

Monticello, Florida
Feb. 9th, 1865

Major,

In compliance with circular order from head quarters, Sect. Corps dated January 24th 1864 – a copy of which reached me, by mail, on yesterday – I have the honor to submit the following report of the operations of the Division I commanded from the 30th of July to the 31st of August inclusive.

On the 28th of July, 1864 Hindman's Division of Lee's Corps was hotly engaged with the enemy about three miles from Atlanta on the Lick Skillet road and near the Poor house. In that engagement the Division lost in killed, wounded, and missing upwards of five hundred men and officers. On the 29th I was assigned to, and on the 30th assumed the command of the Division consisting of Sharp's & Brantley's Brigades of Mississippians, Deas's Brigade of Alabamians, and Manigault's Brigades of Ala. & S.C. Lee's Corps was at that time holding the extreme left of our lines at Atlanta. My Division was on the right of Lee's Corps, my right resting on the Lick Skillet road, my left on Utoy Creek. Deas's, Brantley's, Sharp's, and Manigault's Brigades were in position, in the order named from right to left, and numbered in all about 2800 bayonets. The position had been taken on the night of the 28th July after the command had been withdrawn from the battlefield near the Poor House. The line extended over uneven ground, through woods and open fields, across hills and over narrow valleys, and was capable of being rendered quite strong against an attack by infantry. For this purpose, strong details were made, and all the entrenching tools that could be procured were put in the hands of the troops. The work of entrenching was pushed with vigor, night and day till a feeling of security and even defiance pervaded the whole line. The enemy had established his main line parallel to, and about eight hundred yards in front of ours. He was active in strengthening his position, and made frequent attempts upon our skirmish line, sometimes with partial success, but in the main, gaining no substantial advantage by his rallies. Our own skirmishers were not idle but made frequent reprisals upon the enemy, punishing him in many instances for his temerity. Our skirmish line was about five hundred yards distant from our main line, and at first consisted of shallow rifle pits hurriedly dug in the night, and at intervals of from twenty to fifty paces apart. A few nights' work however, added much to their strength, and in the course of ten days or a fortnight, the pits were gradually connected, and the whole became almost one continuous line of entrenchment with head logs and loop holes, to protect our sharpshooters and enable them to confine the enemy to his trenches. His line of skirmishers was, on an average, not much over a hundred yards from ours and in some places the space between the two lines did not exceed sixty paces in the breadth. His main line was about two hundred yards in rear of his skirmishers. At one point on the line in front of Deas's left and Brantley's right, being favored by the conformation of the ground, he established his skirmish line within sixty yards of ours, and erected on it an earthwork with embrasures for six guns. We had no guns upon my main line bearing directly upon this position, but a rifle battery on the line occupied by the troops of Loring's Division (on my right) being situated favorably for the purpose, by a few well-directed shots on several occasions put a stop to labor on the work; and although it was eventually completed under cover of night, a wholesome dread of Featherstone's Parrot guns and Deas's sharpshooters I have no doubt, deterred the enemy

from ever attempting to put more than one piece in position. With this however, he threatened to do us much damage, and, but for the courage and skill of Deas's skirmishers, backed by the indomitable energy and perseverance of the officers in charge of the line, would, doubtless, have compelled us to return to a position nearer our main line. The embrasure from which this piece was fired was so mantled and the cannoniers so well protected that it was almost impossible for our sharpshooters to do more than confine them to their works, without preventing the free use of the piece. Day after day did they use it with damaging effect upon our riflepits, only sixty paces from its muzzle – frequently leveling the earth upon the line for forty of fifty yards and literally covering our men in the pits, with the debris. Our casualties from this source however, were trifling. At night the men would work heroically and repair the damages of the day. After several days spent in this mode of annoying warfare, by concert of action amongst the sharpshooters of our line along the front and to the right and left of the piece in question it was completely silenced and withdrawn from position.

Similar instances of persevering skill and courage were manifested daily upon other portions of our line along Brantley's, Sharp's, and Manigault's front. In one instance, Brantley's men, by rolling logs ahead of them, and by digging zigzag trenches, approached so near the enemy's riflepits as to be able to throw hand grenades over his breastworks. Firing between the parties on the two picket lines was constant during the day and not infrequently continued throughout the night. Our scouts – whenever the darkness of the night favored such operations – penetrated the enemy's picket line, and kept us well advised of all his important movements.

During this time, the main line was constantly being strengthened. The trenches were enlarged, the breastworks were made wider and stronger in every particular while every available obstruction within reach of the troops was resorted to, and made use of, to render the line as strong as possible. A battery of the most substantial kind, chevaux de frize and palisades of approved styles, bristled along our whole front, giving confidence to our troops and speaking defiance to the foe. Four weeks, in the month of August, were spent in perfecting these works of defense and in annoying the enemy from our picket line, and with artillery as much as was consistent with an economical expenditure of ammunition. I refer to the operations of the Division during this month with pleasure as evincing a spirit and determination on the part of the troops, as well as an alacrity and skill in the performance of every duty on the part of their officers, worthy of the highest praise. To the Brigade Commanders (Deas, Brantley, Sharp, and Manigault) I am especially indebted for their prompt obedience to every order and cheerful cooperation in every thing tending to promote the efficiency of the command and the good of the service. Their sympathy, counsel, and hearty cooperation lightened my burden of responsibility and contributed to the establishment of that spirited corps, discipline and good feeling which happily pervades the Division and without which the bravest troops in the world cannot be relied on.

On the night of the 25th August our scouts reported a movement on the part of the enemy, the precise character of which was not fully understood, but which was indicated by the rumbling of artillery and wagons, etc. On the next morning it was ascertained that he had withdrawn from the front a portion of the line occupied by Lt. Genl. Stewart's corps, which was on the right of Lee's corps. During the night of the 26th he withdrew from my front. As this movement was not unlooked for by us, preparations for it had

been accordingly made. At about 9 o'clock P.M. each of our batteries delivered a few rounds for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not a reply could be directed. With the exception of one, perhaps two pieces on my extreme left, there was no response along my whole front. Before daylight on the morning of the 27th our skirmishers occupied a portion of our enemy's main works without opposition. By direction of the Lt. Genl. commanding the corps, Deas's Brigade with Jackson's Brigade of Bates Division of Hardee's corps (Brig. Genl. H.R. Jackson commanding the whole) were sent forward in pursuit on the Lick Skillet road. They advanced cautiously a distance of six or seven miles to within a short distance of the Chattahoochee River and coming upon a force of the enemy deemed too strong to be assailed by the two Brigades, the command was halted. Brig. Genl. Jackson reported the facts & awaited further instruction whereupon the two Brigades were directed by order of the corps commander to return to their positions in the line. They reached their places in the trenches at about ____ o'clock P.M., having captured a few stragglers, some sutlers stores, several wagons and mules with forage, broken down houses, etc. On the 28th and 29th small parties were sent forward for the purpose of scouting my whole front thoroughly & of ascertaining, if possible, the precise route taken by the enemy and for the purpose generally of getting all the information possible in regard to his movement. These scouts reported the enemy as having moved the larger portion of his forces in the direction of Sand Town and Blue Pond, but one corps at least, they reported to have crossed the Chattahoochee River and to have moved up that stream on or near its right bank, in the direction of the Rail Road Bridge or Marietta. Early in the night of the 29th I received orders from Corps Headquarters to hold the Division in readiness to move to the left at 4 o'clock the following morning. At the appointed hour the command was withdrawn from the trenches and moving left in front, proceed[ed] about two miles in the direction of East Point when it was halted by orders from Corps Headquarters, at the point where our line of march crossed the Campbellton road. We rested here till about 4 o'clock in the afternoon, when we were directed to proceed to East Point and relieve Cheatham's Division then in the trenches in front of that place and on the left of the Rail Road running to West Point. The head of the column reached this position shortly before sundown, and commenced relieving Cheatham's Division as soon as the necessary information in regard to the lines, pickets, details, etc. could be obtained from Brig. Genl. Maney in command. About the time that the work of relieving Genl. Maney's command had been completed orders to withdraw the troops from the trenches, and to follow Cheatham's Division in the direction of Jonesboro. Repairing to Genl. Maney's quarters to ascertain when he would be ready to move, I learned from him that he had received no orders to move to Jonesboro, but upon showing him mine, he immediately made preparations to commence the movement. It was about eleven o'clock before his rear and the head of my column got in motion. Much delay was experienced because of the want of road and the absence of competent guides. The column was several times halted for an hour or more because the advance had taken the wrong road, or to remove some obstruction. Just before day on the morning of the 31st a halt occurred where I was about the centre of my command, and riding forward to ascertain the cause, I met Brig. Genl. Carter now commanding Cheatham's Division, who informed me that Maj. Genl. Cleburne of Hardee's Corps who was in advance had sent back to inform him that the enemy had taken possession of a bridge in his (Cleburne's) front, and that the troops must

be halted till he (Cleburne) could reconnoitre [reconnoiter] the position and ascertain whether or not a passage of the stream could be effected. In the meantime the better to be prepared against an attack should the enemy feel disposed to make it, I ordered a strong line of skirmishers to be thrown out in our front and a couple of batteries of our artillery to be put in eligible positions for defense. Before these dispositions however, were completed the Lt. General Commanding the Corps overtook me, and approving my action, directed me to remain in my then position until he had ridden forward and obtained further information in regard to the exact situation. I had not remained long where he left me, until a staff officer returned with orders for me to follow with the whole Division. Very soon Cheatham's Division began to move forward, and I followed with the commands well closed up. Before the column was all in motion however, the sun had rose, and a clear, cloudless sky betokened fair weather at least for the day's operations. The march during the night had been toilsome in the extreme to the troops who had not been out of the trenches for thirty days; and daylight revealed a wearied and jaded column with ranks considerably diminished by straggling during the night. Although the most diligent exertions were made by the officers of all grades to prevent this evil, their efforts were but partially successful. The darkness of night, the dense woods through which we frequently marched, without roads, the want of shoes by many, and the lack of recent exercise by all contributed to induce a degree of straggling which I do not remember to have seen exceeded in any former march of the kind. In this plight the Division – well closed up on Cheatham's rear – reached the vicinity of Jonesboro at about 11 o'clock A.M. on the 31st of August, and was halted on the Rail Road north of, and about half a mile distant from, the village. The enemy in apparently strong force was plainly visible on both sides of Flint River (an inconsiderable stream at this point) in a westerly direction from where we halted and distant from a thousand to fifteen hundred yards. The column was closed up – faced to the right, skirmishers were thrown forward, and hasty preparations immediately made for commencing at the proper time.

The Battle of Jonesboro

The troops were advanced to a position parallel with, and about two hundred yards west of the Rail Road – and immediately began strengthening line with logs, rails and such other material as could be procured at hand, without tools of any kind. The skirmish line was about a hundred and fifty yards in advance of the main line, and had already begun to exchange frequent shots with the enemy who was in easy Enfield range of their position. A hasty reconnaissance revealed the fact that the enemy was strongly posted on the crest of an irregular ridge, and that his position was rendered still stronger by a line of breastworks which he had thrown up before our arrival, and upon which he was still at work.

Our order of battle was in two lines. The first was a continuous line and was comprised of three Brigades from each Division. The second was comprised of one Brigade from each Division posted about two hundred yards in rear of the first, at least this was the disposition in my own command, and shortly before going into action I was directed by the Lt. Genl. Commanding the Corps, to relinquish the command of my supporting line to Maj. Genl. Clayton, and to devote myself exclusively to the three brigade in the first line. There were Sharp's, Deas's, and Brantley's from right to left in

the order named. At the same time it was explained to me by Lt. Genl. Lee that his Corps – of which my Division composed the right – was not to attack until Cleburne commanding Hardee's Corps on the left had hotly engaged the enemy at close range in his front. Preparations for the attack having been completed throughout the Corps, the Division commanders assembled at the side of Genl. Lee awaiting the report of small arms on Cleburne's line, and the signal from the Corps Commander for the action to begin on our part.

At about 2:20 P.M. the quick and heavy rattle of musketry on Cleburne's line mingled with rapid discharge of artillery in the same direction, indicating the time appointed for our advance. The order was given and the troops moved forward deliberately and with resolution. The enemy's line of skirmishers were pushed back upon his main line at the top of the ridge before alluded to, and our first line was soon under a heavy fire from his breastworks. There was but little cover for our assaulting lines, and the ascent in some places was steep, but not rugged, affording the enemy great advantages in the ground, in addition to those derived from his breastworks. The troops however, moved forward with a spirit and determination that threatened – in spite of all odds – to crown the hill and drive the enemy from his place. Slowly but resolutely they advanced up the ascent to within pistol shot of the enemy's works. At this point, under a deadly fire, a few wavered and the rest laid down. The line was unbroken, and although the position was a trying one, every inch of ground gained was resolutely maintained. A staff officer was sent to request the reserve line to be pushed forward without delay. After waiting some time for the reserves to come up – perhaps not so long as it appeared to those exposed to this deadly fire at such close range – another staff officer was sent back with an urgent appeal for them to be brought up immediately. In the meantime both men and officers in the front line were suffering severely. Each moment brought death and wounds into their ranks. On every part of the line, officers were constantly falling, while engaged in encouraging and urging the men to remain firm till assistance could arrive, and by their conduct, setting examples of heroism and courage seldom equaled and still more rarely surpassed. The second line came up in rear of Deas's and Brantley's but the ranks of the latter had been so thinned by the fire to which they had been exposed, that the two lines combined were unable to make any further advance. Unwilling to abandon the attack while a reasonable hope of success remained, and believing that with the assistance of a couple of good brigades, the enemy's left could be forced back, a staff officer was sent to Genl. Lee's to ascertain if the necessary assistance could be spared from other portions of the field. In the meantime, every effort was made to hold the ground already gained. Stragglers were pushed up to the front and the slightly wounded were encouraged to remain there. (While engaged in their efforts, a color bearer was discovered some short distance behind the front line, with a number of men scattered about through the pines near him. On inquiry he reported himself as color bearer of the 13th La. Regt. and stated that he had tried to get the men to follow him to the front but could not prevail on them to do so. The officers of the Regiment were then called for but none responded. The color bearer expressed desire to carry the colors forward, and upon my directing him to do so, he did advance them gallantly calling upon his comrades to follow. I regret to say, but few responded. When the conduct of officers or troops justifies it, I deem it fit no less imperative to censure them to praise; and it is under a sense of this duty that I relate this circumstance. I would not be understood as imparting

reprehensible conduct to the whole regiment whose color bearer I have alluded to, for I know that on other fields that regiment has acquitted itself with the highest honors. But I do say that if the men in question did belong to the 13th La. Regiment as represented to me, they are unworthy comrades of a gallant color bearer, and that they reflect discredit upon a gallant regiment from as gallant a state as shines in the southern constellation.)

Regarding the extreme right of my line as in great danger and desiring to hold our position there until assistance might arrive, I now proceeded along the line from Brantley's right towards Sharp's position. All this time the troops of the front line were lying down within sixty yards of the enemy's breastworks and at many points much nearer: Keeping up a hot fire upon every thing that appeared above the defenses of the enemy. From these defenses the enemy too poured an unremitting fire upon the assailants. Though at a distance from them, Sharp's gallant Mississippians could be seen pushing their way in small parties apparently up to the very slope of the enemy's breastworks. Officers could be plainly observed encouraging the men to this work. One on horseback – whom I took to be Genl. Sharp – was particularly conspicuous. After having rode along the line from Brantley's right – urging the officers and men to stand a little longer – when I had reached a point near Sharp's left, I received a wound which compelled me to leave the field, and which had resulted in my absence up to the present time. This occurred about 4:30 P.M.

Not having access at present to the reports of Brigade Commanders or of their subordinates, it is not in my power to state accurately the casualties in the Division on this day at Jonesboro, though I am confident they will be found to exceed five hundred in killed, wounded, and missing. Some idea of the severity of the engagement may be formed by comparing this list with the number carried into action, which I am confident did not greatly exceed two thousand. The want of official reports which prevents me from giving accurately the list of casualties in the Division, also precludes me from embracing in this report the names of the many gallant officers who fell on the occasion. For these I must refer to the Reports of Brigade and regimental Commanders where doubtless the names, conduct, and examples of the dead are recorded in befitting terms.

A deep sense of obligation I am personally under to the four Brigade Commanders above named, renders it no less my duty than a pleasure to express my thanks for their cheerful and cordial cooperation and assistance on all occasions, whether in the trenches, on the march, or upon the battle field. To them and their subordinate commanders, is due whatever spirit, discipline, and efficiency the Division can boast.

To the staff also, without exception my thanks are due for that constant intelligent and efficient discharge of their respective duties which marked their conduct throughout the whole time of our official association. In the list of those who have thus performed well their parts are the names of Capt. Wm. G. Barth, A.A.G. Capt. E.F. Travis, A.A.G. and A.I.G. Wm. M. Davidson aid de camp Major acting Division G.M., Capt. P. Eggleston Chf. Com. Sub. for the Division, Private Simon Mayor A.A.A.G., & D.A. Kinchloe Chf. Surgeon of the Division. To the latter as well as to Ast. Surg. Lundy I am personally much indebted for attentive and skillful treatment on the field and elsewhere.

I am Major,
Very Respectfully
Yr. Obt. Svt.
Patton Anderson

Maj. Genl.

Major J.W. Ratchford
A.A.G.
Lee's Corps, Army of Tennessee

Transcribed by Christopher A. Baker, University of Florida, 2008.