell of their opponents, nor at the brisk fire of the first rifle shots aimed against them. They kept



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

their advanced positions till Ward could make his deployments behind them. Following the impulse of a soldier's instinct, Ward did not suffer his men to wait without cover, pale and sick at heart as men are apt to be at such a juncture, but put them at once into rapid motion, ascended the hill, absorbed his skirmishers as they went, and met the Confederate charge with a vigorous counter charge. Bradley's new front, facing west, and flank were thus quickly relieved.

The struggle in Ward's front proper was a little prolonged by fitful and irregular firing from everywhere, it seemed; and as his men had nothing for cover his losses were considerable. Three hundred well prisoners and 150 wounded, many battle flags and a cleared field were his within an hour.

The succession of Confederate blows continued leftward—the several brigades of Maney and Loring, striking Williams's division, next after Ward, and carrying it on so as to involve at least one brigade of Palmer's corps.

Taking the division commanders and considering them in succession, we first come to Geary. Our Geary had been compared to Napoleon's Marshal Ney, from his large proportions, his cheerful deportment, and his unfailing energy. His eyes were always wide open, so that he examined every approach to his position, and watched with clear vision for some high point if he could get one. He reconnoitered without regard to personal danger. His men had skirmished up a hill abreast to Ward and Newton, across the Shoal Creek. Geary was in the outset with his skirmishers preparing to bring up to the crest his battle lines. While thus diligently and fearlessly engaged he heard

## Battle of Peach Tree Creek

the distant Confederate cry. His left just then had an open front, while his right ran down into low ground and was obstructed by entangling undergrowth. This wood, troublesome to the foot soldiers and impassable to cavalry, caused quite a gap between him and Williams's division. He had left enough force near the creek to occupy and defend the bridgehead. Like Newton's men, in the place where they found themselves, Geary's were just commencing to intrench and barricade, when the sound of battle reached them suddenly. In his own front, without shouting, almost without noise, in apparent masses the Confederates, with their quick, springy step, charged Geary's skirmishers.

The movement was so adroitly executed that most of those in Geary's outer line were captured. Here the sharp firing commenced. Geary galloped to the vicinity of his own battery, where all his left wing, now thoroughly warned, began a rapid and continuous fire. This firing was so strong and well directed that it checked and broke up the Confederate charge. Successive efforts to breast this Union storm on the part of the Confederate officers in immediate command were unsuccessful. Geary's right wing, however, had a much harder struggle. Under cover of the treacherous woods a Confederate column furtively penetrated between him and Williams, and his right flank for a time was completely enveloped. His right brigade commander, Colonel P. H. Jones, soon supported by all the rest, changed front as soon as he could, but too late to check the onset, so that nearly the whole right wing was forced back to the bridgehead near the Peach Tree Creek.

The battle was perhaps not severer in Geary's



## Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

front than elsewhere, but the immediate results were not so decisive for him. The limbs of trees and the underbrush were as badly broken and cut up as those had been on Geary's front the last day at Gettysburg. Geary persisted here, as he did everywhere, in re-enforcing and making renewed attacks till near night, when the Confederates before him retired. Their commander, General Walthall, had doubtless discovered before his withdrawal that the general attack had altogether failed. The successive advances of Stewart's Confederate corps passed on beyond the ravine westward, and struck Williams a heavy blow. His left was held by Robinson's brigade. The blow came while Robinson was in motion by the left flank endeavoring to get into the ravine and connect with Geary. General Hooker, watching the well-matched combat, had ordered this important junction. Troops could not be worse situated to resist an attack. Sheridan's division at Chickamauga was broken to pieces under such conditions. Yet, Hooker was proud to say, Robinson's men coolly faced toward the enemy and stood fast, giving volley for volley. They lost heavily but they not only maintained their ground but helped Geary's right in recovering what he had lost. Williams, commanding the division, was at all times a faithful officer at his post. He had heard the distant sound of battle, which proved a favorable signal to him and his veterans. At once he caused his batteries to gallop to the nearest hill, and soon to bring an oblique fire to bear upon not only those before his direct front, but upon all who were attacking Geary and Robinson.

As the stormy echelon wave passed along it dashed upon Knipe's and Ruger's brigades with undimin-

## Battle of Peach Tree Creek

ished force and fury. Having had a little more warning than the others, they were fully prepared when the storm burst; and so they steadily met the shock of battle, and succeeded in repelling their assailants without loss of ground.

The last strong effort made by the Confederates in this engagement took place on Hardee's right. It was evidently Bate's division, supported by Walker, which was making the final effort to turn the flank of the Army of the Cumberland. It was an effort to take Newton in reverse through the gap between my divisions. Thomas, who could move quickly enough when duty demanded it, hastened Ward's artillery to the proper spot near Newton's bridge where it could be most effective to sweep the Clear Creek bottom and the entangled woods that bordered it.

Not only artillery but all the cannon that belonged to Newton's division was ranged in order, and began and followed up with terrible discharges, using solid shot, shells, and canister, their brisk fire beginning just as the Confederate brigades emerged from the shelter of the woods and were aiming to cross the Peach Tree Creek itself. This artillery fire, combined with all the oblique fire that Newton could bring to bear, broke up the assaulting columns and rendered all attempts to turn Thomas's position futile.

While this was going on there was again a renewed supporting effort put forth by all the Confederate divisions, from Walker's right to French, to sustain their attack, but Thomas's men from Newton to Palmer's center were still watching, and easily stopped and drove back the advancing lines.

The loss on both sides was heavy: on our side not far from 2,000 men *hors de combat*. The Confederate



### Autobiography of Gen. O. O. Howard

loss cannot be accurately ascertained. It was between 4,000 and 5,000 killed, wounded, and made prisoners.

Thus ended in defeat Hood's execution of Johnston's plan for a general battle at Peach Tree Creek.

A brigade commander, Colonel Cobham, One Hundred and Eleventh Pennsylvania; Colonel William K. Logie, One Hundred and Forty-fourth New York, and Lieutenant Colonel G. B. Randall were among those who fell. We had a great impulse of joy because we had won the battle. The Confederates had at this time, besides the affliction of death, a great sense of chagrin because they had lost.